



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

**Corporate Identity In The Contexts Of The UK's**  
**Green Slow-Fashion Industry And Micro-**  
**Organisations**

PhD Thesis

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*One can pay back the loan of gold, but one dies forever in debt to those who are kind.*  
– Malayan Proverb

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Don't aim for success if you want it; just do what you love and believe in, and it will  
come naturally (David Frost).

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## **Abstract**

Corporate identity is not a new phenomenon, but rather has engaged practitioners and academics for the past decades, leading to a vast variety of models to emerge. Contrary to previous research, this PhD thesis investigates corporate identity in two unique contexts: micro-organisations, which in recent years have gained greater attention, and the green slow-fashion industry, which is a hot topic and has mainly been explored from an arts and humanities perspective and not from a marketing/management point of view.

This thesis focuses on four carefully selected case studies and takes on a multi methods research methodology, which includes qualitative (employee shadowing, social media analysis, semi-structured interviews, and semiology) and quantitative (questionnaires) elements. To further validate the research findings and to gain a better understanding of the industry, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with experts in the field.

The findings indicate that although there are similarities across the various models of corporate identity, they differ dramatically in some of their components, which led to the creation of a new framework: The Micro-Identity Model. Three distinctive features of the Micro-Identity Model are: firstly, it is closely linked to a micro-organisation's organisational processes; secondly, the central role of the owner-manager within the new model, who creates the identity from the inside out as a bottom-up approach. Lastly, communication is no longer seen as simply a component of a micro-company's identity, but rather, the underlying essence of it. Moreover, the findings established that within the two contexts of this PhD research, standardisations (e.g. Fair Trade, GOTS) are seen as unimportant.

The main theoretical contributions of this study focus on providing a new corporate identity framework, the mapping of a micro-company's organisational processes, and an interpretation of sustainable fashion. The key methodological advancement lies within utilising social media analysis and employee shadowing within the area of corporate identity. In terms of policy implications, this research brings forward suggestions in the area of eco-labelling and in terms of providing guidance for micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry.



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## List of Acronyms

AMA	Academy of Marketing Association
BFC	British Fashion Council
BIS	Department for Business Innovation & Skills
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis Software
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CSF	Centre for Sustainable Fashion
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEFRA	Department of Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs
ECNC	European Centre for Nature Conservation
EFS	Ethical Fashion Source
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSSD	Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development
ISO	International Standards Organisation
IT	Information Technology
M&S	Marks & Spencer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
O/M	Owner-Manager
QR	Quick Response
SCAP	Sustainable Clothing Roadmap of Action Plan
S-DL	Service-Dominant Logic
SME	Small- and Medium Sized Enterprise
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SPE	Single Person Entity
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TNS	The Natural Steps Organisation
UKFT	UK Fashion and Textile Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USP	Unique Selling Point
WRAP	Waste and Resource Action Plan



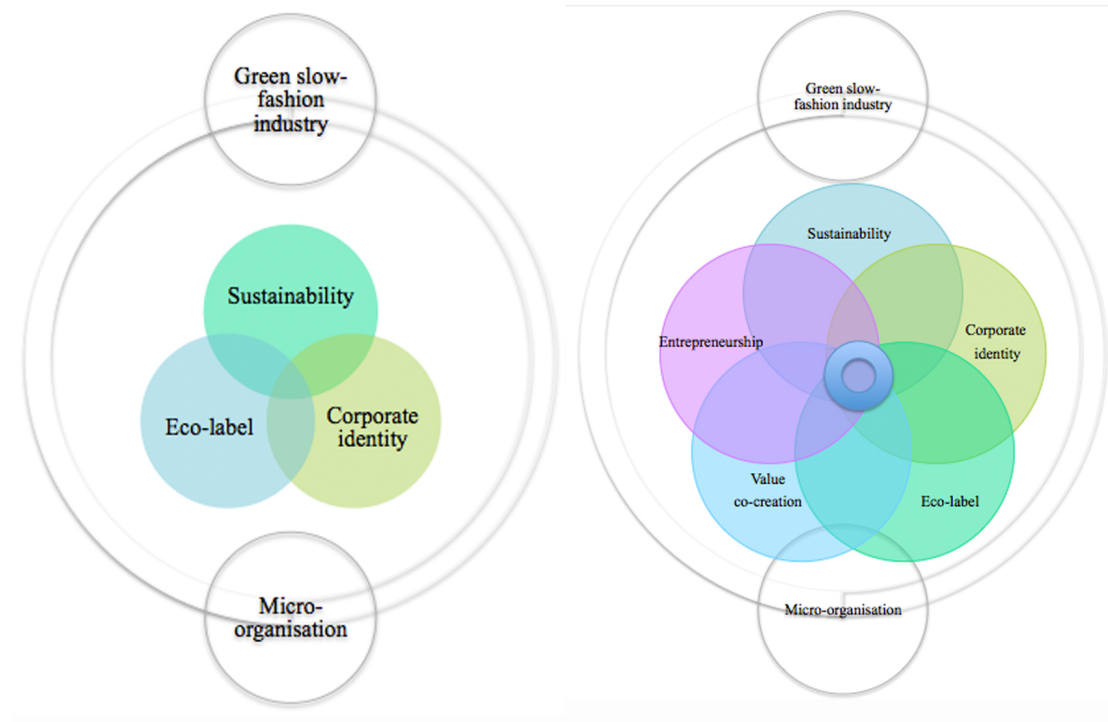
# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Brief overview of PhD research

Corporate identity is not a newly discovered phenomenon, but rather a framework that has garnered the interest of practitioners, academics, and managers for the past four decades (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012; He & Balmer, 2013). In broad terms it addresses how managers understand and interpret their company's identity (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2008). Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the key role corporate identity plays in terms of expressing their individuality and creating a point of differentiation, thereby allowing their stakeholders to distinguish their brand/product from those of their competitors. In doing so, organisations increasingly develop and manage their identity by establishing a unique selling point (USP) (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). At the same time that interest in corporate identity flourished, the concept and importance of sustainability arose, making managers more aware of the need to widen their organisational goals beyond financial matters and encouraging them to incorporate environmental issues as a top strategic priority. Sustainability as a key term has made its way into the business world, as people in managerial positions realise that the organisation's social and environmental goals are as important as their economic ones (Bansal, 2005; GRI, 2011). The angle of this thesis has changed and evolved over the duration of the research process. Originally this PhD research set off with the idea of looking at how corporate identity and sustainability might be combined to increase the current knowledge of how corporate identity could help micro-companies to be 'green' and have a lesser environmental impact overall. After the findings were analysed the necessity arose to broaden the focus of this project to include the role of eco-labels, whilst furthermore two new literatures were incorporated: value co-creation and entrepreneurship. The results of this PhD research have been surprising and unanticipated: This research did not only explore what corporate identity means in the context of micro-organisations, but also investigated their organisational processes, which are part of their overall identity. In other words, this research found that in order to determine a micro-company's corporate identity one needs to take into account their decision making process and the organisational processes as a whole.

Figure 1 provides a visualisation of the initial literatures included and how these broadened over the course of the PhD research. The blue circle indicates the unique positioning of this thesis.

Figure 1: Visualisation of PhD research (Researcher’s own infographic)



The following sections provide background information on the two contexts and an insight into the reasoning behind their selection for this thesis. Furthermore, it reflects on the researcher’s attitudes towards eco-labels and how this influenced the project overall. The sections that follow state the research problem, the research gap, and research questions. Chapter 1 concludes with a brief overview of this thesis’ structure.

## 1.2 Definition of contexts

### 1.2.1 The green slow-fashion industry

The slow-fashion industry provides the counterpart to the fast-fashion industry. Fast-fashion is often described as those garments that can be acquired on the high street and are characterised as: cheap, mass-produced, fashionable, have a fast stock turnaround, and “mimic current luxury fashion trends” (Joy et al., 2012: 273). Slow-

fashion on the other hand, whilst being fashionable and at times ‘cheap’ (depending on the price sensitivity of the consumer), is neither mass-produced, nor does it have a fast stock turnover (Fletcher, 2008; Bourland, 2011). Organisations operating within the slow-fashion industry generally produce a new collection twice a year in Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter (BSR, 2012). By contrast, the fast-fashion industry turns their stock around every 2-3 weeks, which means approximately 20 fashion lines per annum (BSR, 2012). In this regard, “today’s mainstream fashion industry relies on globalised, mass production where garments are transformed from the design stage to the retail floor in only a few weeks” (Dickson et al., 2013).

The *green* slow-fashion industry, differs from the slow-fashion industry, in that designers and organisations not only incorporate techniques such as upcycling (making a new, different product out of an old one) and recycling (mending and changing an existing product), but also take particular care in terms of their material selection (e.g. bamboo, pre-loved garments, plastic bottles) (Cool Brands, 2013; Dickson et al., 2013) and production processes (BSR, 2012). Moreover, it is seen as a move away from quantity to quality purchases (Fletcher, 2007; Dickson et al., 2013). This definition provides the baseline for this research and determines the selection process for the case organisations that participated in this project (see Chapter 3).

### **1.2.2 Micro-organisations**

Micro-organisations are part of a wider grouping: small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Europa, 2007). A micro-company can be defined “as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed €2million” (approximately £1.65million) (Europa, 2007). Further characteristics of micro-businesses include, but are not limited to: firstly, having a limited financial budget, which depends on the owner-manager’s (O/M) financial backing as the sole risk-taker (EC, 2013a). Secondly, the companies are seen to be innovative in terms of their designs and production processes (EC, 2013a). Thirdly, they are sensitive to competition, especially if larger organisations provide a comparable product/service at lower cost (Chironga, 2012; EC, 2013a). Lastly, they seek to employ workers that have a transferable set of skills (EC, 2013a).

## **1.3 Justification for choosing contexts**

### **1.3.1 The fashion industry**

Generally, the apparel industry is one of the largest industrial sectors globally that is still truly competitive (Easey, 2009; Europa, 2013), with the UK apparel sector continually increasing its capability to compete within the sector (Intel, 2011; Europa, 2013). According to the 2006 UNIDO statistics (Allwood et al., 2006), the fashion industry employs approximately 26.5 million people worldwide. Globally, one in six people is employed within the apparel sector (Brown, 2011), and of that number, 5 million people were employed within the European Union (EU) in 2013 (Europa, 2013) and roughly 816.000 within the UK in 2009 (BFC, 2010; Fox, 2010). This implies that the UK is “the third-largest fashion employer in the EU-27 surpassed only by Italy and Germany” (FashionUnited, 2013a). Official government reports show that the fashion industry has managed to increase its employment figures by 2% in 2011, compared to figures in 2010 (UKFT, 2011).

However, recent news has highlighted that the outlook of the UK high street is changing (DCLG, 2013; Felsted, 2013) and with it the shopping experience (Jones, 2013). Whilst large chains, including USC and Republic, are forced to close down their shops (Warman, 2013), initiatives focusing on local designers, makers, and crafters become more apparent (Mitchell, 2013). This leads onto the next section, providing a justification for the UK context.

### **1.3.2 The UK context**

The UK fashion industry was chosen for various reasons: Firstly, due to its dominant role and long-standing history in the apparel industry, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Allwood et al., 2006). In this regard, Harold Tillman, chairman of the British Fashion Council (BFC), called this industry a “great British success story” (Fox, 2010), which boomed after World War I, becoming the most important sector for employment (Godley, 1995). Furthermore, the UK has had a major influence on past fashion eras, leading the global industry into “the ‘Swinging Sixties’, the Punk, and New Romantic movements of the 1970s and 1980s and the Cool Britannia image of the 1990s” (BFC, 2010: 26). This suggests that the UK has played a significant role within the apparel industry.

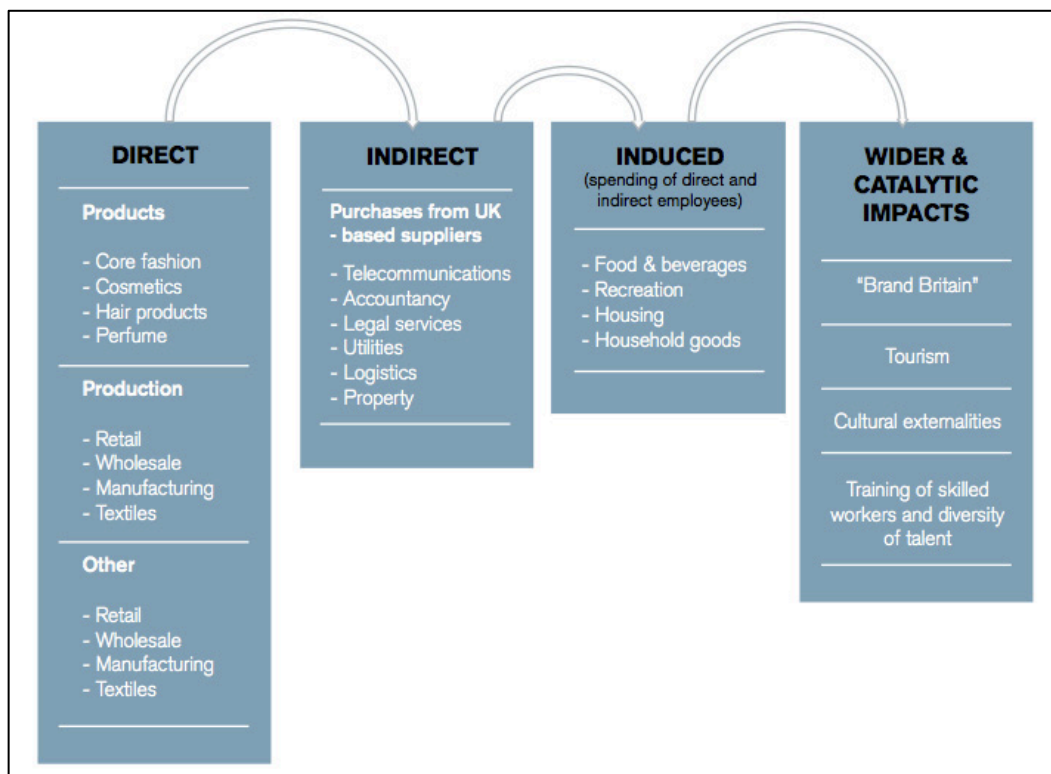
Secondly, London is one of four cities hosting the premier global fashion weeks, holding both autumn and spring fashion shows (Reuters, 2007; Florida & Johnson, 2012; GLM, 2013). It has gained prominence in the international fashion scene, and is ranked at the same level as Paris, Milan, and New York within the industry. Moreover, London hosts Estethica, one of the biggest ethical fashion shows worldwide (BFC, 2011) and “has developed the reputation of ‘innovation capital’ and the ‘birthplace of talent’” (BFC, 2011: 11), which reflects positively on the UK apparel industry as a whole.

Thirdly, the UK has brought forward various nationally and internationally renowned designers and branded chains, such as: Vivienne Westwood, Stella McCartney, Burberry, and Mulberry (BFC, 2010). This further supports the important role of the UK fashion sector on a global scale, and its appropriateness for further research.

Lastly, from an economic perspective: “The British fashion industry is growing, is contributing so much [to the economy and is rated] one of our top 20 productive sectors in this country” (Lord Patten, in BBC Democracy, 2013). To be more precise, the UK fashion industry contributes £26bn directly and £16bn indirectly to the British economy (Fox, 2010; BFC, 2012a, 2014a; Yueh, 2014). By manufacturing and selling fashion items and related accessories, including cosmetics and hair products, the fashion industry has a *direct* contribution to the British economy through job creation (BFC, 2010; UKTI, 2012). Alongside this direct economic contribution is the *indirect* influence of external non-fashion related businesses that provide vital services required to manufacture and sell fashion products. These businesses range from accountancy firms, to department stores, internet providers or electricity suppliers. Each of these businesses, although not directly related to fashion, are necessary for the successful running of a fashion business, hence their *indirect* influence on the economy (BFC, 2010). A third impact on the economy comes in the form of *induced* effects. Although similar to the *indirect* influences listed above, *induced* impacts differ as they are not necessarily vital to the day-to-day running of a fashion business, but rather are involved from a third-party standpoint. This can be further explained through the example of a fashion show, which might take place at a location that is not linked to the designer and is used on a one-time-only basis. This location may be used for a myriad of different events that

are not connected to the fashion industry, but may have facilities that cater towards a fashion show. Thus, while the people working at this third-party location are not employed within the fashion industry and are not directly or indirectly involved in fashion, they are still earning money as a result of being ‘involved’ in the fashion industry (BFC, 2010). Figure 2 shows the three impacts the fashion industry has on the UK economy.

Figure 2: The UK fashion industry and its economic impact (BFC, 2010: 13)



In her speech to the House of Lords, Baroness Young of Hornsey emphasises that:

[T]he estimate amount spent on clothing in the UK in 2011 was £43.9bn, despite the large garment manufacturing carried out overseas, the estimate value of UK manufactured clothing and textiles in the UK was £8.1bn in 2011, and the overall export of the UK fashion and textiles was £7.3bn (BBC Democracy, 2013).

This links with the research carried out by Oxford Economics stating that the apparel industry in the UK is one of the largest employers within the creative industries (Fox, 2010). “British fashion is not just about designer frocks; it is a serious business” (Fox, 2010). According to the BFC (2012b) Leeds, Manchester, and London are hubs for fashion manufacturing, which provides further justification for choosing the UK as

the context for this study. As the researcher is based in Sheffield, this allows for easy access and travel opportunities to conduct this research. Thus, there are multiple reasons in support of the selection of the UK fashion industry as a highly important sector worth researching and investigating.

### 1.3.3 Context of micro-organisations

Most research in the fields of corporate identity, sustainability, eco-labels, and value co-creation alike that was conducted in the past has concentrated on large organisations, and only more recently on SMEs (Baden et al., 2011; Fassin et al., 2011). Past research, although instructive, has mostly excluded micro-organisations (Jenkins, 2006; BIS, 2011). Micro-companies “account [for] 53% of all jobs in Europe, so their importance to the European economy is enormous” (EC, 2013a). This is also reflected in the UK’s economy, in which “micro businesses are a key economic force, with the potential to be a greater one” (BRE, 2011: 3). In the UK, SMEs account for 58.8% of the employment (BIS, 2011), which corresponds to approximately 7million jobs (BRE, 2011). Within this, micro-businesses account for 32% of employment (Ward & Rhodes, 2014) and make up 34.9% of the private sector turnover alone (BIS, 2011). Furthermore,

[M]icro-businesses also play an important social role, providing work for many in the ‘margins’ of the labour force (the unskilled, formerly unemployed, part time workers, women returnees, young and old people) (BRE, 2011: 3).

Hence, various authors (Morsing & Perrini, 2009; von Weltzien & Shankar, 2011) pose that more research needs to be carried out on micro-organisations.

In summary of this overall section it can be said that both the fashion industry as a whole and the green slow-fashion industry specifically, and micro-companies play a key part in the UK’s economy. Following on from this section, background information on the two contexts will be provided to gain a better understanding of the research settings. Firstly, sustainable fashion, a term that is used to describe the garments produced by green slow-fashion manufacturers will be explained in-depth. Secondly an overview of micro-organisations in the fashion industry is provided.

## 1.4 Background information

### 1.4.1 Research terminology – sustainable fashion

The context of the green slow-fashion industry brings forward a ‘new terminology’. One of the key phrases that is often used in connection with this industry is ‘sustainable fashion’, which is:

[A]bout so much more than the clothes we wear. It may be an expression of our professional and personal identities, [...] about where we see ourselves in relation to our peer group, or cultures, our families, our communities, an expression of creativity, [...] [and] fun. [...] However consciously we do it, as we dress, we make a statement (Baroness Young of Hornsey, in BBC Democracy, 2013).

The phrase “we make a statement” (BBC Democracy, 2013) holds even truer for sustainable fashion, a concept that in itself is relatively new and thus far no common definition has emerged. Whilst some describe sustainable fashion as an oxymoron—with the fashion industry being one of the most polluting industries – others see it as the future for innovation (Egan, 2011; BSR, 2012). The question that remains is: What does sustainable fashion mean?

According to practitioners in the field, sustainable fashion is described as *fashion with a conscience* (Friedman, 2010; Liggett, 2010). This implies that garments are “ethically handcrafted [...] by fairly compensated artisans” (Barnard, 2014). Sustainable fashion is also conceived of as fashion that is derived from raw materials, in such a way as to produce a garment with the least impact possible on the natural environment. This often focuses on renewable materials, and sourcing supplies locally, which goes hand in hand with the definition of the London College of Fashion describing the *sustainable* part of fashion as the “harnessing and utilising of resources responsibly and ethically without destroying ecological and social balance” (Johnston, 2012). Oscar de la Renta, founder and owner of the eponymous brand, defines it in this way: “sustainable fashion implies a commitment to the traditional techniques, not just the art, of making clothes” (Friedman, 2010). Anya Hindmarch, founder of the *I’m not a plastic bag* satchels, describes it as “locally sourced materials that do [not] pollute in their creation or demise (preferably recycled) and with limited transportation to achieve the complete product” (Friedman, 2010). Clothing lines characterised as sustainable fashion can range from high-end garments as seen on the Green Carpet Challenge (an initiative brought forward by



Livia Firth, encouraging fellow celebrities to wear sustainable fashion), to organic cotton t-shirts sold on the high street, to upcycled second hand clothes (Figure 3).

Figure 3: High-end fashion garment by Lavin, made from eco-certified material (Zanna, 2012), Positee organic t-shirt (Etrala, 2013), upcycled fashion by MILCH (Chua, 2010)



A working definition of *sustainable fashion* is provided in Chapter 3, whilst Chapter 4 investigates what the term means to the various stakeholder groups involved in this research: members of the four case organisations, their customers, and experts in the field.

#### 1.4.2 Emergence of sustainable fashion

*Green fashion* or *sustainable fashion* emerged in the 1960s in the UK, when people became more conscious about the natural environment (Peattie, 1995; McCormick, 2001; Brown, 2011; SustAinability, 2011). However, during this period *eco* or *green* fashion was seen as being “crusty and granola and tie-dyed and hippie and all that kind of stuff” (Brown, 2011). The 1980s and early 1990s brought anti-fur campaigns, which led to a majority of brands eliminating fur from their collections, ensuring “good animal welfare conditions” (BSR, 2012: 1). The 1990s further renewed interest in ethical and eco-friendly clothing, due to media attention focusing on labour practices (Brown, 2011). These labour practice issues are still current today with “over 400 people [dying] in Bangladesh and Pakistan in fires over the past 6 months, with at least one of the factories involved in producing garments for a British retailer” (Baroness Young of Hornsey, in BBC Democracy, 2013). This highlights that “green is not the new black, it is not a trend that is coming in and out of season [...], [but rather] sustainable, green, eco, and ethical are increasingly a part of the fashion conversation, which is welcomed” (Baroness Parminter, in BBC Democracy, 2013). Simply put, sustainability in the fashion industry is not just a passing fad, but is rather a key concern that is taken seriously by the British Government and an increasing

number of fashion organisations across the whole industry. To reiterate this point, various initiatives launched by the UK Government in collaboration with various governmental and non-governmental institutions, for example DEFRA (Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs) and ECNC (European Centre for Nature Conservation) (2013), show the relevance of this PhD research and the necessity to further investigate issues concerning sustainability and corporate identity from a management and marketing perspective.

### **1.4.3 Current situation**

Today, sustainable and ethical processes have a higher awareness factor amongst consumers, which helps to increase sustainable fashion sales within the UK (Intel, 2009). It can be said that apparel manufacturing has a longstanding leadership tradition, which is characterised in terms of “innovation, fashion and creativity” (EURATEX, 2004: 4). Although some authors (Wong et al., 1996; Villiger et al., 2000) highlight that the sustainable fashion sector is still relatively small in comparison to the apparel sector as a whole and is not rapidly increasing, Lipson (2008) predicts a dramatic increase of sustainable fashion within the next decade. This view is further supported by a Intel Report conducted in 2009, stating that the ethical clothing market remains underdeveloped, accounting for less than one per cent of the whole market with a potential to grow in the future (Intel, 2009). Moreover, the increasing awareness not only among customers, but also the UK Government and major UK retailers including Marks & Spencer (M&S) and Tesco, has helped to raise the ethical fashion profile. Lipson (2008) furthermore states that traditional media channels, social networking sites (SNS), and increased commitment among manufacturers will contribute to the growth of ethical and eco-friendly apparel.

### **1.4.4 Challenges in the industry**

The increasing awareness of environmental and ethical issues within the apparel industry is “set against a bleak backdrop” (Skov, 2008: 4). This can be partly explained by a consistent decrease in pricing for fashion garments (Pasquinelli, 2012a), and thus, the association of fashion production with economic constraints, as manufacturers are consistently pressured into lowering their prices (Skov, 2008). In this way, the “fashion appetite” (Sharma & Hall, 2010: 2) on the consumer side has

both “environmental costs and implications” (Sharma & Hall, 2010: 2), which might be considered as issues that need to be challenged, but are not likely to change in the near future (Tynan, 2013). Consumers are used to a fast fashion stock turnover (BSR, 2012; Pasquinelli, 2012a), which leads to an increase in waste, particularly at landfills, as the average consumer bins 30kg of clothing and textiles per capita per annum (EFF, 2008; WRAP, 2012a). In the same vein, ethical issues have arisen due to the controversies within the fashion industry stemming from an encounter between corporate power and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Bullert, 1999; Skov, 2008). An example is the anti-sweatshop campaign launched against Nike to raise public awareness of poor working conditions amongst their employees in Asian countries (Skov, 2008). Skov (2008) found that most types of industrial regulation are happening on a company level, thus it is the organisation’s responsibility to not only check their supply chain regularly, but also take action on any issues if necessary (Aaker, 1996).

In summary, sustainable fashion and, thus, the green slow-fashion industry have gained importance throughout the past decades, which emphasises the relevance of this PhD research. The following section looks at the importance of micro-organisations in the green slow-industry and briefly discusses the implications this has for the selection of the four case organisations.

### **1.5 Implications of the researcher’s attitudes towards labels**

As previously highlighted, labelling was a third area that emerged during the data collection process. The researcher herself has rather strong feelings on this specific topic, which makes it necessary to reflect upon the implications this might have on the overall research. Due to these implications being of a personal matter, the following section will use ‘I’ instead of the third person, to further emphasise the implications that the researcher’s own feelings may have on the project.

Eco-labels for me, as a German citizen, have a very special meaning. Looking at my own cultural background, I grew up in a household that regularly recycled and was taught from an early age of the importance of protecting the environment. This might have been influenced by the fact that Germany is seen as a pioneer in terms of ‘labelling’ and ‘eco-label schemes’ (Lohse & Wulf-Schnable, 2000). This also included becoming familiar with various types of product labels, including, but not

limited to, food related items, electronics, and textiles. Scanning products for eco-labels has become second nature to me and thus I believe I am hyper-aware of their existence. Even before this current research, I have been conscious of the fact that various eco-labels are used in the apparel industry. This knowledge has now been furthered through investigating individual signs and their meaning in the context of the fashion industry.

During the first year of my PhD research, I conducted a pilot study, which allowed me to gain a better understanding of what interviewees associate with eco-labels. To this end, I asked a series of questions: firstly, I was interested in knowing whether or not any of the participants knew about ‘official marks of standardisations’ that are used within their industry. I elaborated on the expression, if needed, highlighting that these ‘official marks’ may signal that a product performs better in terms of environmental or social aspects in comparison with other products in the same category. Secondly, due to this pilot study, I realised that the term ‘eco-label’ may have a variety of meanings for managers and their employees. I was curious to explore what participants associated with the phrase and whether it held positive or negative connotations for them.

Although, I had planned to ask questions about eco-labels within all of my research interviews, I felt it was important to investigate the topic at the right moment in time. In the majority of conversations the topic emerged naturally, when talking about the sourcing process for raw materials and the brand’s own in- and on-product labelling of their garments.

To conclude, the pilot study enabled me to reflect upon my own knowledge of ‘labels’ and my personal view of these certifications. I understood that my cultural background and knowledge provided me with a different perspective of these standardisations and I expected to know the answer I was given. The pilot study has allowed me to focus on aspects of these eco-labels that I would have otherwise missed: firstly, the interviewees’ interpretations of the word, and secondly, the participants’ awareness of these standardisations.

## **1.6 Research problem and aim**

To summarise the previous sections, it can be said that the ethical fashion movement has been on the rise over the past decade, and has recently gained greater visibility,

and importance, due to increased concern over global environmental issues (where materials are sourced, how they are used, and if the working conditions are fair) (Phelan, 2011; Chan, 2013; Europa, 2013) and scandals in the fashion industry (e.g. Bangladesh's Rana Plaza) (Somers, 2013). This background is key to gain an understanding of this research's aim: to investigate the corporate identity of micro-organisations in the green slow-fashion industry. As previously highlighted, the research has changed and developed further throughout the duration of this PhD, which implies that the focus has shifted slightly. In other words, rather than concentrating on only one area, the literature review and the focus of this PhD thesis were widened to include corporate identity, eco-labels, value co-creation, and sustainability. The relationship between these fields is explored and their role within the context of this PhD research highlighted.

## **1.7 Objectives, research questions, and potential outcomes**

### **1.7.1 Research questions**

- What are the elements of a micro-company's corporate identity, within the context of the green slow-fashion industry?
- What is the role of sustainability in relation to these elements?
- What is the role of eco-labels in green slow-fashion organisations?

### **1.7.2 Research objectives**

1. To explore the question 'What does sustainable fashion mean?' from the perspectives of the O/Ms, their employees, and their consumers and how their individual characteristics and meanings of the term overlap.
2. To identify the key components of corporate identity within the context of the green slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations.
3. To analyse how sustainability is incorporated into the elements of corporate identity.
4. To compare and contrast different practices utilised across the four focal companies in terms of communicating their corporate identity.
5. To map the relationship between eco-labels, sustainable fashion, and green slow-fashion organisations.

### **1.7.3 Potential research outcomes**

- a) The aim of this research is to create a new model of corporate identity within the green slow-fashion industry. This PhD focuses on micro-companies, as this is a largely under-researched area and therefore this current research aims to contribute to the wider literature and practical implications of corporate identity.
- b) To review the current communication tools implemented by the case organisations and provide the owner-managers with feedback on how to promote their organisations in a more efficient way.
- c) To suggest policy improvements on current labelling schemes that make it easier to identify 'sustainable fashion'.

### **1.8 Structure of this PhD research**

This research is divided into seven chapters. Following on from the introduction, the literature review provides milestones, key findings and gaps in existing literature regarding the three primary areas identified: corporate identity, sustainability, and eco-labels. Further two sections on value co-creation and entrepreneurship were added after the findings were concluded. Chapter 3 provides information on this PhD research's philosophical stance and methodological tools that were used to fulfil the aim, objectives, and research questions. Leading on from the methodology are two findings chapters, the first one focuses on Objectives 1 and 5 (as stated above), and the second chapter looks at Objectives 2, 3 and 4. The discussion chapter will draw together the findings and the literature review. Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to this research, emphasising the contributions made in terms of theory, policy, and practical implications.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 1 highlighted that this research focuses on corporate identity, sustainability in the slow-fashion industry, eco-labels set in two contexts. Further two sections were added: value co-creation and entrepreneurship. The basis for this literature review is corporate identity, as the aim of this research is to explore the components of corporate identity in micro-organisations and how these components might be utilised to strengthen a micro-organisation's processes and attitudes to becoming green.

Figure 4: Visualisation of literature review

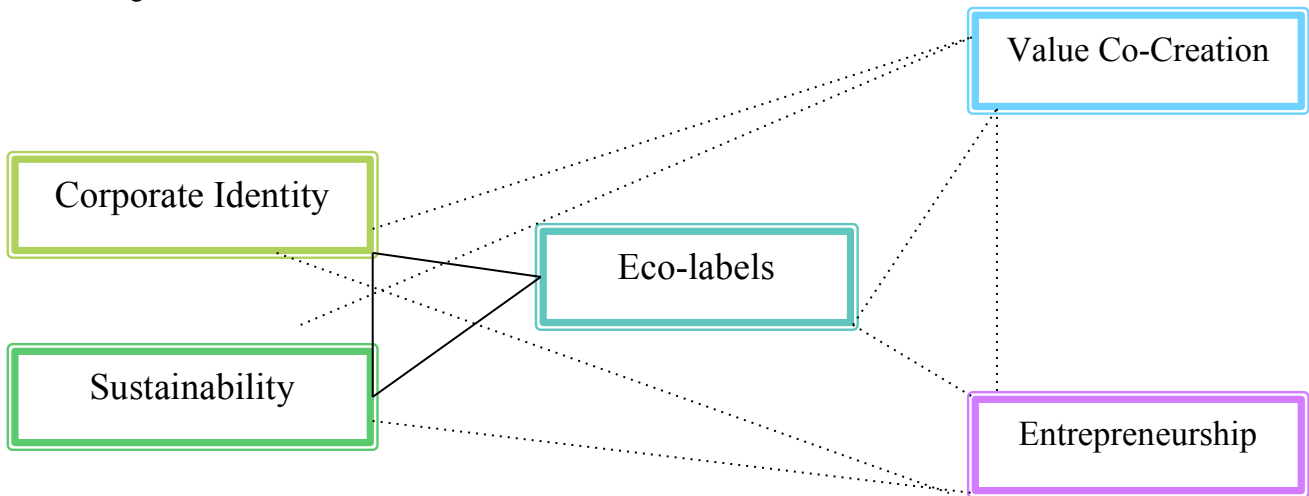


Figure 4 provides a visualisation of the literature review's structure: a coherent overview of milestones within all four areas will be provided, highlighting their relationship with one another and their importance within the contexts. Due to the original outline of this thesis and to highlight this PhD research's findings, corporate identity dominates Chapter 2.

### 2.1 Corporate identity literature



This section is split into six parts: 2.1.1 explains the concepts of a brand, a corporate brand, and corporate branding, which leads onto a detailed overview of key authors and conceptual frameworks (2.1.2). Section 2.1.3 describes three key corporate identity models in-depth. The final sections (2.1.4 to 2.1.6) examine the

relationship between corporate identity and sustainability, eco-labels, and value co-creation.

## 2.1.1 Brand, corporate brand, and corporate branding

### 2.1.1.1 Definition of a brand

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) a brand can be defined as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any feature that identifies one seller’s goods or services as distinct from those of other sellers” (AMA, 2013). Stated alternatively, a brand provides its buyers with the seller’s promise to deliver on an advertised set of features (Kotler, 2000). Thus, “technically speaking, then whenever a marketer creates a new name, logo, or symbol for a new product, [...] [they have] created a brand” (Keller, 2003: 3). In this regard, a brand is merely seen as something that allows a consumer to ‘identify’ a product/service from its competitors, and thus, it could be concluded that its sole purpose is: to create a strong brand image (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2002). However, this view has changed, as authors (Kotler, 2000; Keller, 2003) highlight that a “brand is an even more complex symbol [...] which can convey at least six levels of meaning” (Kotler, 2000: 188): attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality, and user.

Taking the AMA’s (2013) definition and bringing it into the context of this PhD research, a fashion brand would then distinguish itself from its competitors solely through the use of a company logo or graphic design (corporate design), the clothing style (visual identity), the way the company operates (corporate structure), and how the organisation is perceived by its stakeholders. Whilst this analysis provides an initial overview of a fashion brand, it leaves various questions unanswered (Kotler, 2000: 188), such as:

- 1) **What attributes are associated with the brand?** Previous research has highlighted that consumers purchase clothing to, for example, make a statement about themselves or to indicate a belonging to social groupings (Herbst & Burger, 2002; Jegethesan et al., 2012), which is not accounted for in the AMA’s (2013) definition.
- 2) **Does the brand have any benefits over another brand?** Is it long lasting, environmentally friendly, cheap and fashionable, or an *it* item (Okonkwo, 2007)?
- 3) **What is the brand’s personality?** Burberry was associated with the ‘chav culture’ (Bothwell, 2005) and ‘eco-fashion’ was seen as



unfashionable (Brown, 2011). These attributes can affect a brand, but are not looked at in the AMA's (2013) interpretation.

- 4) **Who are the brand's consumers and what is the perceived value of the brand?** This question is vital as it sets the tone for the company's marketing strategy (Aaker, 1996).

These questions and examples emphasise that the definition of a product brand, as formulated by the AMA (2013), is not enough to explain a fashion brand, which links to the next section: the definition of a corporate brand.

#### *2.1.1.2 Definition of a corporate brand and corporate branding*

The corporate brand evolved from the (product) brand and was first mentioned by Bernstein (1989) and King (1991), who use the phrase "company brand" (King, 1991: 6). In broad terms, this appellation can be defined as "a brand that spans an entire company (which can also have disparate underlying product brands)" (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004: 369). Stated alternatively, the key distinction between a 'product' and a 'corporate' brand is that the product brand seeks to attract and retain consumers by keeping true to the brand's promise, whilst a corporate brand focuses on a holistic approach by incorporating internal and external stakeholders (Balmer, 1995; Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Roper & Davies, 2007). Linked to the corporate brand is corporate branding:

[A] systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a favourable reputation of the company with its constituent elements, by sending signals to stakeholders using the corporate brand (van Riel, 2001: 12).

Overall, one can see a strong link between the three concepts: the brand (product or corporate) is the *tangible* aspect (e.g. logo, clothing, design), whilst corporate branding is the *intangible* part. Corporate branding tries to create an emotional bond between stakeholders and the organisation's product/service.

The challenge for marketers in building a strong brand is ensuring that customers have the right type of experiences with [products/services] [...] so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions, [and] opinions [...] become linked to the brand (Keller, 2003: 59).

This is where the concept of *identity* is vital, as it is on the one hand anchored in a brand's foundation (brand identity), and on the other hand it is at the heart of an organisation (corporate identity). Stated alternatively, it is unique to the specific product, organisation and/or brand, timeless, and regarded as the most valuable asset

in terms of monetary benefits and also in retaining, and gaining stakeholders. The specific identity is often referred to as the core identity (Ries & Ries, 1998). In order to gain credibility and a good reputation among internal and external stakeholders, the brand's and the organisation's identity as a whole must overlap (Belz & Peattie, 2010).

### *2.1.1.3 Reflexivity - link between corporate brand, corporate identity, and micro-organisations*

Concern was raised during this research that micro-organisations cannot be seen as corporate brands, and thus, have no corporate identity. Whilst it is true that past research in the field of corporate identity has predominantly focused on large companies (Balmer & Soenen, 1999; Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012), more recently various authors (Morsing & Perrini, 2009; von Weltzien & Shankar, 2011; Sandbacka et al., 2013) emphasised that micro-companies play a key role in the economy and thus, more investigations are necessary in this specific context.

Moreover, previous definitions of the 'corporate brand' emphasised the needs of various stakeholders involved in an organisation (Balmer, 1995). In this regard, a company seeks to create a brand experience that satisfies its stakeholders' needs (de Chernatony, 2002). In doing so, the organisation "establish[es] unique brand associations, [which] require [the] compan[y] to constantly interact with consumers" (Schwaiger & Sarsted, 2011: 180). These statements have one key commonality: neither of them explicitly states the size (e.g. number of employees, annual sales turnover) necessary to classify organisations as 'corporate brands', but rather focus on a holistic approach that involves various stakeholders in the brand.

In the context of micro-organisations it could be argued that a single person entity (SPE) may not be classified as a 'corporate brand', as it (SPE) does not employ workers, and thus does not satisfy its employees' needs, which were highlighted in de Chernatony's (2002) definition. However, entrepreneurial ventures have the potential to grow and expand rapidly in the same way as any SME or large organisation, and thus may in the future employ people and incorporate their needs in creating their company's corporate identity. Accordingly, in this research a corporate brand is defined as an organisation that utilises a holistic approach and takes its stakeholders' opinions and views into account (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). Thus, the stand

taken in this thesis is that micro-organisations can be corporate brands and possess their own corporate identity.

## **2.1.2 Brief history of corporate identity**

### *2.1.2.1 Overview of corporate identity*

Corporate identity is not a new phenomenon, but rather has received increased attention over the past decades (Balmer, 2009; Suvatjis et al., 2012). Research exploring issues surrounding corporate identity can be split into two dominant literature strands: marketing and organisational behaviour (Balmer & Wilson, 1998; Balmer, 2008). Marketing scholars utilise the term ‘corporate identity’ within their academic work and understand it as a concept that creates a competitive advantage for an organisation (Balmer & Stovig, 1997). In this sense, their main focus is on understanding ‘what corporate identity actually is’, ‘how it can be managed’, as well as understanding the purpose of its management (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). Contrary to marketing scholars, organisational behaviourists, such as Albert and Whetten (1985) and Hatch and Schultz (1997) refer to corporate identity as organisational identity. Their interest has both an external and an internal orientation by seeking to explore in how far stakeholders see themselves as part of the organisation and in more general terms, what do stakeholders identify with (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). This implies that “while there is increasing interest in the area, there is still confusion and ambiguity surrounding the nature of corporate identity” (Balmer & Wilson, 1998: 13). Although work on corporate and organisational identity complements one another (Balmer, 2008), there are key differences in terms of the foci. Stated alternatively, corporate identity research has a longer history comparatively to organisational identity, dating back to 1964 (Balmer & Greyser, 2003) and is predominantly “underpinned by a strong practical and managerial inheritance” (Balmer, 2008: 881). By contrast organisational identity is said to be embedded in richer theoretical foundations (Balmer, 2008).

Traditionally, corporate identity was synonymous with a company’s logo, sign, or graphics (Napoles, 1988; Balmer et al., 2007; Berrone et al., 2007), which links back to the definition of a product brand (e.g. AMA, 2013). In a contemporary context, corporate identity can be described as a mix of attributes that make a company distinct from its competitors, including corporate values, ethos, location,

mission, activities (Pugh, 1973; van Riel, 1995; van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007), structure, and multidisciplinary phenomena (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). Alternatively stated, corporate identity is defined “as the image the organisation [tries] to project to its target stakeholders and the way it present[s] itself to these groups” (Balmer et al., 2007: 8), which links back to the attributes mentioned in developing a corporate brand (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). Therefore, corporate identity is the leitmotiv anchored in a firm’s foundations, determining the essence of everything a company does and communicates (Balmer, 1995; Gray & Balmer, 1998; Marzilliano, 1998; Kiriakidou & Millward, 2000; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). It could create a USP (Ingenhoff & Fuhrer, 2010), by keeping the communicated promise between the firm and the key stakeholders alive (Balmer, 1998, 2008). It can be said that corporate identity not only shows an organisation’s ultimate goals communicated through the corporate marketing mix (Aaker, 1996; Cheney & Christensen, 1999), but also, once established, acts as the basis for company wide direction, communication, and image (Cheney & Christensen, 1999; Balmer, 2008). In other words, a strong corporate identity needs a coherent and strong mission statement and philosophy (Balmer, 1998; Roper & Fill, 2012), which is simultaneously communicated within the firm and incorporated in the organisation’s culture (Roper & Fill, 2012).

Corporate identity highlights the common goal among managers and employees (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). In essence, a company needs to create an emotional bond with its stakeholders (Hallawell, 1999). In an ideal scenario, this emotional bond results in a strong identity that has the power to attract and retain highly skilled and valuable employees (Ind, 1997; Hart & Murphy, 1998; de Chernatony, 2002; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Leitch & Motion, 2007), whilst providing reassurance to its customers (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Melewar & Walker, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012). However, if the organisation’s corporate identity is perceived to be unfavourable, it may result in high employee turnover, low customer retention, and a lack of consumer loyalty (Balmer, 1995; Balmer & Dinnie, 1999). This implies that corporate identity focuses on how managers understand and interpret their company’s identity (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2008). A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that corporate identity, as a construct, is rather subjective and open to an individual’s interpretation (Da Silveira et al., 2013). However, it can be argued that an

organisation's corporate identity is predominantly influenced by internal factors and thus external stakeholders provide only "one input to be considered" (Aaker, 1996: 69).

In summary, corporate identity reflects what the organisation is. It transmits an image to its target audience, which, in an ideal scenario, leads to consumer buy-in. Linking this back to this PhD research, the fashion industry in general terms is highly competitive, thus possessing a strong corporate identity could provide a micro-organisation with a USP and may be a determining factor of survival in this environment (Urde, 1994). In this regard, the following section provides an overview of milestones in the corporate identity literature, focusing on how various authors have dealt with incorporating a multi-faceted/holistic approach to corporate identity, before moving on to discussing the three dominant corporate identity frameworks in-depth (Melewar, 2003; Balmer, 2012; Suvatjis et al., 2012). These models provide a point of reference for this PhD research, in that they are utilised to reflect upon the findings.

#### *2.1.2.2 Development and milestones in the corporate identity literature*

Before elaborating on the developments and milestones of corporate identity it is vital to provide a brief overview of various schools of thought that underpin the various views held by academics and practitioners researching in the field of corporate identity. Balmer (1995), Balmer and Wilson (1998), and Balmer (2008) provide various differing schools of thought, which emphasise on the key aspects of the individual corporate identity frameworks and group these according to their distinct shared features.

Balmer (1995) identifies four main foci that describe seven schools of thought:

- 1) Strategic focus: highlights the importance of the mission statement and the company's philosophy (strategic school) and the incorporation of visual cues (strategic visual school);
- 2) Cultural focus: emphasises on creating a company culture (behavioural school) and expressing it through the use of semiotics (visual behavioural school of thought);
- 3) Communication focus: indicates that the strategic focus needs to be communicated (corporate communication school), ideally through visuals (strategic communication school);
- 4) Fashionability focus: insists that visual cues need to be timely and up to date (design-as-fashion-school).

These perspectives, whilst instructive, only focus on a fraction of elements that are associated with corporate identity, namely: philosophy, mission, visual identity and

communication. Balmer (2008) takes a slightly more general turn by dividing the literature in terms of: the identification from a corporation, which focuses on the visual cues a company transmits to stakeholders; the stakeholder/s identification with the corporation, which as the name indicates, looks at the relations between the company and its stakeholders; the stakeholder/s identification to a corporate culture; and the envisioned identities and identifications, which focuses on perceptions held of and about the company (Balmer, 2008). This divide can be linked to Balmer and Soenen's (1999) ACID test, which will be further elaborated on in section 2.1.3.1.

As stated in the overview section on corporate identity (2.1.2.1), there are two dominant literatures that have focused on corporate identity research: marketing and organisational behaviour. Balmer and Wilson (1998) provide an insightful classification of various schools of thought based on these two literatures, which is utilised in this PhD research. The reasons for incorporating these schools of thought are firstly, they provide a general overview of how various authors can be grouped together according to their findings. Secondly, due to differentiating between marketing and organisational behaviour literature, developments in the frameworks can be readily explained and identified.

Within the marketing literature van Riel and Balmer (1997) build upon Balmer's (1995) seven schools of thought and distinguish between three schools of thought: the graphic design, the integrated-communications, and the interdisciplinary and 'cultural' perspective. The graphic design perspective sees the visual identity creation as vital (Balmer & Wilson, 1998) and defines corporate identity in terms of "the symbols an organisation uses to identify itself to people" (Dowling, 1994:8). Stated alternatively, it focuses predominantly on work that described corporate identity in terms of logos and other visual cues (e.g. Birkight & Stadler, 1986; Olins, 1995). The integrated-communications perspective builds upon the graphic design perspective in that it recognises that a visual identity is important. However, representatives of this school of thought also insist that an organisation's visual cues must be communicated in a coherent manner to their target audience (Bernstein, 1984; van Riel, 1995). Lastly, the interdisciplinary and 'cultural' perspective, incorporates a more contemporary approach to corporate identity, in that authors, such as Balmer (1995) and Hatch and Schultz (1997) emphasise on a multidisciplinary focus, by incorporating the employees perspective as a vital component.

The organisational behaviour literature on the other hand developed the integrated, the differentiated, and the fragmented perspective (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). A commonality between these schools of thought is that fact that they all see corporate culture as a key component in the creation of a ‘corporate’ identity (Scott, 1987), as a favourable culture enhances the likelihood of attracting and retaining skilled employees (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Leitch & Motion, 2007). Within the integrated perspective authors (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein 2010) emphasise on the “collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2009). In this sense, organisational members show a great loyalty to the company itself and are committed to it (Balmer & Wilson, 1998; Schein, 2010). By contrast, the differentiation perspective insists that consensus may not always be reached across the whole of the company, and thus, should focus on sub-cultures, as found in different departments (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). Lastly, scholars of the fragmented perspective believe that consensus is reached through continuous discussions, whereby organisational paths can be changed, depending on events and changes in the company’s (industry) environment (Balmer & Wilson, 1998).

The following sections provide an overview of developments and milestones with the corporate identity literature and will relate these back to the differing schools of thought previously highlighted. It has to be highlighted that due to the overall PhD research’s setting, in the marketing division of the management school, the following overview of corporate identity presented is predominantly based on marketing literature, with references made to work in organisational behaviour.

#### 2.1.2.2.1 Corporate image and corporate identity

The early stages of corporate identity research focused predominantly on the corporate image management process, which sees corporate identity either as a by-product or interchangeable with the corporate image. These developments are strongly linked to the graphic design and the integrated-communications school of thought, which, as previously indicated, predominantly focus on visual cues and their coherent communication (Balmer & Wilson, 1998).

Kennedy (1977) is one of the first authors who indirectly mention what is now known as the *corporate identity mix*: a combination of behaviour, symbolism, and

communication (van Riel, 1995). Kennedy's (1977) work is based on a qualitative research methodology utilising a multiple case study approach, followed by a questionnaire, which is similar to this research project (Chapter 3). Kennedy (1977) believes that a firm's image can be manipulated and therefore manufactured by individuals:

[In] acknowledging that employees are an active source of information, steps are needed to ensure that the information, and hence the image they transmit, is compatible with the way in which top management wish the company to be seen (p. 121).

Whilst this view is valid, as an organisation can seek to create a favourable image through communicating messages that attract consumers to try a company's product/service (Hatch & Schultz, 1997), these messages are not the sole source of information available to stakeholders. In a technology-savvy era (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Marandi et al., 2010), stakeholders can gain mass information through the internet and thus, are able to form a "holistic and vivid impression [...] towards an organisation" (Hatch & Schultz, 1997: 359). Whilst a company can try and manipulate its image, its stakeholders have the ability to research whether or not this image is portrayed 'correctly' according to their own perceptions. In turn, if a firm's projected image and the consumers' perceived image do not overlap thoroughly, this may be unfavourable for the organisation (Hsieh & Li, 2008). Moreover, it is questionable whether a company's image can be manipulated easily, as it is a projection of the organisation's corporate identity, which, in modern corporate identity constructs, takes various internal and external factors into account (Suvatjis et al., 2012).

In conclusion, Kennedy's (1977) model focuses strongly on communication as a strategic tool. The author believes that communication is key in creating a corporate image that projects a firm's policies to its stakeholders (Kennedy, 1977). Dowling (1986) builds upon Kennedy's (1977) model by incorporating communication as a separate key component in the creation of a corporate image.

Similarly to previous work, Bernstein (1984) also employs qualitative research tools: focus groups. Through this approach, he investigates the notion of corporate identity further, and finds that "each company has a corporate identity even though it may never have [...] heard of the term" (p. 157). Moreover, he emphasises that this identity needs to be communicated coherently to its target audience and thus substantiates previous studies that found communication to be vital in the process of



creating a coherent corporate identity. Moreover, Bernstein (1984) defines corporate identity through its “planned assembly of visual cues by which the audience recognizes the company and discriminate one company from another” (p. 63). In other words, these visual signifiers and the firm’s philosophy need to align in order for a desirable company image to be portrayed to the target audience.

In summary, each of these models sees communication as a key component in establishing a corporate image. Furthermore, the authors (Kennedy, 1977; Bernstein, 1984; Dowling, 1986) use the terms *corporate image* and *corporate identity* interchangeably. In the same vein, they believe that an organisation only projects *one* image to all its stakeholders, rather than *multiple* images, which vary according to each audience.

The late 1980s set the first stepping stone for the current understanding of corporate identity and its manifold frameworks, which is based on the interdisciplinary and ‘cultural’ school of thought (Balmer & Wilson, 1998). Abratt (1989) builds upon Bernstein’s (1984) work introducing philosophy as a new aspect to be considered in the corporate image management process. The organisation is represented as a corporate personality, which expresses itself through the use of corporate identity, generating an image interface to its stakeholders. For the first time within the literature, the author distinguishes between *corporate identity* and *corporate image* (Abratt, 1989). Abratt (1989) acknowledges that the two terms have different meanings and thus should be defined as separate aspects. He sees corporate identity as the *communicator* – the tool that enables the company to project their personality to the target audience - whilst the corporate image is the *outcome* in the process.

Stuart (1994, 1998) revised Abratt’s (1989) corporate image management process model twice, utilising a quantitative approach, thereby distributing surveys to large accountancy companies. Her model still sees corporate identity as a communication tool transmitting the organisation’s strategy to the target audience. Although similar in nature, three advancements were made to Abratt’s (1989) framework. Firstly, Stuart (1998) moved corporate culture from the corporate personality umbrella and made it part of the *corporate identity mix* (van Riel, 1995). Secondly, corporate symbols, representing the visual components of the firm, were added as a further element within the corporate identity component structure. Lastly, Stuart (1998) links her construct back to Bernstein (1984) highlighting that stakeholders form a firm’s corporate image through their perceptions and feelings.

Thus, the author incorporates the “employees’ view of corporate identity” (Stuart, 1998: 369) in her model, making them a key part in the communication process of corporate identity to the target audience.

A noteworthy observation is that the authors (Abratt, 1989; Stuart, 1994, 1998) still see corporate identity as part of the corporate image management process and not as a separate entity.

#### 2.1.2.2.2 The move away from the corporate image management process

The early 1990s see a move away from the corporate image management process and define corporate identity as an action plan that provides the answer to four questions (Olins, 1995: 3):

- Who are you (as an organisation)?;
- What do you do (as a firm)?;
- How you do it (in terms of strategy)?; And
- Where do you want to go?

In other words, corporate identity is no longer seen as a simple communication mechanism transmitting an image to a target audience, but rather as a USP, which

[W]hen [...] used with its maximum impact [...] has an influence on all parts of the organisation: design, marketing, selling, purchasing, recruitment, finance (Olins, 1995: 15).

This implies that corporate identity is seen as a multi-faceted approach that incorporates multiple aspects of an organisation including, but not limited to, its history and founding member personalities, its strategy, and its organisational structure. A further vital amendment is that fact that authors (Abratt, 1989; Olins, 1995) continuously focus on the importance of the organisation’s personality as a vital component of the overall corporate identity process.

To reiterate this further, van Riel’s (1995) work ties into Olins’ (1995) idea, interpreting corporate identity as strategy and USP rather than a communication vehicle. His work is strongly influenced by Birkigt and Stadler (1986), creators of the corporate identity/corporate image model. The framework highlights four key components making up an organisation’s corporate identity, whereby behaviour, symbolism, and communication represent the firm’s personality. The company’s personality provides the answer to ‘who you are’ and ‘what you do’ (Olins, 1995). Birkigt and Stadler (1986) highlight that the corporate image is a fraction of the organisation’s identity portrayed to the target audience, and thus needs to be carefully

nurtured (van Riel, 1995). Van Riel (1995) emphasised the importance of a coherent corporate identity in establishing a desired corporate image stating: “a company that has a strong, convincing corporate identity can achieve much more with its various target groups” (p. 29). Thus, there is a clear relationship between corporate identity and a corporate image, which needs to be addressed carefully in order to avoid challenges that could have a negative impact on the company itself.

Markwick and Fill (1997) build upon the work of various authors (Kennedy, 1977; Bernstein, 1984; Abratt, 1989; Olins 1990). Their key contribution to the literature is discovering the link between three components of corporate identity: corporate image, reputation, and personality. The authors make a distinction between these key terms, with reputation being “a reflection of the historical, accumulated impacts of previously observed identity cues and possible transactional experiences [and] consequently [...] more durable than images” (Markwick & Fill, 1997: 398). Similar to Stuart (1998), Markwick and Fill (1997) also employed a quantitative survey, which targeted three stakeholder groups within one organisation. One can see a strong similarity between Markwick and Fill’s (1997) Corporate Identity Management Process Model and Stuart’s (1998) Corporate Image Management Process Model. Both frameworks emphasise the importance of corporate strategy/strategic management within the process of managing corporate identity and/or the corporate image.

Van Rekom (1997) recognises that the literature available in the 1990s lacked a distinct definition of the basic components that make up a company’s corporate identity, and investigates three criteria (Albert & Whetten, 1985), corporate identity as:

1. The organisation’s core;
2. A differentiator of one firm from another;
3. Being the same over a time. (This derives from the idea that *identity* stems from the Latin word *idem*, which means *the same* (de Vries, 2010).)

Van Rekom (1997) used a mixed methods approach combining a quantitative means-end measurement with qualitative open-ended interviews. In accordance with Markwick and Fill (1997) and Stuart (1998), he concludes: management concerned with an organisation’s image need to be aware of the company’s corporate identity, which takes a central role.

Westcott Alessandri (2001) builds upon Van Rekom's (1997) work, providing an extensive literature review, looking at both scholars and practitioners in the field, concluding that both groups agree on one aspect: "corporate identity is very closely related to how a firm presents itself to the public" (Westcott Alessandri, 2001: 174). Her framework provides an overview of how corporate identity is constructed within an organisation and its effect on the company's image and reputation.

Topalian (2003) takes the idea of corporate identity being a USP (Olins, 1995) further, emphasising that an organisation does not only have a corporate identity (Bernstein, 1984), but in order to be *successful* needs to "live" it (Topalian, 2003: 1121). Stated alternatively, a corporate identity is not a static asset, but rather changes over time, thereby adapting to the transforming environment. Moreover, a company's corporate identity:

[H]as to be meaningful to employees (not just leaders) and others [...] [involved] with the organisation. Employees understand and adopt the identity in such ways as to bring it to life for themselves and those they serve (Topalian, 2003: 1121).

The notion of employees playing an essential part within the corporate identity process links back to Stuart's (1998) model, highlighting that corporate identity is a multi-faceted construct that takes various stakeholder perspectives into account.

#### 2.1.2.2.3 Summary and key developments thus far

Before Abratt (1986) corporate identity and corporate image had the same meaning. Abratt (1986) distinctively defined the terms, which led to developing corporate identity models independently of the corporate image management process. Whilst the overview highlighted that the various frameworks are similar in nature, each individual one focuses on slightly different aspects within the corporate identity process. This indicates that corporate identity, thus far into Chapter 2, does not have a commonly agreed-upon definition.

Moreover, previous research focused mainly on large organisations and utilised a variety of methodological tools: predominantly either quantitative or qualitative with only a few authors using a mixed methodology. Thus far, it can be said that corporate identity is described as a multi-faceted approach, incorporating various aspects of an organisation with the purpose of producing a desirable corporate image. Most authors seem to agree on the following elements to be part of a company's corporate identity:

communication, corporate culture, philosophy, strategy, behaviour, and symbolism (Appendix 1).

### 2.1.3 Key corporate identity frameworks

The late 1990s and early 2000s have brought forward three main corporate identity constructs: Balmer and Soenen's (1999) ACID test, Melewar's (2003) Corporate Identity Taxonomy, and Suvatjis et al.'s (2012) Six-Station Model. Due to their importance within the field of corporate identity, this PhD research elaborates on these constructs in-depth. Links between corporate identity, sustainability, value co-creation, and eco-labels are drawn and explored.

#### 2.1.3.1 *The AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test*

The AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test is divided into seven 'identities': **A**ctual, **D**esired, **C**<sup>1</sup>ommunicated, **I**deal (Balmer & Soenen, 1999), **C**<sup>2</sup>onceived (Balmer & Greyser, 2002), **C**<sup>3</sup>ovenanted (Balmer & Stuart, 2004), and **C**<sup>4</sup>ultural identity (Balmer, 2012). The model was created by taking on a qualitative methodology, utilising in-depth interviews, desk research, and content analysis within one case organisation, followed by interviews with 25 UK consultancy agencies (Balmer & Soenen, 1999).

The framework differs from previous corporate identity models in that it encourages to think about various 'identities' that can be held within and about an organisation:

1. The **a**ctual identity represents "what the organisation is" (Balmer & Soenen 1999: 82) and incorporates various components: leadership/management style, the structure of the organisation, the industry the company is operating in, its products and their quality, and the "set of values held by management and employees" (Balmer & Greyser, 2002: 73).
2. The **c**<sup>1</sup>ommunicated identity looks at the communication strategy, or what the company says it stands for (Kleyn et al., 2012). The **c**<sup>1</sup>ommunicated identity distinguishes between controllable and non-controllable communication.
3. The **i**deal identity represents "what we ought to be" (Kleyn et al., 2012: 63). It is the result of a company's strategic planning process, highlighting where the organisation should be positioned in a given period of time based on the competitive and business environment the company is operating in (Balmer & Greyser, 2002).
4. The **d**esired identity is "the identity which the chief executive and management board wish to acquire" (Balmer & Soenen, 1999: 82). In this thesis, it is based on the O/M's vision of and for the micro-company and

might therefore be influenced by personality attributes and the ego of the creator (Balmer & Greyser, 2002).

5. The  $c^2$ onceived identity links back to Stuart's (1998) corporate identity construct. It represents the way a company is perceived by its stakeholders and looks at an organisation's image, reputation, and corporate branding efforts (Balmer & Greyser, 2002). It depends largely on an organisation's communication tools, as this plays an influential role on how the company is perceived by others (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).
6. The  $c^3$ ovenanted identity "refers to the covenant (promise) that relates to the corporate brand" (Balmer & Stuart, 2004: 5). Once a brand is established it has a meaning of its own, it represents a certain message to its stakeholders that is seen as a unique sixth identity, which surrounds all other identities (Balmer & Stuart, 2004).
7. The  $c^4$ ultural identity is strongly linked to a company's culture and takes into account "the collective feeling of employees in relation to the corporate brand" (Balmer, 2012: 1079).

Although Balmer's (2012) model is one of the key contemporary frameworks of corporate identity, providing a complex approach to investigating corporate identity (Cornelissen et al., 2012), it has been criticised heavily. Cornelissen et al. (2012) argue that the AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test is an umbrella construct that "evolves into a background theoretical perspective [...] as opposed to still being an operational theoretical formulation" (p. 1096). Stated alternatively, the model is seen as oversimplifying a phenomenon and not paying enough attention to detail in terms of contributing to organisational theory (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). Furthermore, it has been claimed that the AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test incorporates too many dimensions that cannot be clearly separated and understood, as the attributes are "both factual and counter-factual reasoning and retrospective and prospective sense making" (Cornelissen et al., 2012: 1096). Moreover, the 'identities' strongly overlap and could be described as a "proliferation of different terms and labels for a similar phenomenon – a problem that is often colloquially described as putting 'old wine in new bottles'" (Suddaby, 2010: 352).

#### *2.1.3.2 The Corporate Identity Taxonomy*

Melewar's (2003) Corporate Identity Taxonomy provides a comprehensive corporate identity model, established through an extensive literature review. The author looks at various academic disciplines, including, but not limited to, marketing, psychology,

and organisational behaviour, which allows for a multidisciplinary perspective (Melewar, 2003).

The Corporate Identity Taxonomy shows great similarities with previously established frameworks by incorporating key components: communication, behaviour, symbolism, strategy, and corporate culture. It differs in that philosophy is seen as an aspect of corporate culture, moreover it includes two further components: structure and industry identity (Melewar, 2003). In comparison to the AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test (Balmer, 2012) the model “specified all the salient elements of corporate identity” (Melewar, 2003: 208) and provides in-depth definitions of these components. Similar to the AC<sup>(4)</sup>ID test, Melewar (2003) splits corporate identity into seven components:

1. **Corporate culture** links to the c<sup>4</sup>ultural identity (Balmer, 2012) and is “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982: 252). It is a highly complex phenomenon (Roper & Fill, 2012) that incorporates “beliefs, values and norms [...] [which represent] the unique character of an organisation, and provides the context for action in it and by it” (Morgan, 1997: 41).
2. **Behaviour** deals with the way the organisation and people act in a specific environment/situation (Melewar, 2003). In this thesis, behaviour plays a vital role: Due to potential financial constraints it is unlikely that micro-companies are able to employ specialists, and therefore they often look for workers who possess a broad set of skills (Simpson, 2001). This implies that employees, ideally, must be flexible, for example working in multiple and different areas of the organisation (Dutta & Evrard, 1999; Florén, 2003). This process may be influenced and encouraged by management behaviour (Kelliher & Reinl, 2009).
3. **Corporate Strategy** incorporates a company’s objectives and determines which audience is targeted, what product/service is manufactured, and which market is entered (Gray & Balmer, 1998). It “affects what the company produces, how much profit it makes on them and how those products affect the customers’ feelings about the company” (Melewar, 2003: 207). The Corporate Identity Taxonomy comprises corporate strategy into differentiation and positioning strategies (Melewar, 2003).
4. **Corporate Structure** is defined as a grouping of departments and people employed in various positions that are working together to fulfil an organisation’s goals and objectives (Friend, 2012). In micro-companies these ‘department networks’ may not be fully developed, but rather consist of a group of people, who each focus on different tasks (May, 1997; Cardon, 2003). The O/M plays a key role, as their personal values are directly incorporated within the brand’s foundations, which influences the corporate culture and the decision-making process. In other words, corporate structure considers the way an organisation is managed (Melewar, 2003).
5. **Corporate Design** looks at an organisation’s visual identity, which consists of a brand’s name, logo, and other texts that allow its customers to identify the brand and its products more easily (Balmer & Balmer, 1997). In a highly

competitive market it is important to be distinct and have a coherent visual identity in order to retain and attract stakeholders (Melewar, 2003).

6. **Corporate Communication** links to the communicated identity (Balmer, 2012) and is defined as the interaction between, and the understanding of, individuals by sharing knowledge, information, and meaning (Leydesdorff, 2001). Communication can be broadly divided into three areas: marketing, organisational, and management communication (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). All three categories share a common goal: “to engage stakeholders [...] that they develop an overall positive disposition towards the organisation” (Roper & Fill, 2012: 219).
7. **Industry Identity** looks at the economic environment of an organisation (Olins, 1995). “The identity of the industry in which the company operates influences the extent to which the company can have and project its individual” corporate identity (Melewar, 2003: 207).

In summary, the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003) follows in the footsteps of various corporate identity models (e.g. Olins, 1995; van Riel, 1995) emphasising that corporate personality is at the core of corporate identity, and thus driven by an organisation’s culture, its values, and principles (Melewar, 2003). Whilst the Corporate Identity Taxonomy overall provides an extensive review of existing literature (Melewar, 2003), there are various aspects that can be criticised: Firstly, the model focuses on large organisations, rather than SMEs, which is not only a precondition of the initial data analysed (Melewar, 2003), but also the ‘practical verification’ was conducted in large organisations (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006). And secondly, the model does not incorporate the aspect of the company’s corporate image nor does it acknowledge a strong influence of external stakeholders on the firm’s corporate identity. The only external factor mentioned is the industry identity, as “the most salient external factor mentioned by the interviewees” (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006: 865). Although the Corporate Identity Taxonomy provides an initial point of conduct, the framework is limited in its dimensions: whilst it emphasises a multidisciplinary perspective by incorporating various academic fields, it does not extend this lens to a holistic approach, incorporating, or acknowledging the role of external influencers on corporate identity.

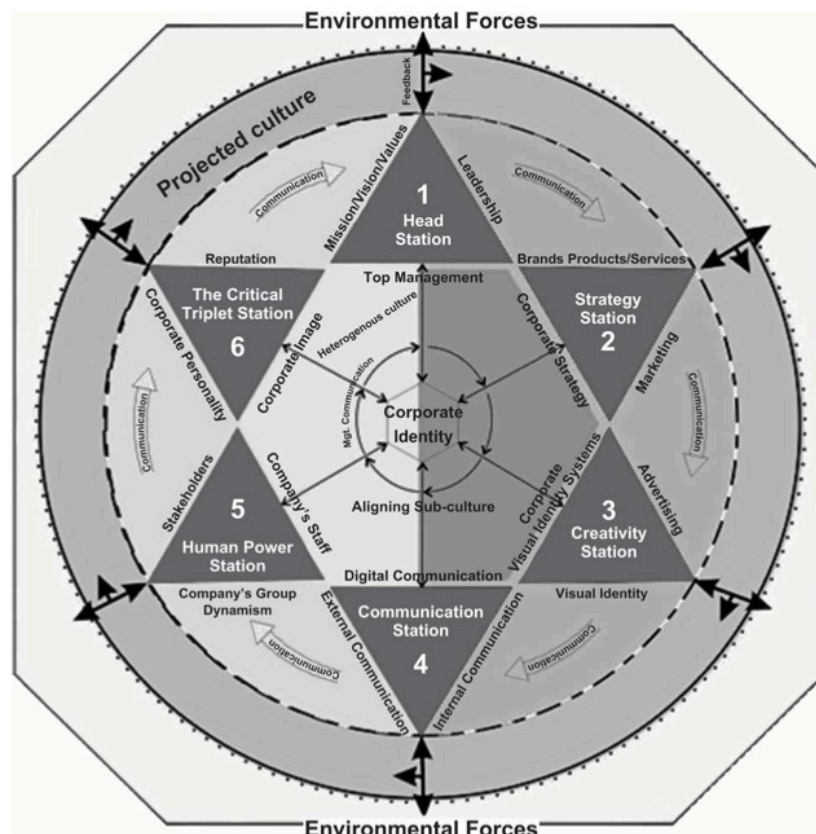
### *2.1.3.3 The Six-Station Model*

The Six-Station Model (Suvatjjs et al., 2012) (Figure 5) is the newest model established in the field of corporate identity and is a meta-framework. Similarly to this PhD research, the authors made use of a mixed methods approach. Contrary to



the Six-Station Model this research investigates micro-organisations. A key alteration in the Six-Station model, compared to previous research is the incorporation of ‘external stakeholders’ into their framework, which allows for a holistic approach to corporate identity.

Figure 5: The Six-Station Model (Suvatjis et al., 2012)



Moreover, the framework acknowledges two key aspects (Suvatjis et al., 2012):

- It is open to ‘multiple images’, which are projected to different stakeholders.
- The authors believe that corporate identity is rather individualistic and company specific, thus, corporate identity cannot necessarily be standardised.

Conversely to their predecessors Suvatjis et al. (2012) focus strongly on marketing and branding aspects of a business, whilst also incorporating new technologies under the heading of digital communication. Moreover, the framework sees an organisation’s output (products/services) as an influencer of the company’s corporate identity. Lastly, each of the individual components is not only influenced by one another, but also by the external environment.

In summary, the model provides vital points of reference, which may be valid for micro-organisations. In acknowledging the important role of the external environment this framework also caters for the context of the green slow-fashion industry, which distinguishes itself through a high competitiveness and the continuous fight of organisations to survive.

#### 2.1.3.3.1 The Six-Station Model – components

##### Head station

The *head station* is divided into three sections: top management, leadership, and mission/vision/values (Suvatjjs et al., 2012). The term top management refers to the person(s) involved in the main responsibilities of a firm, including the decision-making process of the enterprise's activities. Top management strives to achieve success by accomplishing its set goals and targets through implementing strategies and formulating a commonly shared vision amongst its stakeholders (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Pasmore, 2011). In this research top management as well as the decision-making process fall to the O/M, who, as the sole risk-taker, chooses whether or not to involve their staff in the decision-making process. This is described as (management) behaviour in Melewar's (2003) model, but is not explicitly mentioned in the Six-Station construct. The way an O/M is running a business can take on various management styles, which often relates to the O/M's personal attributes.

A leader is defined as a person “who selects, [...] trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse [...] abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organisation's mission and objectives” (Winston & Patterson, 2006: 7). Accordingly, a manager with good leadership qualities is characterised as being able to communicate with their staff, provide support and guidance on business related issues, and manage time efficiently (Davis et al., 1996). In this research the leadership style, top management, and the firm's mission/vision/values are strongly focused around the O/M's personal characteristics and attitudes. Generally, the company's mission/vision/values reflect ‘what the organisation stands for’ and thus, link to the actual identity (Balmer & Soenen, 1999). Most micro-organisations start off as an entrepreneurial venture, and therefore have the O/M's personal values and vision at its core.

##### Strategy station

The *strategy station* consists of a brand's product/service, the corporate and marketing strategy. In this research the brand's product/service relates to clothing and accessories. Firms operating within the green slow-fashion industry produce biannual collections, which contrast with the high street's more frequent turnaround (BSR, 2012).

Corporate strategy "refers basically to a firm's relationship with its environment, its main objectives, and its means of accomplishing them" (Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 1988: 10). Put differently, corporate strategy sets objectives and goals, which need to be achieved over a set time period, taking the external and internal environment into account (Grant, 1995).

Marketing is defined as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for [...] [stakeholders] and society" (AMA, 2014). That is, a company's marketing efforts aim not only to sell and promote a firm's products/services, but also to create a long-term oriented sustainable competitive advantage (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007).

In order to be successful, it is vital for an organisation to target a specific audience/market, and cater for their needs and tastes (Aaker, 1996). Due to the two contexts of this PhD research, this section will predominantly focus on the aspect of *price* within the strategy station. Chapter 1 showed that the fashion industry is a highly competitive market and has a price sensitive consumer base (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008; Vogler-Ludwig & Valente, 2009). Moreover, micro-organisations only have a limited budget available to produce, market, and distribute their fashion garments (EC, 2013a), thus the price of an item is vital in establishing a financially viable business model.

The pricing process plays a crucial role within the fashion industry. It is a key component of the overall business strategy that is complex in nature. The price of a product is not chosen at random, but is made-up of various factors that arise both before and after a garment is purchased (Hüser, 1996). Although various authors (Mattoo & Singh, 1994; Meyer, 2001; D'Souza, 2004; Hanas, 2007) stress the importance of price within the purchasing decision, a consumer does not solely consider the price-tag (Monroe, 1990; Gale, 1994; Azevedo et al., 2009); rather, they take *value* into account (Eckman et al., 1990). A product/service's value can be described in terms of weighing the benefits received and sacrifices made when

purchasing a service/good (Leszinski & Marn, 1997). If benefits exceed the displayed price consumers are willing to pay a premium (O’Cass & Choy, 2008). However, if consumers feel they are sacrificing too much monetarily, ecological/green concerns are a secondary consideration, and given less importance than price (Yan et al., 2012; Fottrell, 2013).

Price is a major determinant in the green slow-fashion industry. Although a demand for environmentally friendly clothing exists (Laroche et al., 2001; King, 2012; Borromeo, 2013a), there are still various barriers to be overcome in order to make the ‘fashion trend’ more successful. Examples of these barriers are: higher production cost due to advanced technology used, less variety and choice compared to high street fashion, and complex information about environmentally friendly measures that is not easily understandable (Coddington, 1993; Peattie, 1995; Fraser, 2009). There are two contrary views argued within this context: Firstly, Yan et al. (2012) mention that customers care more about how much they spend on clothing rather than giving weight to the environmental benefits. To reiterate this point, past research has shown that although there are segments of the population interested in environmentally friendly clothing, they may be hindered from actually purchasing such goods, as customers generally speaking are price sensitive and therefore unable to justify spending the money (Eckman et al., 1990; Meyer, 2001; D’Souza, 2004; Hanas, 2007). Secondly, a statement made by Mudpie – a major influential fashion trend-setting agency in the UK and worldwide – argues the contrary opinion, highlighting that customers are looking for investment purchases (MPDClick, 2013), which is associated with “sustainable fashion or sustainable practices, where obviously the brand has to be completely open now” (Expert Interview). This aspect is further investigated in Chapter 4.

#### *Creativity station*

The *creativity station* looks at an organisation’s advertising strategy, its corporate visual identity system, and its visual identity. Gupta and Rathore (2012) define advertising as a communication tool that informs a company’s consumers about current offers available to them. Advertising itself has a strong link with marketing in terms of bringing value to the customer (Darroch et al., 2004), by highlighting product/service benefits. Furthermore, it is interwoven with communication strategies,

whereby meaning is shared between the organisation and stakeholders (Dibb & Simkin, 1991).

The corporate visual identity system incorporates all aspects utilised for a company's visual identity. It looks at the organisation's logo, including its typeface, colour scheme, and tag-line (Melewar & Saunders, 2000). Thus, the corporate visual identity system is implemented to ensure that a coherent visual identity is broadcasted to the company's various audiences (Henrion & Parker, 1967).

The visual identity and the corporate visual identity system are strongly interconnected. A company's visual identity consists of the elements described in corporate visual identity system with the purpose of making it easier for a firm's consumers to identify their brand/products from the services offered by their competitors (Balmer & Balmer, 1997). The overall visual identity needs to be communicated in a coherent manner in order to retain existing, and attract new stakeholders (Melewar & Saunders, 2000; Melewar, 2003).

#### Communication station

The *communication station* focuses on external, internal, and digital communication and links to the communicated identity (Blamer, 2012) and corporate communication (Melewar, 2003). Suvatjis et al.'s (2012) key advancement is the inclusion of digital communication.

External communication (marketing and organisational) sends messages to stakeholders outside the organisation. Marketing communication is mainly concerned with external stakeholders, through promoting and marketing an organisation's products/services to its customers (Fill, 2009). Conversely, organisational communication deals with public relations, including CSR, media and investor relations, as well as environmental communications (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

Internal (management) communication focuses on the internal environment (van den Bosch et al., 2004), and is the type of communication that is pertinent to this research. Management communication depends upon managerial staff being able to influence internal stakeholders to act according to the company's set objectives (Roper & Fill, 2012). Therefore, it can be said that communication efforts are undertaken in order to promote engagement and motivation internally and sustainable solutions externally, which links back to marketing communications (Belz & Peattie, 2010; Stuart, 2011).

Digital communication is “easy, [...] convenient and [...] incredibly powerful; not because of technology, but because of how that technology nurtures the connection between people” (Ryan & Jones, 2012: 153). By incorporating the internet into daily life, the method of utilising technologies has changed for consumers and businesses alike (Ryan & Jones, 2012). SNS have become a buzzword, which can broadly be understood as any online forums that allow different audiences to communicate with one another, share knowledge, and ‘socially’ interact (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

In summary, communication strategies are vital for an organisation as they (Roper & Fill, 2012: 244):

1. Provide stability and continuity;
2. Create a strong corporate culture that [...] [can] enhance performance;
3. Enable the development of a strong reputation, which [...] helps attract highly skilled staff and managers, [...] suppliers and other resources.

It can be said that communication is a powerful tool (Hon & Grunig, 1999), as it sets an organisation’s direction by informing stakeholders about the firm’s values and beliefs expressed through corporate identity (Roper & Fill, 2012). This implies that the company tries to influence the stakeholders’ perceived brand image (Belz & Peattie, 2010; Roper & Fill, 2012), while at the same time creating and maintaining a favourable brand reputation (Argenti, 1998; Cornelissen, 2008).

#### Human power station

The *human power station* is divided into: company’s staff, company’s group dynamic, and stakeholders. The company’s group dynamic links back to the components of corporate culture (Melewar, 2003) and c<sup>4</sup>ultural identity (Balmer, 2012). This specific strand not only investigates the atmosphere between employees, but also between the O/M and employees and the internal and external stakeholders. This leads to the last advancement made in the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012), the incorporation of external stakeholders. Thus, the Six-Station model not only focuses on a multiple-perspective approach, reviewing literature from various academic fields, but also establishes a holistic approach by incorporating internal and external factors into the framework (Suvatjis et al., 2012).

#### The critical triplet station

The *critical triplet station* looks at reputation, corporate image, and corporate personality, which links to Markwick and Fill's (1997) model. Moreover, 'reputation' can be connected to the *conceived identity* (Balmer & Soenen, 1999), which plays a key role in influencing how an organisation portrays itself to its target audience (Balmer & Greyser, 2002; Kleyn et al., 2012).

A brand's reputation and its corporate image are strongly interlinked. A company's image can be dramatically enhanced through its employees. King (2003) mentioned that staff could act as brand builders, thereby communicating a brand's image to consumers and other stakeholders (Miles & Mangold, 2005). This links to Melewar's (2003) corporate culture, highlighting that employees, in an ideal case, act as brand ambassadors and 'live' the brand, whilst in a worst-case scenario, portray an unfavourable image of the organisation (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Roper & Fill, 2012).

A corporate personality "plays an important role in generating consumer engagement with the brand" (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012: 11). Stated alternatively, a brand/company is given attributes that normally describe a person (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). As demonstrated, the component of 'corporate personality' has formed a vital part of the corporate identity framework.

#### 2.1.3.3.2 Critique of the Six-Station Model

Firstly, the model focuses on large organisations, thereby contributing to a context that has already been studied in-depth (Suvatjis et al., 2012). Whilst the framework provides some new insights into the creation of a company's corporate identity, it thus far has not been validated for its reliability and applicability in other contexts. Secondly, a question that can be raised is whether marketing and advertising should be in two separate stations, or if they should be combined. Lastly, the arrows surrounding the Six-Stations model point only in a clockwise direction from one station to another, which leaves room for investigations.

In conclusion of the corporate identity section various remarks can be made: Firstly, corporate identity does not have a common definition, nor is there a consensus on the individual components included in a corporate identity framework (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012). Secondly, the majority of corporate identity models in existence are the results of investigating large organisations. This ties in with Objective 2 set for this PhD research, which seeks to

identify the key components of a micro-company's corporate identity (Chapter 5). Lastly, the various frameworks can broadly be based in six different schools of thought, which range from a strong focus on visual cues, to integrated communication approaches, and a strong focus on culture and interdisciplinary aspects. Within this PhD research it is believed that both approaches, from a marketing and organisational behaviour perspective complement each other (Balmer, 2008) and thus, follows in the footsteps of various authors (Balmer & Greyser, 2002; Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2006).

## 2.2 Sustainability literature



### 2.2.1 Sustainability and sustainable development

#### 2.2.1.1 Sustainability – an introduction

Similarly to corporate identity, sustainability is neither a new phenomenon, nor does it have a clear-cut definition (Epstein, 2008; Miller, 2013). However, one aspect of sustainability is agreed upon: it is seen as a positive construct, vital for future development within any society (Allen & Hoekstra, 1994). Various authors (Markusen, 1999; Gunder, 2006; Partridge, 2011) agree that providing a single definition for sustainability is challenging, as it is often described as a *fuzzy concept* (Markusen, 1999: 870):

A fuzzy concept is one that posits an entity, phenomenon, or process that possesses two or more alternative meanings and thus cannot be identified or applied reliably by different readers or scholars.

Alternatively stated, “sustainability is a concept that everyone purports to understand intuitively, but somehow finds very difficult to operationalize into concrete terms” (Gunder, 2006: 211). According to the US Environmental Protection Agency sustainability is the ultimate goal that embraces the human needs for survival and well-being (US-EPA, 2010).



### 2.2.1.2 *The Brundtland Commission*

The most common definition of sustainable development leading to sustainability was published in the Brundtland Commission's report *Our Common Future* - a milestone for sustainable development (WCED, 1987) - emphasising the necessity of "meeting needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their needs" (UN, 2011). This report highlights the commitment to sustainability and the idea of having eco-friendly economic growth, which would have been an impossibility during the 1970s, as technology and innovation processes were not as advanced (WCED, 1987). Eco-friendly economic growth implies using advanced technologies, thereby reducing waste materials within the production process and overall carbon emissions.

Although the report provides a valuable working definition of sustainable development, it is rather limited (McClonskey, 1999; Kates et al., 2005). *Our Common Future* was written as part of a governmental report, thus the main focus is "only upon human needs [...] [and sees] economic growth [as a] necessar[y] part of development" (Diesendorf, 2000: 21). This implies that the report looks at the social and economic dimension of sustainability, but does not explicitly mention the natural environment (von Schomberg, 2002). Diesendorf (2000) provides a broader definition, incorporating the environmental aspect: "sustainable development comprises types of economic and social development which protect and enhance the natural environment and social equity" (p. 22). While this interpretation is overarching in nature, the Brundtland Commission's understanding of the concept as a more political entity (and despite its limitations) has gained increasing importance and is still the most cited definition used to date (Baumgartner, 2009; Nunan, 2011; IISD, 2013).

Following on from the Brundtland Report, the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro saw environmental protection as a key issue that needed to be integrated on a global scale, through promoting sustainable development (Mitchell, 1995; Erskine & Collins, 1997). This was achieved by introducing Agenda 21, a blueprint towards sustainable development that was adopted by the world leaders attending the conference, on a voluntary, non-binding basis (UNEP, n.d.; FAO, 2007). In other words:

Agenda 21 provides a comprehensive action programme to attain sustainable development and address both environmental and developmental issues [...] at global, national, and local levels (FAO, 2007).

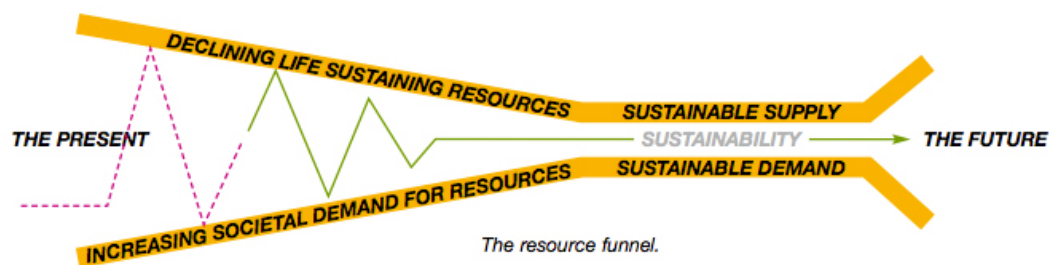
To conclude, thus far, the concern to preserve the environment for generations to come has taken centre-stage, with the Brundtland Report laying the foundations for various projects assessing the natural environment and natural scarce resources (Belz & Peattie, 2010). The question that remains is concerned with how to implement sustainability and sustainable development in society.

### 2.2.1.3 Towards reaching sustainability and sustainable development

The previous section emphasised that sustainable development is a strategy that guides businesses, societies, governments, and other institutions to reach the ideal state of sustainability. The Natural Step Organisation (TNS), “a globally recognized brand” (TNS, 2013a), developed the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD), to provide guidelines that “help anyone place a system or organisation in the larger context of sustainability as science defines it” (TNS, n.d.). The framework consists of five levels: system, success, strategy, action, and tools. The FSSD is utilised to analyse the standardisations used in this research (Chapter 4).

The *system level* is concerned with “the scope of the system” (TNS, n.d.), which explains sustainable development through *The Resource Funnel* (Figure 6). Sustainability within a society is reached, when the demand and supply of goods/services is in an equilibrium which caters for the current generations’ needs without compromising opportunities for future generations (WCED, 1987).

Figure 6: The resource funnel (Chambers et al., 2008)



Here, ‘current generation’ refers to Generation Y (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999), who were born in the 1980s/90s, and are described as “a very large and economically

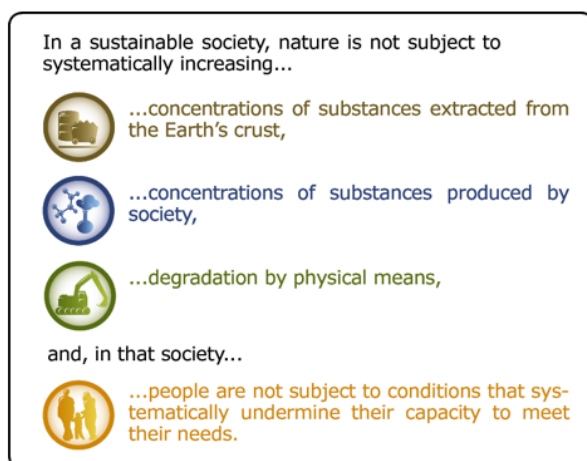
powerful generation” (Djamasbi et al., 2010: 307). Generation Y distinguishes itself from previous generations, as they are:

- 1) Technology-savvy (Gardner & Eng, 2005; Valentine & Powers, 2013);
- 2) Self-confident (Syrett & Lammiman, 2003; Gardner & Eng, 2005);
- 3) Demonstrating individuality (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003);
- 4) Showing positive attitudes towards sustainability (Talbot, 2012; Rogers, 2013).

Focusing back on Figure 7, the left hand side shows the present situation of society: the demand for resources is increasing, which could be due to a rise in population, industrialisation, or standard of living, whilst the resources needed to provide the same opportunities for current and future generations is declining. Thus, in order to fulfil the obligations of the Brundtland Report a balance needs to be established that allows society to flourish, whilst keeping the environment intact. In an ideal case this will lead to natural resources recovering slowly and establishing new environmentally friendly technologies that will satisfy the populations needs and wants. For the fashion industry this would furthermore imply, educating their consumers to move away from their “fashion appetite” (Sharma & Hall, 2010: 2) towards consciously purchasing garments that fulfil ‘sustainable criteria’, including but not limited to organic production, fair wages for workers, and environmentally friendly materials.

This leads to the *success level*, which has been associated by various authors

Figure 7: The four system condition (TNS, 2013b)



(Robèrt et al., 2002; Bansal, 2005; Chambers et al., 2008) with the “four system condition” (TNS, 2013b) that creates a ‘sustainable society’ in the future (Figure 7) through: equal opportunities for generations to fulfil their needs, no environmental degradation, decreasing artificially produced chemicals, and limiting the extraction of natural resources.

While these four aspects may be desirable, questions that are not explicitly discussed are: issues of power and control and the impact/consequences the Four System Condition has on the overall economy.

The *strategic level* links, in this case, to eco-labels (tools), which could encourage an organisation to implement sustainable practices (TNS, n.d.). This level was designed to provide a company with the opportunity to focus on their long-term achievements. This leads onto the *action level*, which highlights what steps have been taking by an organisation to fulfil the goal of sustainable development (TNS, n.d.). The *tools level* links back to the strategy level example: eco-labels are tools that enable an organisation to fulfil their targets (TNS, n.d.).

To sum up, sustainability and sustainable development are key concerns within our society and have taken a centre-stage role since the 1980s. However:

The first and perhaps most difficult problem [...] is the time frame that ought to be assumed. Is a sustainable society one that endures for a decade, a human lifetime, or a thousand years? (Worster 1993: 134).

This implies that sustainability is a long-term commitment to continuously improving technology and thus the environmental, social, and economic performance of the society that mostly looks at timescales of months and years (Strange & Bayley, 2008).

#### *2.2.1.4 The Triple Bottom Line (TBL)*

##### 2.2.1.4.1 Criticism of the Triple Bottom Line

The TBL expands on the Brundtland Report's (WCED, 1987) definition of sustainability, by incorporating an environmental component to the predominantly political definition (Elkington, 2004). Utilising this approach implies that companies are not simply looking at financial aspects (Norman & MacDonald, 2004), but also focus on the environmental and social performance (Raar, 2002; Roper & Fill, 2012).

Although the TBL has been widely accepted and implemented by academics and practitioners alike (Holmberg, 1992; Reed, 1997; Elkington, 2004; Pava, 2007), it has been criticised for the same reasons as the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test (Balmer, 2012): the measurability of the individual components and the overall definition of the concept lack clarity (Norman & MacDonald, 2004). Norman and MacDonald (2004) highlight that the TBL is a vague construct that in some instances is also interchangeably used with corporate social responsibility (CSR). The authors' main criticism is that there is a controversy "in the promises suggested by the [TBL] rhetoric" (Norman & MacDonald, 2004: 244), which implies that it does not explicitly state how individual 'bottom lines' are measured and calculated (MacDonald & Norman, 2007). Pava (2007) responded to their article and emphasises that the TBL "reporting is a

metaphor to remind us that corporate performance is multi-dimensional” (p. 108). In other words, the author sees the term merely as an “irony” (Pava, 2007: 108) that should encourage further investigations and provide an initial thought-provoking impulse that guides organisations and academics to think about sustainability and sustainable development.

#### 2.2.1.4.2 The TBL – components

Although heavily criticised, the TBL still stands as an important construct. Its individual components incorporate: economic, social, and natural performance. *Economic performance* relates to the manufacturing processes of goods/services. In order to be ‘sustainable’ the production process must produce the goods/services on a continuous basis, must be financially viable and prevent any *imbalance* that could damage or destroy the agricultural and/or industrial production within a country (Harris, 2003).

*Social performance* focuses on improvements that can be made, in order to strengthen a society, in terms of investments in public facilities, including, but not limited to, leisure facilities, schools, and community centres, thereby making the company’s surrounding location more attractive for people to live in (Holmberg, 1992; Harris, 2003).

Lastly, *environmental performance* as a

[S]ustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes (Harris, 2003: 1).

The relationship between the TBL’s components (Elkington, 2013) is most commonly displayed in a Venn diagram (Vos, 2007), with each of the three circles encompassing one performance. In an ideal case the three circles will either completely overlap or have a large, equally shared interface. It can be said that:

The idea behind the TBL idea was that business and investors should measure their performance against a new set of metrics-capturing economic, social and environmental value added - or destroyed - during the processes of wealth creation (Elkington, 2013).

Figure 8 is often referred to as the 3P model (people, planet, profit) and can be seen “as a more populist version of the TBL” (Elkington, 2008).

Figure 8: The 3Ps: people, planet, and profit (Lakeshore Branding, 2011)



To conclude, the main difference between the TBL and the 3P model is the use of terminology, with the latter explaining the TBL in every-day language.

#### 2.2.1.4.3 The Triple Bottom Line and the fashion industry

In the context of this research “sustainability is about much more than our relationship with the environment; it [is] about our relationship with ourselves, our communities, and our institutions” (Seideman, 2008), which links to the TBL’s triangulation: environment, society, and economy.

Within the UK fashion industry the TBL has gained greater importance with people working in the industry becoming more aware of the effects clothing production has on the natural and social environment (Little & Wilhelm, n.d.; Allwood et al., 2006; Walsh, 2009; Goworek, 2013). Focusing business activities around the TBL helps to raise awareness about the implications the production has on the environment (social, economic, and environmental) and raises motivation amongst employees and stakeholders towards sustainability as an environmental and economic performance tool (Bowden et al., 2001; EC, 2001a; Siebenhühner & Arnold, 2007). Thus, sustainable development is “a dynamic process, [that] enables all people to realise their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways that simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth’s life support systems” (Chambers et al., 2008: 3), which links to the relationship between the TBL and corporate identity (section 2.1.1.4).

In conclusion, although the TBL has been criticised for its vagueness (Norman & MacDonald, 2004) it is a widely implemented construct (Holmberg, 1992; Pava, 2007). Parallels can be drawn between the TBL and internal and external factors that influence a company’s identity, which is investigated in Chapter 5.

### 2.2.2 Corporate sustainability

Corporate sustainability is strongly interlinked with sustainable development, the difference being a more business oriented approach (Faupel & Schwach, 2011; UNGC, 2013). Amending the Brundtland Report's definition of sustainable development to comply with a business context, leads to: "meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders, [...] without compromising the ability to meet needs of future stakeholders" (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002: 131). Thus, it can be said that corporate sustainability is part of an organisation's sustainable development process, and often described as a voluntary activity, which links to the TBL (van Marrewijk & Werre, 2002; van Marrewijk, 2003; Powell, 2011; Slaper & Hall, 2011).

Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) go even further than the TBL, which they refer to as the business, natural, and societal case, and maintain the opinion that "business practices go beyond eco- and socio-efficiency to include the additional criteria of eco- and socio-effectiveness, sufficiency and ecological equity" (Young & Tilley, 2006: 406).

The *business case* reaches its full capability once the company can guarantee a sufficient cash flow at any given time, whilst also presenting their shareholders with a persistent, above average return on investment (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). Linking this to corporate sustainability, the organisation is then not only serving the shareholders' best interest, but also producing goods/services that accommodate the demand for these commodities. In doing so the organisation furthermore reduces the ecological impact the manufacturing processes have (eco-efficiency) on the environment and increases the value-added impact it has on the society (socio-efficiency) (Hockerts, 1999; Figge & Hahn, 2001; Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002).

The *natural case* is concerned with natural resources (renewable or non-renewable) and the eco-system service, which looks at aspects such as climate stabilisation and water purification. Resources used for production purposes would, ideally, be used responsibly, which implies that there is a balance between using and reproducing resources (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Young & Tilley, 2006). To reach the highest level of corporate sustainability, products/services need to be eco-efficient, which implies "the transformation of products and their associated material flows such that they form a supportive relationship with ecological systems and future

economic growth” (Braungart et al., 2006: 2). This can be linked to the context of the green slow-fashion industry and the way businesses produce slow-fashion garments. Furthermore, the natural case is dependent on consumers willing to choose a product that is classified as being eco-effective and efficient (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Braungart et al., 2006), which is explored in Chapter 4.

The *societal case* takes the human capital (skills, motivation, employee loyalty) and societal capital (educational systems, infrastructure, etc.) into account. To reach full potential, ecological equality and socio-effectiveness need to be reached. Moreover, a parallel can be drawn between the societal case and the part of corporate identity that involves people, for example, corporate culture or stakeholders (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012). Within large organisations socio-effectiveness often refers to CSR (Young & Tilley, 2006), which is investigated in section 2.2.3.

To sum up, corporate sustainability focuses on a ‘corporate’ approach to sustainability and sustainable development, which can be hypothetically linked to corporate identity. Due to the unique setting of this PhD research, it provides an opportunity to investigate whether corporate sustainability is a construct that is relevant to the contexts.

### 2.2.3 Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

As previously stated, CSR is linked to corporate sustainability through the societal case (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009). It “is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (EC, 2002: 5). It then seeks to “achiev[e] commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment” (White, 2006: 6).

CSR has a broad variety of meanings (Crook, 2005) and motivational drivers, which are (Porter & Kramer, 2006): moral obligation, sustainability, license to operate, and reputation. *Moral obligations* suggest being a ‘good corporate citizen’ (Sheehan, 2013; Abländer & Curbach, 2014), which links to *sustainability*, and establishing and maintaining long-term relationships. A *licence to operate* is concerned with legal requirements introduced by governments and ‘forced upon’ organisations to act more responsibly. Lastly, reputation as a *motivational driver* highlights the link with corporate identity, creating stakeholder buy-in internally and



externally. Within the contexts of this research CSR communication is seen as an emerging field that continuously gains importance (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009).

Porter and Kramer (2006) highlight that “no business can solve all of society’s problems or bear the cost of doing so. Instead, each company must select issues that intersect with its particular business” (p. 9). To that end, an organisation focuses on issues important to them, which can be divided in one of three categories of social and environmental issues (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Belz & Peattie, 2010) that:

- a) Are important to society, but not affecting a company’s business;
- b) Focus on the value chain and thus, impact on the product lifecycle;
- c) Effect competitive drivers within a market place.

This highlights a criticism raised by Michael (2003) stating that CSR itself is not a new phenomenon, but rather is part of a long debate between capitalism and socialism. He sees CSR as a tool that promotes the agenda of individual organisations, the government, and NGOs. “Yet, while the actors most loudly advocating CSR may benefit, society as a whole may be harmed” (Michael, 2003: 126).

Nevertheless, the renewed interest in CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2010) is not only an important concept for organisations, but also for their employees, and is considered a key factor in attracting talent (Franklin, 2008). This suggests that CSR can provide ‘think-tanks’ and ‘consultancy’ opportunities for SMEs (Franklin, 2008). For example, Tesco (UK) is working together with London-based ‘sustainable brand’ *From Somewhere* in an attempt to make use of *waste* materials in one of Tesco’s textile warehouses (Pasquinelli, 2012b). The waste material results from fast seasonal fashion trends in a change-intensive industry, challenges which large companies try to overcome through these collaborations (Kunz, 2005). The venture with Tesco and *From Somewhere* emphasises how large organisations are increasingly aware of the environmental impacts their actions have and how to counteract them to become a ‘good corporate citizen’ (Sheehan, 2013). It shows that in today’s economy individual corporations have more options to practice sustainable development than might have been feasible in the past, especially within the fashion industry by utilising ‘think-tanks’ (Gam & Banning, 2011). This can also be seen as a justification to investigate micro-companies and their corporate identity, as it provides an insight into what these firms stand for and how they can be utilised as ‘think-tanks’.

#### 2.2.4 Sustainability debate

The introduction (2.2.1.1) to the sustainability literature described the term as a ‘fuzzy concept’ that is intuitively understood (Gunder, 2006), but does not have a commonly agreed upon definition (Partridge, 2011). Klostermann and Cramer (2006) indicate that one explanation for this could be that the meaning of sustainability changes depending on the context and the individuals involved. In other words, sustainability has a different meaning for different people. A further observation brought forward is the fact that different actors (stakeholders), who are directly affected by sustainability or more specifically policies and regulations that lead to more sustainable behaviour, focus only on the aspects of sustainability that are most meaningful to them and directly affect their business and/or other activities (Klostermann & Cramer, 2006). To explain, whilst organisations may incorporate a CSR strategy into their business, this strategy was implemented for the purpose of providing the company with benefits (Michael, 2003). Whether or not this strategy has a positive impact on society at large is a secondary outcome for a majority of businesses (Michael, 2003). With this in mind a question that arises is: if a concept has a variety of meanings and can be interpreted in a manifold of ways can it be dismissed “as an empty vessel that can be filled with whatever one likes?” (Dryzek, 2005: 147). The answer to this question within the literature is a strict and distinctive ‘no’ (Dryzek, 2005; Klostermann & Cramer, 2006). Although sustainability, like many other concepts before it, has been criticised and contested, it is vitally important and cannot be dismissed (Dryzek, 2005; Klostermann & Cramer, 2006). To reiterate this further, the fact that sustainability is debated and intensely discussed among various stakeholders (e.g. government, businesses in various sectors, public) can lead on the one hand to changes in behaviour and on the other hand to heightened awareness of the concept (Dryzek, 2005). Whilst not having a common, clear-cut definition can be seen as challenging, especially when seeking to create change in behaviour, it can also be advantageous, as the meaning can be stretched to include new possibilities and opportunities that arise in a changing environment (Dryzek, 2005).

In order to gain a better insight into the sustainability debate, in terms of what sustainability means and how it can be perceived, a social constructionist perspective is applied. This perspective also complements the philosophical stance of phenomenology taken in this PhD research, which is discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.2. Briefly, phenomenology is concerned with investigating a phenomenon within its

context and uncovering its essence (Husserl, 1929). Phenomenology seeks to describe a third party's experience with as much accuracy and rigour as possible, whilst at the same time understand this individual's behaviour and attitudes, as opposed to simply predicting them (Harrison & Reilley, 2011).

Social constructionist theory distinguishes between two types of 'reality' (Shotter, 2002). Firstly, 'reality' refers to the world that exists independently without any interactions (Shotter, 2002). Secondly, '*reality*' can also be thought of as a world that is constructed by humans. This construction may either be within the person's mind or through social interactions with other individuals (Shotter, 2002). The latter indicates that if '*reality*' is constructed through human interaction, there may be a gap between meanings of different situations/circumstances and the 'reality' (Klostermann & Cramer, 2006; Bañon et al., 2011). To reiterate this point further, some people may have a set of associations or beliefs about sustainability that differ from those of another group. Whilst both parties may find a common ground in their definitions, uncertainty remains, as it cannot be guaranteed that sustainability in a different 'reality' constructed by a third party may also agree upon this definition (Klostermann & Cramer, 2007; Bañon et al., 2011). This suggests that although there might be a consensus among one group of people, others may prefer a different interpretation of 'sustainability'. Thus, rather than assuming the existence of only one '*reality*' or interpretation of sustainability, there are multiple '*realities*' or definitions of sustainability in existence at any point in time. To explain, the term sustainability, as has been highlighted, can be interpreted differently depending on the context and background of the individual describing this term. 'Reality' links to the concept of 'Gestalt' (Solomon et al., 2010), "held together by its own loosely related principles, rules, interests, and goals that are used to interpret, organise, and evaluate phenomena" (Bañon et al., 2011: 178). Thus, it is through these '*realities*' that concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development are interpreted and understood. They are both part of a bigger picture that is complex in nature, due to various 'realities', perceptions, and associations involved (Klostermann & Cramer, 2006, 2007; Bañon et al., 2011).

The focus of this section is to provide a further approach to thinking about sustainability that links both the phenomenological stance that underpins this PhD research and social constructionist theory, which helps to understand the debate about sustainability. Through the focus of the creation of a '*reality*' by humans, the social

constructionist view can be seen as complementary to the phenomenological stance taken in this PhD research (Edvardsson et al., 2011). To further reiterate this point, phenomenology focuses on the 'lived' experiences and social constructionism highlights that '*reality*' is created through the interaction of people and their minds. Whilst there is a difference between social constructionism and phenomenology in that the latter sees an individual's experiences as a window to interpret their thoughts and feelings, social constructionism views these experiences as "serving a range of interpersonal and societal functions" (Harper, 2011: 88). Nevertheless, both phenomenology and social constructivism are looking at a phenomenon that needs to be understood from an individual's perspective, which provides the link between the viewpoints and highlights their compatibility (Weiss et al., 2008; Edvardsson et al., 2011).

With environmental problems taking centre stage and the knowledge that some of these problems are man-made, the ideas surrounding sustainability have "taken on an unprecedented significance" (Bañon et al., 2011: 173). However, with people talking about sustainability from their own interpretations, as well as looking at it from different aspects of their life, it becomes challenging to bring clarity to the concept (Klostermann & Cramer, 2006, 2007). Bañon et al. (2011) highlight that when people debate sustainability some may be talking about - metaphorically speaking - apples, whilst others advocate pears, and a third party may speak of citrus fruit, which emphasises the fact that "sustainability does [not] apply to the physical environment in itself, but rather our human relationship with the world" (Bañon et al., 2011: 180). Bringing this into the context of micro-businesses and more specifically a managerial point of view, managers will interpret sustainability according to their own viewpoints and needs. A manager may only take aspects of sustainability into account that are vital for their business, rather than focusing on a bigger picture that looks at how their decisions may impact the natural environment and other stakeholders (Weick, 1980). It could be said that an individual's perception and their '*reality*' influences their behaviour and actions, without necessarily considering, in this case, the implications this may have on the environment (Klostermann & Cramer, 2007).

As highlighted, sustainability has no common, clear-cut definition, but rather multiple interpretations are available to express what sustainability entails (Fischer et al., 2007). Examples of these different definitions are: firstly, the Brundtland

Commission's interpretation, which sees sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED, 1987). Secondly, sustainability can be explained through the systems perspective, which implies that the concept is tackled as part of the environment (Wallerstein, 2010). From this point of view, sustainability is looked at as one puzzle piece of an entire jigsaw puzzle, which exists within this system, if none of the other pieces are overloaded (Brown, 2003). This links to what has been described in section 2.2.1.3, in that sustainability and sustainable development are seen as part of a system that has four specific conditions that need to be fulfilled (TNS, n.d.). Thirdly, from an ecosystem perspective, sustainability is defined as "the capacity to create, test, and maintain adaptive capability" (Holling, 2001: 390). Adaptive capabilities are those that allow an entity to change in accordance with an evolving environment. In this sense, sustainable development refers to "the goal fostering adaptive capabilities and creating opportunities" (Holling, 2001: 390). Whilst these definitions differ within their wording, their overall message is seemingly consistent, in that sustainability needs to be not only part of the environment, but also integrated throughout any actions taken. Thus, to achieve sustainability within any of these perspectives Fischer et al. (2006: 622) emphasises that three key aspects need to be tackled:

- Targets that are set need to be meaningful and achievable, thereby outlining any insufficiencies within the current environment;
- Governmental support is required in form of policy tools, which could impact on any unsustainable behaviour and lead to changes in them;
- The focus needs to be on a long-term orientation, which might be stimulated through policy alterations.

Whilst the Brundtland Report's definition has become the most commonly accepted interpretation of sustainability, the definition bears various challenges and poses questions. 'Meeting the needs of future generations' (WCED, 1987), indirectly implies that these future generations will have the same needs as the current generation (Redclift & Woodgate, 2000). However, with technology evolving so does society and their needs. Thus, it is questionable whether future generations identify the same 'needs' as the current generation or whether future generations will alter their expectations and needs according to the changes in the environment. These changes in the environment can be enhanced through updated technology and innovations, which ultimately alter the expectations, wants and needs of an individual

(Redclift & Woodgate, 2000; Fischer et al., 2007). This implicitly implies that the 'needs of the current generation' (WCED, 1987) cannot be sustained, as in the present it is unclear what these 'needs' entail and in how far they differ from those of the current generation.

Similarly, current unsustainable behaviour is targeted with advanced technologies, which seeks to provide solutions for unsustainable actions within a business (Tilman et al., 2006). Interestingly, the majority of this 'unsustainable behaviour' is man-made, which implies that any innovations are counteracting past developments that were seen as innovative and forward thinking (Tilman et al., 2006). Thus, it could be implied that any technological advancements may lead to a threat of the future of sustainability (Redclift & Woodgate, 2000), as these man-made innovations are based on - in one way or another - exploiting the natural environment (Tilman et al., 2006). Thus, and in linking this back to an earlier statement, if any technological advancements are implemented, these should be in line with the overall targets set for sustainability and focus on a long-term perspective (Fischer et al., 2007).

A further question that arises is what 'needs' are referred to in the Brundtland Commission's definition. Redclift and Woodgate (2000) indicate that different societies may have different needs, based on their countries' or regions' environment and their resources or lack thereof. Thus, needs not only vary, but also can be defined differently. Similarly, in a developed country that has access to high-tech technology 'needs' may not only be based on essential requirements that allow human beings to survive, but also to artificially created 'needs' that continuously evolve with new inventions and innovations (Redclift & Woodgate, 2000; Solomon et al., 2010). Continuing this train of thought, new innovations imply that demand for these newly created products and services arise. The demand for these products than can lead to establishing a need for these products. A chain reaction starts that sees the necessity to increase the demand for resources (e.g. human, technological, natural), which are essential in producing these new goods and services that satisfy the newly created needs. This in turns provides job opportunities, which lead to increased production cycles and, in a worst-case scenario, hyper-consumption. In this sense, it could be argued that the continuous evolution of society and the creation of needs jeopardise the natural environment, which may be further exploited and damaged (Stern et al., 1996; Redclift & Woodgate, 2000; Solomon et al., 2010).

In the same vein as identifying what ‘needs’ are described in the various definitions, a further question that can be posed is: ‘what needs to be sustained?’ (Redclift and Woodgate, 2000). This question can be answered in various ways, depending on the author’s interpretation of sustainability. Redclift (2005), for instance, indicates in his article ‘Sustainable development (1987-2005): An oxymoron comes of age’ that it could be argued that the current or even future levels of production and consumption should be sustained. This implies that the levels of production and consumption would have to stay at the same level or increase over time (Redclift, 2005). On the other hand, with an ever-growing population constraints are put on the natural environment that might potentially have bigger implications, which are currently not accounted for. In this manner, it has been highlighted that definitions of sustainability should allow for these unforeseen circumstances within their interpretations, as sustainable development implies a long-term perspective (Lutz, 2009). That said, current initiatives and encouragement to change to more sustainable behaviour might be fruitful and lead to an overall change in consumption practices, which might alter any expectations or lack thereof that link to sustainable development (Redclift and Woodgate, 2000). Thus, a key challenge in answering the previously posed question is to engage individuals at a societal level and identify core values that not only can be sustained for the future, but also are worth sustaining (Diamond, 2005). Ideally, identifying these core elements of sustainable development could lead to establishing stretch goals (Fischer et al., 2007). Stretch goals focus on the outcome first, in this case resources that have to be sustained, before proving a pathway that leads to achieving these targets (Fischer et al., 2007).

Thus far, this section has highlighted that neither sustainability nor sustainable development have a common, clear-cut definition. However, both concepts are seen as favourable and desirable within any society (Redclift & Woodgate, 2000; Bañon et al., 2011). Furthermore, it was highlighted that various elements within the Brundtland Report’s definition pose questions. One explanation that can be provided in terms of why there are a variety of definitions and interpretations of sustainability and subsequently of sustainable development, is the fact that different people have different *realities* and thus, a different opinion on what sustainability actually means and entails (Redclift & Woodgate, 2000).

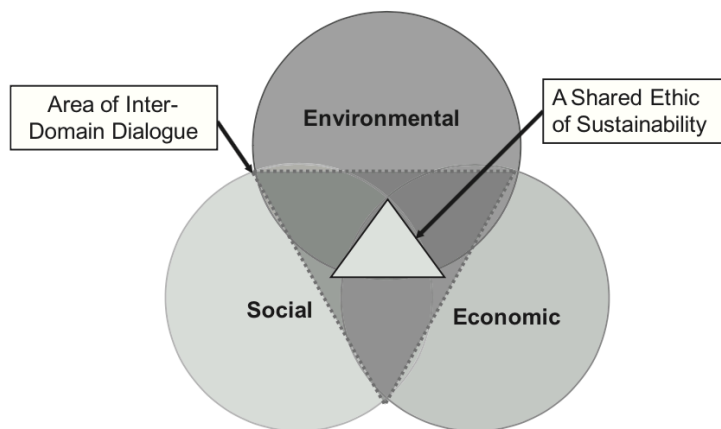
A further conclusion that can be drawn is that aspects and concerns surrounding sustainability and sustainable development have gained a universal

acceptance. However, the reasons for supporting initiatives that focus on sustainability vary not only in nature, but also depending on the context and associations of different groups involved (Bañon et al., 2011). Consulting the business literature, aspects of ‘going green’ have been strongly associated with sustainability, and are seen as vital in gaining a competitive advantage within the market environment (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Bañon et al., 2011). However, rather than simply focusing on a management perspective, sustainability could also be seen as:

A moral way of acting, and ideally habitual, in which the person or group intends to *avoid* deleterious effects on the environmental, social, and economic domains, and which is consistent with a harmonious relationship with those domains that is conducive to a flourishing life (Bañon et al., 2011: 176).

Linking this back to Elkington’s (1998) TBL, sustainability is achieved at the intersection of the social, economic, and environmental domain, as interpreted by the individual’s worldview (Bañon et al., 2011). Figure 9 provides an amended version of the original TBL, which allows for various *realities* and interpretations to be held at any point in time.

Figure 9: A shared ethic of sustainability (adapted from Bañon et al., 2011: 184)



The outer triangulation visualises a dialogue between the individual domains of social, environmental, and economic aspects, whilst the inner triangulation implies a commonly ‘shared ethic of sustainability’ (Bañon et al., 2011).

In summary, sustainability is a term that not only lacks a common, clear-cut definition, but also can be interpreted differently, depending on an individual’s *reality*. A question that arises from this section is then: how does this relate to the

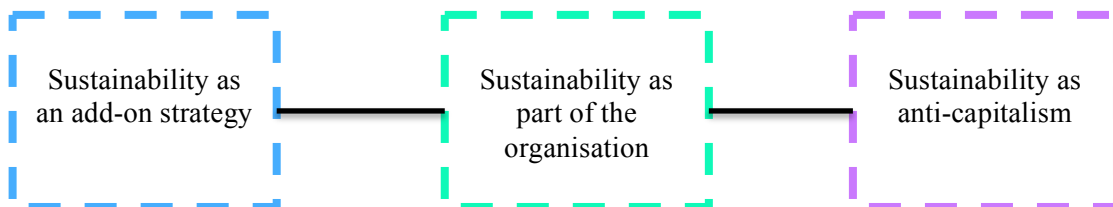


business context? This question is addressed in the following section, which focuses on various different ‘business models’ that companies can implement.

### 2.2.5 Sustainability within organisations

This section focuses on providing an overview of various different options that allow organisations to identify themselves with or describe themselves as ‘sustainable’. Whilst there are various business models available that support sustainability in one way or another, the following section focuses on three views: Sustainability as an add-on strategy, sustainability as part of the organisation, and sustainability as anti-capitalism. Figure 10 provides a visualisation of where these three business models are in relation to one another.

Figure 10: Sustainability spectrum (researcher’s own infographic)



If these different approaches were to be put on a spectrum, the first and the latter view would be the end-points on each side of the spectrum, with sustainability as part of the organisation providing a more moderate view in the middle. The following sections provide a deeper understanding of three views of sustainability.

#### 2.2.5.1 Sustainability as an ‘add-on’ strategy

A widely accepted view of describing businesses and the way they are operating, especially within the fashion industry, is the ‘dominant social paradigm’ (Armstrong & LeHew, 2011). The dominant social paradigm is defined as “the values, metaphysical beliefs, institutions, habits etc. that collectively provide social lenses through which individuals and groups interpret their social world” (Milbrath, 1984: 7). To explain, within the dominant social paradigm the human species is seen as superior to all others, whilst at the same time the environment is reduced to a component that serves the purpose of providing raw materials to fulfil societies’ needs (Kilbourne et al., 2002; Kilbourne & Polonsky, 2005). This highlights that the focus with the dominant social paradigm is on wealth creation and fulfilling ‘the needs of the current generation’. With the emergence of environmental concerns in the 1960s

(Peattie, 1995; McCormick, 2001; Brown, 2011; Sustainability, 2011), businesses started to slowly re-evaluate their attitudes towards the environment. The need to change current business practices and structures became a necessity with environmental consciousness emerging as a top global priority (Coles, 2013) and consumers demanding fashion collections that are not only less harmful to the environment (e.g. Peattie, 1995), but also animal cruelty free (e.g. BSR, 2012) and socially responsibly produced (e.g. Brown, 2011).

The rise of sustainable fashion and more generally the increasing demand for green products (Niinimäki, 2010; Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011) is accompanied by the emergence of green marketing (Belz & Peattie, 2010), which aims to promote products and services that are more environmentally friendly than their counterparts (Polonsky, 1994; AMA, 2012) and is apparent within various industry sectors, including the fashion industry (Sheth et al., 2011). Linking this back to the philosophical debate on sustainability, it could be suggested that organisations that want to be perceived as more environmentally friendly may choose to do so, by adding on a ‘sustainability strategy’. This implies that these companies are still following their ‘business as usual’ approach, but incorporate small changes, which makes them be perceived more favourably by their consumers. To reiterate this further, various fast fashion retailers could be seen to have an add-on strategy. For instance, H&M recently developed a conscious line, to cater for their consumers’ needs (Karmali, 2013; H&M, 2014), whilst M&S is actively involved with charitable work, in that they went into partnership with Oxfam. M&S encourages their shoppers to donate unwanted clothes, which are then sold in Oxfam, in exchange for a £5 shopping voucher (M&S, 2013). Further examples of add-on strategies are eco-labels or sustainability claims on packaging, which could provide companies with an opportunity to suggest that they are more ‘sustainable’ (Stuart, 2011). This will further be discussed in Chapter 4.

However, green marketing has been heavily criticized within an academic context (Peattie & Crane, 2005), in terms of not achieving what it was originally set out to do (Rettie et al., 2012). This highlights that although, “rethinking business for resource and environmental constraints creates significant opportunity, [...] there are also risks and costs associated with inaction” (WEF, 2012: 2). Consumers often seem to distrust ‘green’ or ‘sustainable’ products, as they believe these claims are deceptive and misleading (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008). This links to a criticism brought

forward by Kilbourne et al. (1997) stating that green marketing focuses only on symptoms rather than the problem's causes.

In summary, organisations that are focusing on sustainability as an 'add-on' strategy provide an answer to consumer demands and needs in becoming more environmentally friendly. The fashion industry, which has seen a noticeable change in their attitude towards sustainability, is slowly changing. Due to being a highly competitive industry sector that is based on intense competition, speed, innovation, and consumerism (Armstrong & LeHew, 2011) change in behaviour from both the consumer and manufacture side will take time and move forward slowly, but steadily. Although add-on strategies have been criticised for not being enough and only treating symptoms (Kilbourne et al., 2002), they do provide a way of thinking about sustainability from a capitalistic point of view that sees economic growth and profits as a priority and environmental and social concerns as a necessity that satisfies customer demands (Kilbounre, 2004; Walker, 2006; Armstrong & LeHew, 2011).

#### *2.2.5.2 Sustainability as part of the organisation*

A further way of looking at what sustainability means in a business context is by investigating the concept of ethical businesses. An ethical business is defined as one that "learns that to do well it has to do good, [only then] can we hope to tackle major social challenges facing developed societies today" (Drucker, 1984: 55). This business model suggests that rather than focusing solely on economic performance and wealth creation, all aspects of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) (Elkington, 1998) need to be taken into consideration. Thus, profits are seen as the instrument that allows a business to fulfil its social and environmental purpose (Kanter, 1991). Stated alternatively, organisations following an ethical business approach see sustainability at the core of their company. Contrary to what has been described in the previous section, these businesses are not simply adding a sustainability strategy to their existing business plan, but rather their business ideals are based on environmental, social, and economic aspects. Research suggests that companies that incorporate sustainability at their core and strongly focus on doing good for the benefit of society at large experience increased productivity, customer and employee loyalty, stronger community commitment, and improved environmental performance (Spiller, 2000).

Examples of organisations that follow the ethical business approach could be micro-companies such as Howies, Rapanui, and Patagonia (Fukukawa et al., 2007).

These organisations have managed to incorporate green and sustainable values into their overall identity, which is reflected in their daily business decisions and routines (Gibson et al., 2011). These micro-companies furthermore are exemplars of companies that are not only producing their fashion collections in accordance with ethical and sustainable standards, and thus, reflect all aspects of the TBL, but also have managed to sustain their overall business, in terms of commercial benefits (Fukukawa et al., 2007). However, it could be argued that no organisation can be truly an ethical business and incorporate all aspects of sustainability, as what is defined as being ‘sustainable’ is context and person dependent (Klostermann & Cramer, 2007). Following this train of thought a further question that arises, especially in the fashion industry, is: what is sustainable fashion and can any fashion item be sustainable? This question is further explored in Chapter 4.

In conclusion, it can be said that the perspective of sustainability as part of an organisation’s core identity differs from sustainability as an add-on strategy, in that the latter focuses strongly on profit maximisation. By contrast, ethical businesses take a greater interest in their surrounding environment and seek to act in favour of society and the natural environment as a whole, rather than a small group of stakeholders (Spiller, 2000).

#### *2.2.5.4 Sustainability as ‘anti-capitalism’*

The last perspective to be explored is sustainability as a type of ‘anti-capitalist’ movement, which provides the polar opposite to sustainability as an add-on strategy. Research has highlighted that with the recession hitting the economy in 2008, a widely researched concept – voluntary simplicity – has received increased and renewed attention within the fashion industry (Wu et al., 2013). Voluntary simplicity is predominantly found within consumer research and can be defined as an attempt to reduce the overall consumption patterns and returning - voluntarily - to a lifestyle that focuses on the basics rather than hedonic needs and wants (Zavestoski, 2002; McDonald et al., 2006; Oates et al., 2008; Ballantine & Creery, 2010). With the emergence of environmental consciousness also came the awareness that natural resources are limited (Bove et al., 2009). In light of this, some consumers have started to adopt a new lifestyle based on voluntary simplicity. Key themes that emerge within voluntary simplicity are (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002: 191):

- The element of free choice to lead a simple life.

- Material consumption is reduced, but a life of poverty is not required.
- Voluntary simplifiers have access to resources such as wealth, education, and unique skills that could be traded for high income.
- Control and personal fulfilment.
- Driven by values such as humanism, self-determination, environmentalism, spirituality, and self-development.

From an organisational perspective voluntary simplicity could imply reverting to reusing and recycling materials and/or trading items without any monetary gain. In other words, it is “a desire to return to living and working environments which are of a more human scale, and an intention to realize our higher human potential – both psychological and spiritual – in community with others” (Elgin & Mitchell, 1977: 14). This could be linked back to the TBL in that this approach solely focuses on the environmental and social component, thereby ‘neglecting’ financial gains, which are seen as the ultimate ‘evil’ of society (Elgin & Mitchell, 1977; Etzioni, 1998; Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002). Within the fashion industry, finding examples of companies that are implementing an ‘anti-capitalist’ behaviour proves to be challenging. Organisations that come close to this business model could be charities such as Oxfam or any second hand clothing shop, who are reselling products and/or making new products out of old ones.

Thus, within the viewpoint of sustainability as an ‘anti-capitalism’ sustainability can only be achieved if consumption is not only reduced, but also resources are recycled. In this manner, rather than producing collections with new material, organisations would need to shift their focus to mending garments, offering places to trade unwanted items, and providing overall aftercare services (Rosenbloom, 2010). This of course, would change the overall landscape of the fashion industry, which is based on consumerism and capitalism (Armstrong & LeHew, 2011).

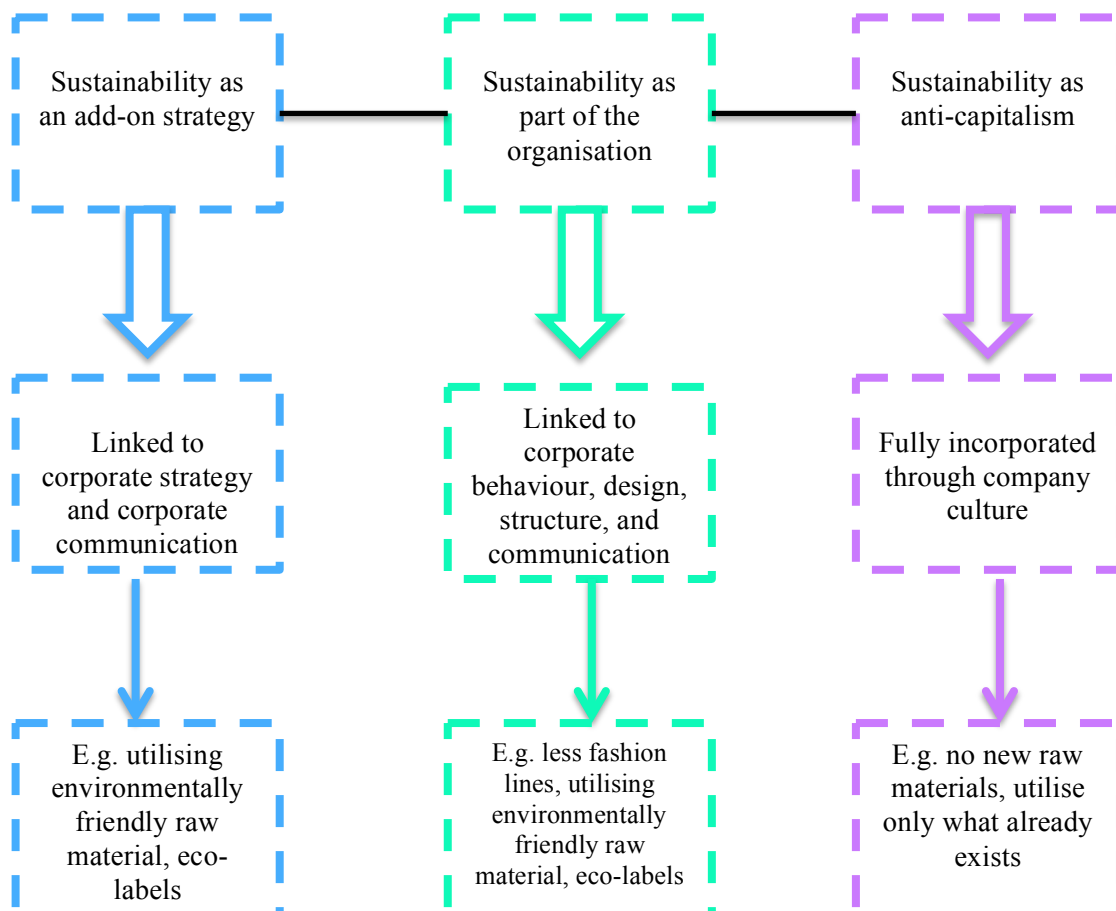
In concluding the overall section, it can be said that there are various ways to talk about and incorporate sustainability within an organisation. From a philosophical standpoint sustainability is a concept that is dependent on an individual’s experience, thus can be seen as highly subjective and context dependent. Whilst commonalities may be agreed upon a clear-cut definition of what sustainability entails is currently lacking. From a business point of view there are various ways on how to incorporate aspects of sustainability within day-to-day business routines. On opposing ends of a spectrum sustainability as an add-on strategy and sustainability as anti-capitalism can

be found, with the first looking at responding to consumer demands, but keeping economic gains as the primary focus, and the latter moving away from a capitalist approach to going back to the roots and using resources that are already available without producing any more garments. The middle position is occupied by ethical businesses that desire to balance the environmental, social, and economic components.

### 2.2.6 Link between corporate identity, sustainability, and sustainable fashion

The previous section discussed various business models available, which can be implemented and allow companies to indicate their sustainable tendencies. This section focuses on illustrating the link between these business models and the implications this has on a company's corporate identity and their way of producing sustainable fashion. This section is based on the researcher's understanding of the sustainability and corporate identity literature. Figure 11 provides a visualisation of what is discussed in this section.

Figure 11: Link between sustainability, corporate identity, and sustainable fashion



As previously indicated, companies that are utilising an add-on strategy are still following a ‘business as usual’ approach. Thus, rather than making changes to their actual identity, they are adopting sustainable strategies due to a need emerging in the market, in this case: environmentally friendly fashion. Linking this to corporate identity, these organisations could be seen to adopt sustainability as part of their overall corporate strategy, which might provide them with a USP and/or a point of differentiation. As was highlighted, H&M could be seen as example of this business model, who stated “our commitment to provide fashion for conscious customers is all about offering you the products you love – at the prices you expect – with a much smaller impact” (H&M, n.d.).

The middle position is occupied by companies such as Howies, Patagonia, and Rapanui, which emphasise that:

We make products from sustainable materials in an ethically accredited, wind powered factory and use technology and design to show that ecology and economics can work together. Our company is values based. That makes us fundamentally different to businesses trying to do a bit of sustainability: We [are] built on it. It [is] not a case of change business as usual, instead, we aim to replace it - and make this the new normal (Rapanui, 2015).

Thus, rather than simply adding on the strategy, these companies incorporate aspects of sustainability within their vision, mission, and values, as well as base their corporate structure, design, and behaviour on aspects of sustainability. In terms of the type of fashion produced, this implies that these companies reduce not only the amount of collections they are producing annually, but also emphasises that their production processes overall and the individual fashion garments have a lower environmental impact.

Lastly, companies that may incorporate sustainability as an anti-capitalistic stance go even beyond the ‘middle’ category, by resisting producing fashion in the commonly understood terms. To explain, rather than producing new raw materials that have a lower impact, companies falling into this category create garments solely out of materials that are already in existence, thereby further reducing their carbon footprint. In terms of their corporate identity, these organisations do not only have sustainability within their vision, mission, and values, their behaviour, structure and design, but also incorporate sustainability in their culture. It could be suggested that they are ‘living and breathing’ all aspects of sustainability.

In summary, it could be said that the degree to which sustainability is viewed is reflected with a company's corporate identity and fashion creation. An aspect to investigate further in Chapter 7 is, whether the definition of sustainability is reflected in the company's corporate identity within micro-organisation. It should also be highlighted that the researcher is aware that the literature on sustainability is dominated by a business management perspective, reflecting her background in Business & European Studies and International Management.

### **2.2.7 Link between corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and corporate identity**

With ethics and sustainability issues emerging as hot topics in the fashion industry (Minney, 2011; FashionUnited, 2013b; Winter, 2014), incorporating ethical values into corporate identity has become not only vital but also a distinct feature to set organisations apart. Alternatively stated, issues concerning sustainability have moved away from consumer needs towards corporate values and the firm's responsibility to stakeholders beyond the consumer (Crane, 1997). Thus, there seems to be a trend of moving away from asking the consumer what they want, to telling them what they need, whilst also having a long-term impact (Vaaland et al., 2008). A concern that can be raised here is whether or not this approach is ethical, which is explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

This new corporate identity, based on ethical values is referred to as corporate ethical identity (Berrone et al., 2007). Organisations in the fashion industry increasingly feel the pressure from stakeholders to be more transparent, emphasising their CSR policies not only on their websites, but also within their annual reports (Ferrell et al., 2012). CSR and corporate ethical identity can be seen as strongly interlinked concepts (Powell, 2011). Thus, a corporate ethical identity creates a USP (Ingenhoff & Fuhrer, 2010) by keeping the communicated promise between the firm and the key stakeholders alive (Balmer, 2008). It can, once established, act as the basis for company-wide direction, integration, communication, coordination, and image (Cheney & Christensen, 1999; Balmer, 2008).

Creating a corporate ethical identity implies that the whole organisation needs to drive towards sustainability, which might mean creating a new 'language' (Stuart, 2011), using terminology related specifically to sustainability and sustainable



development. This may be further enhanced through organisational learning, which can influence behavioural patterns and attitudes towards certain issues. This implies, when organisational learning is used, environmentally friendly thinking and sustainability can be tactically transformed into commonly shared values or beliefs within the firm (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Moreover, sustainability and a corporate ethical identity can further be achieved by incorporating a 'green identity' into day-to-day business decisions, through which organisations may be able to educate consumers (Gibson et al., 2011), and therefore create a competitive advantage. Success stories such as Howies and Patagonia (both micro-companies) show that ethical production works towards commercial benefits (Fukukawa et al., 2007). This suggests that corporate identity and more specifically corporate ethical identity can be strongly linked to CSR and sustainability measures proposed by the company (Kitchin, 2003).

Skov (2008) found that most types of industrial regulation are happening on a company level, with the organisation trying to stand apart from its competition (Aaker, 1996). These studies show that a company has the power to incorporate CSR as part of their corporate identity, emphasising ethical values and responsibilities towards their stakeholders (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009). Furthermore, an organisation can decide to work together with NGOs on a voluntary basis, making sure that all its suppliers along the supply-chain are following the CSR regulations implemented within the firm (Skov, 2008). Some NGOs are rather compelling in terms of public trust and research power, and these NGOs can have more flexibility to investigate cases in-depth. This provides firms with resources with which they can decide whether or not their supply-chain partners are following along their own CSR regulations. Although environmental strategies and CSR are usually developed separately, they do complement each other (Stuart, 2011).

To conclude, there is a relationship between CSR, sustainability, and corporate identity. However, past research has predominantly focused on large organisations, thus, this research investigates whether this relationship holds true within the contexts of this research.

## 2.2.8 Sustainability and the fashion industry

### 2.2.8.1 *The rise of sustainability in the fashion industry*

The textile industry has not only seen changes in consumer behaviour towards more environmentally friendly products, but also in terms of eco-innovation and design (Gam & Banning, 2011). It can be said that the green movement has extended to a wider range of organisations in the fashion industry, which faces more emphasis on sustainability (Black, 2008). This implies overcoming the challenge to find a universal definition of sustainable development. Various authors identify the following characteristics:

- a) The use of renewable and/or non-harmful materials (Chen & Burns 2006; Poole et al., 2009; UNCTAD, 2010);
- b) The use of low-impact processes (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004; Allwood et al., 2008; Poole et al., 2009);
- c) The promotion of reused/recycled waste materials (Joergens 2006; Fletcher 2008; Poole et al., 2009).

The Introduction highlighted that the apparel industry is change-intensive (Kunz, 2005), due to its seasonality and fashion trends (Doeringer & Crean, 2006; Easey, 2009; Gibson & Stanes, 2010). This is a vicious circle: although consumers may be willing to buy eco-friendly products, they are not willing to pay more for these garments or accept less change-intense stock turnarounds (Tynan, 2013). Manufacturers therefore feel the pressure arising from the demand-side, to produce more low-cost fashion, which leads to being unable to use environmentally friendly materials or product processes (Gam & Banning, 2011). The Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF) (2011) reiterates this point further, highlighting that most business models are currently unsustainable due to this imbalance of economic, social, and environmental priorities. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that:

We have developed these [unsustainable] models through our skills, knowledge and experience, but our thinking minds can respond to the challenge of our current imbalance to build new ways to address both: how we work and what we make (CSF, 2011: 5).

Put another way, challenges faced by the fashion industry can be overcome through sustainable development processes. Organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry have moved away from the 'fast fashion – cheap fashion' approach (EFF, 2008) towards a balanced TBL. The emphasis is on long-term goals, providing

opportunities for innovation and creativity, whilst also sharing experiences and knowledge (CSF, 2011). Although it could be argued that fast-fashion organisations are moving towards integrating sustainable development processes through, for example H&M's 'conscious lines' (Karmali, 2013; H&M, 2014) and Primark's Fairtrade T-shirts (Lee, 2007). However, section 2.2.5.2 discusses whether it is feasible to implement these practices across the whole supply chain.

#### *2.2.8.2 Sustainability, government initiatives, and the fashion industry*

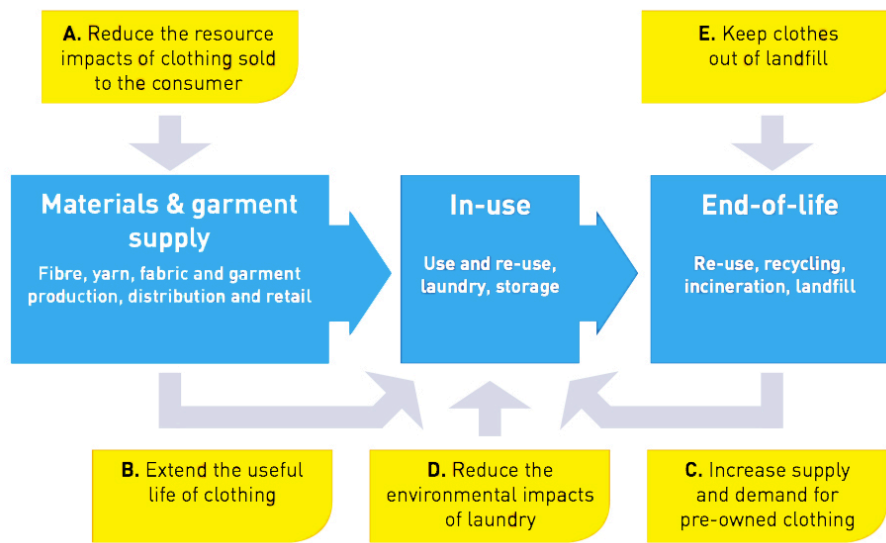
The UK government launched an initiative in 2007, working together with DEFRA and WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Plan) on a Sustainable Clothing Roadmap and Action Plan (SCAP). The aim was to "improv[e] the sustainability of clothing across its lifecycle, from the crops [...] grown to make the fabrics, to the design and manufacture of the garment, retail, use and end-of-life" (DEFRA, 2011). SCAP has internationally been honoured with "The 2013 Global Leadership Award" (WRAP, 2013a), which emphasises the importance of government involvement and support in tackling global challenges that are faced by the fashion industry (WRAP, 2013a). This furthermore accentuates the relevance of this thesis and the necessity to investigate issues concerning sustainability and corporate identity within the green slow-fashion industry.

SCAP focuses on five key areas helping stakeholders to improve their current process in becoming more sustainable (DEFRA, 2010: 2) (Figure 12):

- Improving the environmental performance across the whole supply chain
- Focusing on consumption trends and behaviour
- Raising awareness: media, education, and networks
- Creating market drivers for sustainable clothing
- Improving traceability along the supply chain.

Implementing these areas into the organisation's day-to-day processes provides them with the opportunity to save money and resources.

Figure 12: Saving money and resources across the clothing lifecycle (WRAP, 2012a)



Chapter 1 highlighted that “clothing accounts for around 5% of the UK’s total annual retail expenditure, with consumers spending [...] around £1,700 per household” (WRAP, 2012a: 3).

**Area A** focuses on the supply chain and its impact on the natural environment (WRAP, 2012a). Organisations are encouraged to report their total water consumption, carbon emission, and waste footprint of their clothing over its lifecycle through the *footprint calculator*, a tool developed by WRAP (WRAP, 2013b). This tool allows participants to monitor their success in keeping to their targets, whilst furthermore encouraging long-term commitment to sustainable development (WRAP, 2013b). “Supporters will take an “active role” in promoting good practice in the industry, and deliver consumer information, according to their role within the product lifecycle” (Lockey, 2013). This can also be achieved by utilising eco-labels that help consumers identify products with less environmentally harming impacts than other products (see 2.3).

**Area B** focuses on extending the *useful* time of a garment, through extending the product’s lifecycle by making it more durable, timeless in appearance, or versatile (WRAP, 2012a). According to WRAP (2012a) “around 30% of clothes in the household wardrobe typically have been unused for at least a year – worth £1,000 per household” (p. 5). This implies that approximately 1.7billion items are no longer worn, rest in wardrobes, or discarded in landfills (Smithers, 2012).

Common reasons for discarding garments are highlighted in Figure 13 (WRAP, 2012b). Keeping sustainability and sustainable development at the core of

the organisation’s manufacturing process is key to SCAP. This could be encouraged by offering additional services, which enhance the overall *useful* time: Fashion items that *no longer fit* could be tailored to the person’s body-type, garments that *no longer match the owner’s style* can be customised, and products that exceed their *in-fashion* style can be upcycled and transformed into a new ‘it’ item.

Figure 13: Reasons for unworn clothing (WRAP, 2012b: 27)

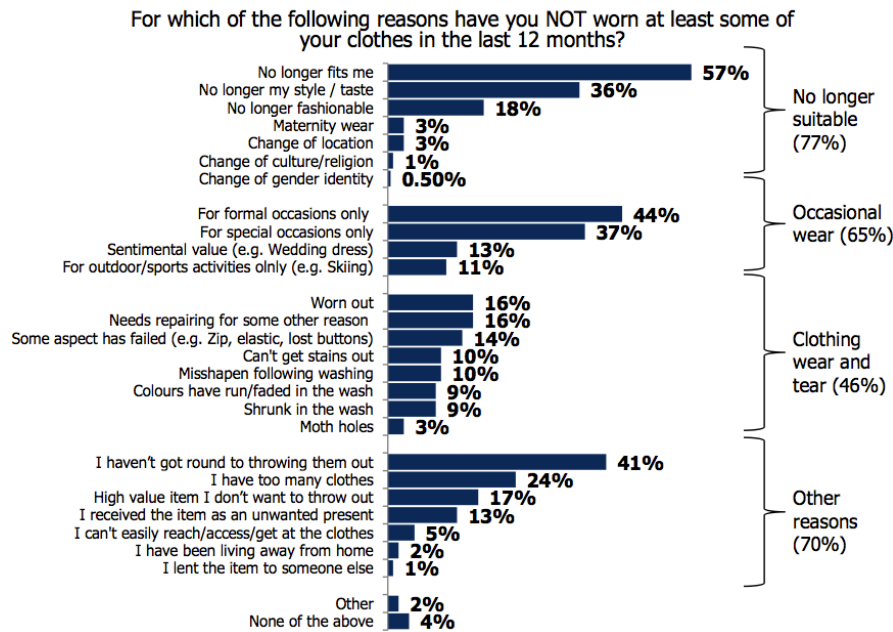
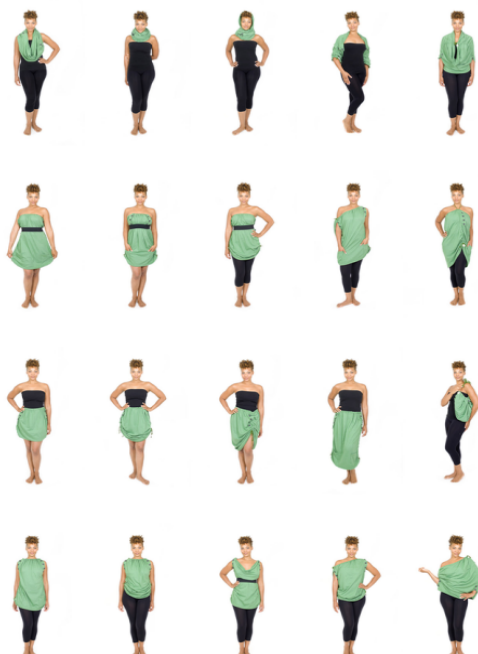


Figure 14: The Versalette ({}evolution apparel, 2011)

A further change in the ‘fashion world’ could be promoted through designing items sustainably. Sustainable design emphasises on the *timelessness* of a garment. This implies the piece of clothing is not bound to seasonality, thus, does not go *in* and *out* of fashion (Joy et al., 2012; Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2013). Furthermore, sustainable design indicates that it is created to fit more than one body type and shows high versatility in use. An example of sustainable design is {}evolution apparel’s



Versalette, a versatile fashion item, which follows a one-size-fits-all-approach. {r}evolution apparel, a micro-company, created the Versalette in a way that the item can be worn in 20 different ways ({r}evolution apparel, 2011) (Figure 14).

**Area C** and **E** are strongly linked to aspects of **Area B**, trying to encourage consumers to buy more pre-owned/pre-loved garments, whilst also advocating to keep these items out of landfill. High street retailers, including H&M and M&S actively promote this movement. H&M started collecting pre-loved clothes in their stores, offering their UK customers £5-off-vouchers on their next purchase over £30 (H&M, 2013). M&S introduced *shwopping*, which encourages their clientele to bring their unwanted garments to the store, which are then resold by their partner organisation Oxfam, which supports people living in poverty (M&S, 2013).

**Area D** is concerned with the water usage, which accounts for ¼ of the carbon footprint (WRAP, 2012a). New laundry detergents, “washing clothes less often, washing at a lower temperature, using larger loads and tumble drying less in summertime could cut the footprint by 7%” (WRAP, 2012a: 4).

A further aspect that has not explicitly been mentioned in Figure 12, but has been recognised as a vital area of SCAP, concerns tools that can help to improve the traceability of raw materials and manufacturing processes along the supply-chain (DEFRA, 2010: 2). Traceability in this context refers to various aspects, including,

but not limited to fair wages, good and safe working conditions, and sweatshop and child labour free production. The fast-fashion industry has managed to sell their garments at very low cost (Figure 15). A \$14 T-shirt was produced at a total cost of \$5.67. The implication that underlies this pricing strategy is so-called hidden costs (Greenovate, 2011) in the manufacturing process. Figure 16 highlights the expenditure in the manufacturing process. However, monetary implications are not the only hidden costs involved, they furthermore

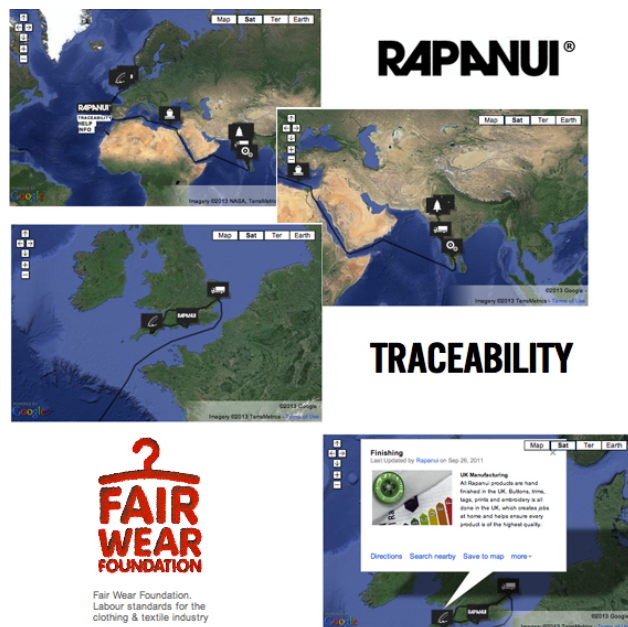
Figure 15: What does that \$14 shirt really cost? (Westwood, 2013)



include an environmental tangent, in form of pollution through the use of non-eco-friendly dyes and other chemicals, and social aspects relating to health problems and poor working conditions (Greenovate, 2011; Tynan, 2013).

A micro-organisation that brings traceability in the supply chain to a new level is Rapanui. This company can be seen as the *avant garde* in the industry, providing their consumers with exact details of their production processes from planting the cotton to the finished garment (Rapanui, 2013). Figure 16 shows three satellite images, the first one tracing the whole journey, the second and third one focusing on the raw material journey and the final production process. The journey is highlighted with a black line, showing various steps along the path with black boxes. Consumers are encouraged to click on these boxes to gain further information on what is happening at each individual stage. Moreover, Rapanui highlights that they are part of the Fair Wear Foundation, which promotes fair wages, fair working conditions, and education for their workers.

Figure 16: Traceability at Rapanui (Rapanui, 2013)



In conclusion, sustainable fashion has received increased attention in the fashion industry and from the UK Government. Governmental initiatives including SCAP encourage organisations to rethink their current practices and motivate them to implement sustainable development in their corporate strategies. It has furthermore been highlighted that micro-companies are key players within the industry and able to adapt to changes in the environment faster than their multinational counterparts. Thus, it can be said incorporating sustainability within the manufacturing processes, the fashion design, and corporate culture is not impossible, it is rather an exciting challenge that the fashion industry is facing. Therefore, it should be explored, in which way sustainable fashion and corporate identity interlink.

### 2.2.9 Sustainability and value co-creation

Consulting the literature, thus far, the link between sustainability and value co-creation has not been explored. Indirect links can be seen in terms of the O/M of a micro-organisation seeking to create products/services that are more environmentally friendly, and thus looks to their stakeholders to see how these can be incorporated or vice versa. Thus, this relationship is investigated in this PhD research.

## 2.3 Eco-Labels



Eco-labels can be seen as a “philosophy and a way of life that is increasing in importance [...] throughout the world” (McCarthy & Burdett, 1998: 61). They can be defined as symbols or signs, awarded to products/services that show more environmentally friendly attributes than their competition (GEN, 2004). The overall goal of eco-labels is:

[T]hrough communication of verification and accurate information, that is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement (GEN, 2004).

The eco-labels utilised in this research (Appendix 2) fall into three mechanisms: Standards, Certifications, and Labelling (Waide & Bernasconi-Osterwalder, 2008; Sustainability, 2011), which are discussed in the following sections. The focus of this research is on ‘standards’, thus ‘certifications’ and ‘labelling’ are only briefly described.

### 2.3.1 Standards, certifications, and labelling

#### 2.3.1.1 Standards

The International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO) defines standards as:

[C]ontaining technical specifications or other precise criteria to be used consistently as rules, guidelines or definitions, to ensure that materials, products, processes, and services are fit for their purpose (ISO, 2014).

These standards act as guidelines to help companies manage environmental issues (ISO, 2009) and often follow a consensus-based approach (Sustainability, 2011).



Within *standards* the ISO technical report 14020 series (Allison & Carter, 2000; EC, 2008) distinguishes three ‘types’: Type I, Type II, Type III (OECD, 1997; ISO, 2009). **Type I** standards are usually awarded by third-party organisations, which can either be government supported institutions or private non-commercial entities (Allison & Carter, 2000; EC, 2008). They are voluntary, multi-sectorial (GEN, 2003a), most commonly used within public procurement, and assess a product’s lifecycle on a pass/fail criteria (EC, 2008). Stated alternatively, these labels look at a product/service’s performance, from the early stages of production through to completion. An example of a Type I eco-label is the EU Flower.

**Type II** standardisations are based on claims made by manufacturers, importers, or distributors regarding environmental information. This implies that the claims made are one-sided (e.g. from manufacturer) and self-declared (Allison & Carter, 2000; GEN, 2003b; Pederson & Neergaard, 2006). Examples that can be mentioned are claims on product packaging.

**Type III** “claims consist of quantified product information based on lifecycle impacts” (Allison & Carter, 2000: I), which can be compared within individual product categories (Allison & Carter, 2000; Pederson & Neergaard, 2006). The information is displayed in form of an environmental performance declaration or non-selective reports (GEN, 2003b). An example of Type III label is Rapanui’s eco-label (section 2.3.4).

To conclude, although the three ‘types’ can be clearly defined, actually splitting eco-labels into these categories is not as clear-cut (see 2.3.5).

### *2.3.1.2 Certifications and labelling*

Similar to standardisations, **certifications** also rely on third-party involvement, in that the certifying body provides written assurance about the organisation’s product/service confirming that these comply with a specific set of standards (FAO, n.d.; SustAinability, 2011). This information is particularly valuable, as it is not communicated directly from the ‘source’ (organisation), but rather from independent (third-party) institutions (FAO, n.d.).

**Labelling** differs from certifications in that a “label is a form of communication with the end-consumer” (FAO, n.d.), rather than a member of the supply-chain. Alternatively stated, certifications are geared towards members of the

supply-chain or companies that may utilise an organisation's product/service as raw material for their own production (Boström & Klintman, 2008; Waide & Bernasconi-Osterwalder, 2008).

To conclude, whilst these three mechanisms (standards, certifications, and labelling) can be clearly defined, they share one common goal: distinguishing environmentally friendly products from those that are not (GEN, 2004). Thus, within this project the terms are used interchangeably. Moreover, in this research any reference made to marks of excellency, eco-labels, or seals of approval all refer to standards.

### 2.3.2 Benefits of eco-labels

Products/services certified with an eco-label highlight the primary goal of environmental conservation and protection (Morris, 1997; GEN, 2004) and further encourage organisations to invest in eco-innovation keeping their products/services up to standard (EPA, 1998; Hickle, 2007). The concept of eco-innovation is defined as a process that

- a) Is concerned with reducing negative effects on the environment (Rennings et al., 2008; Leitner et al., 2010);
- b) Uses resources efficiently to meet human needs (WBCSD, 2000).

The process can be triggered either by a changing environment, leading to improving existing technologies (Kemp & Pontoglio, 2007) or through trying to make business processes economically more efficient (Porter & van der Linde, 1995a). Most commonly, innovations are enhanced by rules and regulations, for example *win-win* opportunities, in which new standards provide room for reducing chemicals or polluting substances, whilst enhancing productivity (WBCSD, 2000; Jaenicke & Jacob, 2002; Green, 2005; Leitner et al., 2010).

Eco-labelling schemes offer a “win-win-win situation” (Pederson & Neergaard, 2006: 25) for participating organisations, regulatory authorities, governments, and society at large (Pederson & Neergaard, 2006) as they act as market-orientated tools helping organisations to fulfil their environmental goals and targets, whilst circumventing inefficiencies that are associated with mandatory standards or bans (Allen, 2000; GEN, 2004; D'Souza et al., 2006). Additionally, they also act as a promotional device, allowing consumers, who plan on purchasing

environmentally friendly goods/services, to make a conscious decision on their product choice (GEN, 2004; Belz & Peattie, 2010) by revealing those that:

- a) Are environmentally safe and less harmful (MSEA, 1999; Gallastegui, 2002);
- b) Use eco-friendly material and ecologically sound chemicals (MSEA, 1999).

In conclusion, eco-labels can be stimuli for organisations to improve their environmental performance, whilst also acting as an assurance for consumers that a specific good/service is less environmentally harming.

### 2.3.3 Drawbacks of eco-labels

Although there are positive aspects surrounding eco-labels, various drawbacks can also be identified. In an episode of a renowned German politics talk-show, discussing current topics, making them easily understandable for the general public, the facilitator, mentions that issues around standards can best be described as sitting in on an advanced business English course, when one is only a beginner (ARD, 2012a). This implies that issues surrounding eco-labels are difficult to understand and rather confusing (ARD, 2012b). In the same vein, standards have often been criticised to pose various barriers:

- a) **Economically:** by acting as barriers to entry in an international context (UNEP, n.d.; Zarrilli et al., 1997; Gallastegui, 2002);
- b) **Financially:** eco-labels can be costly, and may not be affordable for SMEs (EC, 2001a; Gallastegui, 2002);
- c) **Technically:** if technology has not advanced at the same speed within different countries (Tian, 2003).

Additionally, certifications arouse distrust and confusion among customers caused by greenwashing (Baker & Miner, 1993; Eden, 1994; Erskine & Collins, 1997). These negative consequences are further enhanced by the steady increase of standardisations within the marketplace (Koehler & Park, 2011) leading to confusion of what the individual eco-labels actually stand for (Sin, 2008; Sustainability, 2011). According to the Ecolabel Index (2014a) 445 eco-labels are currently circulating within 197 countries, spread across 25 industries. This number increased by 4.49% (20 eco-labels) between 2012 and 2014 (Koehler & Park, 2011; Ecolabel Index, 2012, 2014a).

In the textile industry alone “there are close to 100 different labels addressing environmental or social sustainability” (EFF, n.d.), which leads to two challenges:

- 1) Not all of these eco-labels can be categorised and grouped within the ISO standards (UNEP, n.d.), thus they are too complex and have not yet achieved their full potential (Lohse & Wulf-Schnabel, 2000; EC, 2001a; Horne, 2009);
- 2) Eco-labels lack the potential to harmonise existing and new labels, accelerating further distrust and disinterest (UNEP, n.d.).

In essence, not a single eco-label has managed to establish itself within the apparel industry (Meyer, 2001; Diekamp & Koch, 2010). Moreover, those standardisations that are used, are “frequently difficult to comply with and can often limit the materials that a designer is able to use” (Edwards, 2010a). This implies that existing eco-labels make it challenging for SMEs to access and apply these standardisations (Edwards, 2010a), which leads on to the next section.

#### 2.3.4 Current challenges

Green marketers (people concerned with marketing products that not only satisfy the needs/wants of consumers, but also have a lower environmental impact than their counterparts (Stanton & Futrell, 1987; Polonsky, 1994; AMA, 2012)) may face various challenges concerning green products and messages, as these *green issues* may enhance confusion within the marketplace and therefore among customers (Hanas, 2007). Ideally, if a consumer chooses to look for sustainably produced garments, it should be easy to identify these through an eco-label (Earley, 2012).

Within the UK there are five institutions that deal with standards in the apparel industry: the Ethical Trading Initiative; the Fair Trade Foundation; the Global Network of Fairtrade Organisations; the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation; and the Soil Association and Global Textile Standards Institution (Intel, 2009). Each of these institutions awards different labels, which look at a variety of environmental areas, for example, using less harming substances within the clothing production or promoting better working conditions in communities. A company can then focus on one or more of these areas that is most meaningful to them and acquire eco-labels that fit (Case, 2004), thereby promoting sustainability (OECD, 2002; Koos, 2011). Thus, standardisations have gained importance as environmental tools within the market place (Reinhardt, 1998; Diller, 1999; Blengini & Shields, 2010).

This however proposes various challenges: within the fashion industry over 100 eco-labels are currently used (EFF, n.d.). Consumers may be confused, as although they may have seen and know about some standards, they may not necessarily know what the individual eco-labels stand for (WRI, 2010; Harbaugh et al., 2011). Therefore they may not consider standards when purchasing clothes.

Moreover, thus far no single eco-label has established its dominance in the fashion industry (Meyer, 2001; Björk, 2010). Currently, *Rapanui* makes headlines around exactly this issue. This micro-company has designed a Type III label rating clothes in the same way white-goods are measured. It looks at the supply chain performance, which material is used and how efficient the process is. It is a simplified version, taking various key features from different eco-labels into account by creating a *one-size-fits-all* approach to labelling. This proposal has been drafted in cooperation with British MEPs and was brought forward to the European Parliament (EP) (Bell, 2012; Rapanui, 2012). The EP was not receptive to the newly suggested eco-label, as the EU already has a ‘national’ standardisation (EU-Flower), which according to *Rapanui* is too simplistic and not inclusive enough (Rapanui, 2011).

To conclude, although various eco-labels exist in the industries, many designers operating in the fashion industry do not associate themselves with certifications (Brown, 2011). It is vital to understand why organisations consciously choose not to acquire standards, whilst claiming to be ‘green’, in order to make recommendations for policy contributions, which is explored in Chapter 4.

### **2.3.5 Eco-labels, corporate identity, and sustainability**

Since the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) organisations have been encouraged to change their manufacturing processes by using resources and energy more wisely. The fashion industry, as one of the biggest polluters (CSF, 2008; UNEP, 2013), attempts to incorporate these measures into their supply chain. However, reducing the environmental impact of the clothing production is not the only hurdle faced by this industry, consistent with this challenge is that these garments need to be affordable and fashionable (Sharma & Hall, 2010).

Overall, the opinion about standardisations remains twofold: Opponents have heavily criticised these certifications over the past decades (Reinhardt, 1998; Austgulen & Stø, 2013) as they are simply seen as an add-on strategy that allows

companies to call themselves ‘sustainable’ (Stuart, 2011). Proponents on the other hand see eco-labels as strong communication tools that can enhance a company’s corporate identity (see 2.1.5.2). This relationship is explored in Chapter 4.

## 2.4 Gaps in the literature



The literature review has highlighted the milestones, current situation, and challenges faced in terms of the four key areas. In the following a brief summary of the gaps identified throughout Chapter 2 is provided:

### Corporate Identity

- Corporate identity models are based on research conducted in large organisations, the gap lies in investigating a corporate identity construct for micro-companies;
- Thus far there is no corporate identity model that investigates its relationship with sustainability and value co-creation;
- This links to Objectives 2 and 3:
  - To identify the key components of **corporate identity** within the context of the green-slow fashion industry and **micro-organisations**;
  - To analyse how **sustainability** is incorporated into the elements of **corporate identity**.

### Sustainability

- The literature lacks a common interpretation of the term ‘sustainable fashion’
- Providing common characteristics for the term is vital, as it helps stakeholders involved to understand one another, when talking about this type of fashion
- This links to Objective 1:
  - To explore the question ‘What does sustainable fashion mean?’ from the perspectives of the O/Ms, their employees, and their consumers and how their individual **characteristics and meanings** of the **term overlap**.

### Eco-Labels

- Although there is an extensive literature available on eco-labels and labelling in more general term, there is no evidence why O/Ms of micro-organisations choose (not) to acquire a standardisation
- This links to Objectives 4 and 5:
  - To **compare and contrast** different practices utilised across the four focal companies in terms of **communicating** their **corporate identity**
  - To map the **relationship between labels**, sustainable fashion, and green-slow fashion **organisations**

## Contexts

- Micro-organisations are an under-researched area, thus there is a lack of research and a gap that needs to be filled
- Majority of research conducted on/in the fashion industry is from an arts and design perspective. There is a lack of management (marketing) research in the area
- This links to Objectives 2 and 4:
  - To identify key components of corporate identity within the context of the green-slow fashion industry and **micro-organisations**
  - To compare and contrast different practices utilised across the four focal companies in terms of the green-slow fashion industry and **micro-organisations**

## 2.5 Value co-creation literature



This section of the literature review was added after the data analysis was completed. To explain, the findings brought forward in this PhD research highlighted the necessity to incorporate a further body of literature that explains and complements this research's key contributions and outcome. The following sections provide a brief overview of value co-creation, whilst predominantly focusing on the service-dominant logic (S-DL).

### 2.5.1 Value, value creation, and value co-creation

Before discussing the milestones and developments in the field of value co-creation it is vital to understand what the terms 'value', 'value creation' and 'value co-creation' entail. Similarly to sustainability and corporate identity, the term *value* is hard to define (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniest-Bonillo, 2007) as it can have different meanings depending on the context and situational setting. For example, *values* can be described as the goals and/or the motivational drivers stirring a person's ambitions to achieve their set targets (Engel et al., 1995), which are sometimes referred to as 'the values of consumers' (McGregor, 2000; Rewerts & Hanf, 2006). On the other hand *value* can also be defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973: 5). In that sense, *values* can either be of a social or personal nature. A person's *social values* are influenced by

their external and internal environment: their culture or social grouping (Engle et al., 1995). *Personal values*, on the other hand, whilst also taking social norms into account, may change and evolve over time, depending on a person's "life experience" (Firat et al., 1995: 42).

A key attribute associated with the term *value* is the emphasis of "mental pictures of important needs and goals" (McGregor, 2000: 94), which guide an individual's decision-making process on what products/services are worth acquiring (Anderson & Narus, 1998). Thus it is important to ask: How can *value* be measured? Answering and understanding the implications of this question is vital to any business in order to stay competitive in the marketplace (Anderson & Narus, 1998). Various authors (Kotler & Levy, 1969; Day, 2002) have highlighted that *value* and customer satisfaction are strongly linked, thus it could be said that:

[V]alue in business markets is the worth in monetary terms of the technical, economic, service, and social benefits a customer company receives in exchange for the price it pays for a market offering (Anderson & Narus, 1998: 6).

In summary, *values* are key indicators of a person's or society's preference. Thus, a product/service that is perceived as having 'added value' not only helps to make these products/services stand out, but also is key to creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Grönroos, 1994).

Having established what the term *value* entails the concept of *value creation* is explored. *Value creation* can be seen as a process through which a customer either 'gains' something from purchasing a product/service (Grönroos, 2008) (e.g. social status, self-confidence) or that enhances a person's well being (Vargo et al., 2008). Using the fashion industry to illustrate this further, a company could offer their clients added value by (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996):

- Increasing the garments overall quality;
- Providing support services such as tailoring or personal fashion advice services;
- Implementing end-of-life recycling facilities;
- Engaging in charitable partnerships (e.g. M&S and shwopping).

In an ideal scenario, these added benefits strengthen the relationship between the brand and the consumer, thereby leading to an enhanced product buy-in and customer loyalty (Hallawell, 1999; Yang & Peterson, 2004).

Although the term *value creation* can be explained in simple terms, the actual process is complex and multi-dimensional in nature (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). To



reiterate this further, from a production-oriented perspective *value creation* can be defined as benefits received when exchanging money for a good, whilst with the emergence of a more service-oriented approach the focus has shifted to what Grönroos (2008) identifies as ‘value-in-use’. The latter is defined as value being “created when customers use goods and services” (Grönroos, 2008: 303) and focuses on the customer’s view and his/her role in the value creation process (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Furthermore, *value creation* is strongly interlinked with the concept of ‘perceived value’, “a subjective construct that varies between customers, between cultures and at different times” (Sánchez et al. 2006: 394). *Perceived value* is the outcome of various marketing activities in relationship marketing (Oh, 2003; Flint et al., 2011), which can be split into two key parts focusing on (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Oh, 2003):

- **Benefits** consumers may receive: these may be of an economic nature (e.g. money saving or generating) or social nature (e.g. status, image).
- **Sacrifices** consumers may have to make when purchasing a good/service: these may include, but are not limited to the price paid, time and effort spent on sourcing a garment, and risks associated with the purchase of a product/service.

Accordingly, Slater (1997) has highlighted that “the creation of customer value must be the reason for the firm’s existence and certainly for its success” (p. 166), however, there is little know about “the process of value creation, when it starts, what it includes, [and] when it ends” (Grönroos, 2011: 6). Nevertheless, if an organisation understands the true meaning of *perceived value* they are able to create added value, which leads to developing a strong consumer-brand bond and a sustainable competitive advantage (Wang et al., 2004). However, this is one of the greatest challenges organisations face: *understanding* what consumers actually want and need (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Day, 2002; Flint et al. 2011). Whilst adding additional services and enhancing the overall product’s quality may be favourable, these additions need to align with the consumers’ wants in order to encourage a positive purchasing decision. Ravald and Grönroos (1996) emphasise that “introducing “extras” which are not driven by the needs of the customers can never be more than a short-term solution” (pp. 20-21).

In order to overcome this challenge and gain an insight into the consumers’ perspective, organisations can choose to focus on *value co-creation*. Before elaborating on the importance of value co-creation, it is vital to highlight that

previously, the terms ‘co-creation’ and ‘co-production’ were used interchangeably (cf. Vargo & Lusch 2004a), with co-creation indicating a knowledge exchange between the customer and the company, whilst co-production implies the customer’s participation in developing a new product/service (Terblanche, 2014). With the service-dominant logic gaining increased interest and popularity (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014), which is further discussed in section 2.4.2, there was a need to distinguish these two terms into value co-creation during the consumption process (co-creation) and value co-creation that refers to the co-design, co-inventiveness, or joint production (Vargo & Lusch, 2006a). Etgar (2008) builds on these premises and highlights that co-production relates to customisation processes, which are ultimately part of the co-creation process. Although Vargo and Lusch (2006a, 2011) are key authors within the field of value co-creation, authors such as Ballantyne and Varey (2006) contest their distinction between the terms by highlighting they “want to make a distinction between co-production of knowledge through communicational interaction (an exchange) and co-creation through dialogical interaction (something unique and new)” (p. 344). Furthermore, the authors (ibid) disagree with previous assumptions of a linear supply chain (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2004a), which implies that they see the emergence of a network in which competitors, suppliers, and customers co-create, whilst at the same time compete with one another (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). These opposing viewpoints are representative of an ongoing debate within the literature (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014). Although, thus far there is no clear-cut definition on value co-creation, a commonality between the various perspectives and interpretations of value co-creation is the fact that “from a co-creation perspective, suppliers and customers are, conversely, no longer on opposite sides, but interact with each other for the development of new business opportunities” (ibid: 643). Within this PhD research Vargo and Lusch’s (2004a) interpretation of value co-creation is adopted, which is justified in section 2.4.2.

Overall, it can be said that value co-creation itself has received increased interest within the marketing literature (Zwick et al., 2008) and “stands for a notion of modern corporate power that [...] [is] working with and through the freedom of the consumer” (Zwick et al., 2008: 163). The term value co-creation implies that value is created in collaboration with another entity: internal and/or external stakeholders (Vargo et al., 2008). Stated alternatively, rather than taking on a traditional approach whereby companies dictate what market offerings and added services are available,

consumers are integrated in the process and can take on an active role in communicating their preferences, wants, and likes directly to the supplier (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Ballantyne, 2004; Payne et al., 2008). This dialogue between organisations and their consumers provides the opportunity of collaboration and *co-create* products/services that not only have added value, but also move organisations closer to their ultimate goal: the creation of a competitive advantage (Lusch & Vargo, 2006a).

In terms of a business-to-customer perspective “value is only created when the product or service is used and the customer is viewed as an essential co-creator of value” (Marandi et al., 2010: 170). Put differently, the customer is actively engaged in the production process, by suggesting improvements that make a good/service more valuable to them. However, value co-creation

[I]s neither the transfer nor outsourcing of activities to customers nor a marginal customization of products [...] [nor] staging of customer events around the firm’s various offerings (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b: 6).

It rather is a holistic approach that incorporates multiple parties, who, through communication, create a product/service that is mutually beneficial (Gummesson, 2008). However, similarly to *value creation*, value co-creation bears risks, which are further explained in section 2.4.3. Thus, in conclusion, it can be said that all three terms (value, value creation, and value co-creation) are not only context dependent, but also bear challenges in their implementation process.

As previously indicated, value co-creation and corporate identity share various links. Within the context of this PhD research values were mentioned in connection with an organisation’s culture and corporate strategy. To briefly review the key points: the O/M’s personal ‘values’ influence corporate culture (Juntunen, 2012), which ideally will be shared by the employees and thus create a positive working environment (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Stated alternatively, in this context, the term ‘value’ refers to personal beliefs and attributes that the O/M deems not only important, but also acts upon. A further link can be established between *values* and the company’s overall pricing strategy. In this sense, a garment’s price-tag represents the monetary value the O/M has allocated to this item, thereby carefully considering various cost factors, including, but not limited to the price of raw materials, the working hours inserted to create the product, and profit calculations (Pathirana &

Heenkenda, 2011). Whilst the price-tag may influence a consumer’s decision-making process, it is not the sole influencer in the decision-making process, rather the consumer considers the overall benefits received and whether these outweigh the sacrifices made when purchasing a good/service (Eckman et al., 1990; Monroe, 1990; Gale, 1994; Leszinski & Marn, 1997). This leads onto the next section.

### 2.5.2 Origins and milestones

As previously highlighted, value co-creation has gained increased interest within the field of marketing and has been discussed and researched by various authors (Flint et al., 2011; Pongsakornrungrasri & Schroeder, 2011; Lusch & Vargo, 2011). Within the value co-creation process various streams can be identified, which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Research streams on the co-creation of value (adapted from Cova & Dall’O, 2008: 5)

Research Stream	Consumer-Producer Relationship	Central Topic
Consumer Experience	Immersion	Appropriation by Consumers
Co-Production at the Service Encounter	Service Encounter	Integration through Consumer Participation
<b>S-DL</b>	<b>Value Co-creation</b>	<b>Consumer as Resource Integrator</b>
Collaborative Innovation	Collaboration	Consumer as Developer and Marketer
Consumer Empowerment	Power	Responsibility of Consumers
Consumer Agency	Narrative Re-framing	Performance of Consumers
Consumer Tribes	Collective Action	Consumer as Competitors
Consumer Resistance	Subversion	Hijack by Consumers

Although value can be co-created through multiple processes, within this research, the focus is on the service-dominant logic (S-DL), a dominating stream within the marketing literature. S-DL was chosen as it looks at both, the consumer and the supplier, and their relationship with one another, which fits in well within the context of the slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations.

S-DL presents a new way of thinking about marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a). Rather than following traditional marketing processes, by simply providing a consumer experience (Holt, 1995) or enhancing customer care (Jayawardhena et al., 2007), S-DL sees customers and members of the supply chain as collaborating partners (Lusch & Vargo, 2006a). In other words, value is not simply created by adding an additional service to an existing product, but rather “value can only be created with and determined by the user in the ‘consumption’ process and through use

or what is referred to as value in use” (Lusch & Vargo 2006b: 284). Thus, S-DL leads marketing to move away:

[F]rom the exchange of tangible goods [...] and towards the exchange of intangibles, [...] [which] points marketing towards a more comprehensive and inclusive dominant logic, one that integrates goods with services and provides richer foundation for the development of marketing thought and practice (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a: 1-2).

Stated alternatively, S-DL deems it beneficial to combine marketing strategies and practices, product development, and customer care functions and integrate these into the supply chain, thereby encouraging stakeholder involvement with value creation as the ultimate goal (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a,b; Lusch & Vargo, 2006a; Lusch et al., 2007). Moreover:

[F]rom the traditional, goods-based, manufacturing perspective, the producer and consumer are usually viewed as ideally separated in order to enable maximum manufacturing efficiency (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a: 10/11).

However, this view has changed: the internet has encouraged information exchange with more information being publicly available to both organisations and stakeholders. This provides an opportunity of two-way communication in which organisations and stakeholders can share information and explore their consumers’ needs and wants (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Frigo, 2010). This highlights that the role of the consumer has changed within the concept of S-DL, by being able to influence suppliers to create a new entity that reflects their (consumers’) own identity (Firat et al., 1995). Stated alternatively, S-DL suggests that people who are buying and using a product/service are accepting their role as co-creators (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a; Vernet & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013), which can either be upstream or downstream (Vernet & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). Within the upstream co-creation process, stakeholders are asked to contribute ideas and suggestions during the product development phase. This implies that the organisation makes use of their stakeholders’ input before the product is sold on the market (Vernet & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). Contrariwise, downstream co-creation focuses on suggestions made and feedback given by stakeholders once the product is readily available on the market and stakeholders had the opportunity to experience its functionality (Vernet & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013).

Although S-DL has changed the market environment, it has been on the one hand criticised for its lack of clarity, and on the other hand questioned for its

reliability, validity, and appropriateness as a paradigm. Firstly, a criticism that was raised concerns the lack of clarity in terms of the co-creators' nature: who they are and how they interact (Achrol & Kotler, 2006; Gummesson, 2006; Grönroos, 2006a). Within the S-DL literature anyone within an economy is seen as a potential partner for a collaborative relationship and thus value co-creation (Gummesson, 2004). To reiterate this point further using the example of the slow-fashion industry, any stakeholder can be utilised to co-create value for a garment: from the cotton farmer to supply chain intermediaries, from employees to consumers. This indicates that Lusch and Vargo (2006b) go even further with their value co-creation construct than previous value creation processes, emphasising that co-creation happens beyond the boundaries of a factory and proposing that any individual that can contribute to a win-win relationship is seen as a potential partner. In their opinion, "the customer is always a co-creator of value" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008: 8).

Secondly, O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2009) have heavily critiqued Vargo and Lusch's (2004a) article 'Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing' for being regressive, lacking theoretical foundations, and definition of the term 'services'. This article led to a series of responses between O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2011), Lusch and Vargo (2011), and Vargo and Lusch (2011), which provide an insight into different perspectives of value co-creation and further justification for incorporating this specific paradigm into this PhD research. The following paragraphs briefly summarise the key arguments made in each of the articles.

O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2009) indicate that the term 'services', according to the definition used by Vargo and Lusch (2004a) is limiting in nature, as it focuses on activities that are performed, rather than, in a traditional sense, which looked at functions performed. In their 'rejoinder' Lusch and Vargo (2011) clarify that they use the term loosely as an all-encompassing term, which is "viewed as assisting or helping or aiding someone and this can be done through activities, tasks, processes and performances" (p. 1302). This implies that in a sense all businesses – to a smaller or larger extent - provide services and thus, can be viewed and analysed within the S-DL paradigm. However, a question that arises is, if all businesses are delivering a service, how can the definition of the term be made meaningful (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2011)? In O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy's (2011) opinion

[A] definition of a service organization is only meaningful when contrasted with non-service organisations; defining as Lusch and Vargo do, a service in such an all embracing way, says no more than all businesses rely on the skills, competences, technology and knowledge of employees to produce the results sought (p. 1312).

This then would reduce any kind of service in a business to a truism and ultimately creates a backwards step in the development of marketing, as the paradigm then loses on depth and richness (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2011). This criticism however, was previously contested in that Lusch and Vargo (2011) emphasised that S-DL is a research stream that has received interest globally and is thus not represented through one article, but rather a body of work. Moreover, Vargo and Lusch (2011) indicate that they do agree with O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy (2011) in that S-DL currently is lacking a theoretical foundation, however they also insist that throughout their scholarly work they (Vargo & Lusch, 2011) have called for more research to be undertaken in order to gain depth and richness and create a theoretical framework.

Within this PhD research Vargo and Lusch's (2004a) interpretation of S-DL is adopted as it provides the freedom to explore 'services' in a broader, all-inclusive sense that compliments the context of this research project.

### **2.5.3 Current challenges**

Value co-creation is rather challenging for marketers (Roberts et al., 2005; Maklan et al., 2007; Roberts & Adams, 2010). With IT changing the way organisations and consumers communicate, marketers recognise the importance of incorporating stakeholders into the business (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Lusch & Vargo 2006b; Grönroos, 2006a,b; Mahr et al., 2014). Although consumers now have more access to information and are more knowledgeable (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Füller, 2010) two key issues remain:

- Do stakeholders want to get involved in the co-creation process?
- Do stakeholders have the expertise to get involved in the co-creation process?

Firstly, it is questionable whether stakeholders want to get involved in co-creation. Priem (2007) emphasises that whilst consumers may be willing to purchase a good/service that has added value, they may not feel strongly enough about these items to get involved in the value co-creation process. For example, while a consumer

may appreciate increased quality control on knitted jumpers, they may not be as attached to these seasonal garments to suggest any changes on how to further improved them. Yet in order to co-create value the consumers' attitude and willingness to engage in a dialogue with the organisation and sharing their experiences is a prerequisite for value co-creation (Priem, 2007; Cova & Dallı, 2008). Secondly, even if the first challenge can be overcome and stakeholders are interested in the co-creation process, it is not said that they have the expertise and competence to provide a value-adding contribution to the product/service (Vernette & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). Going back to the knitted jumper example, stakeholders could suggest adding leather patches on the elbows, making it more durable. However, the risk the organisation than takes is to decide whether this suggestion has potential or could aggravate consumers that feel strongly about animal welfare. In other words, in order to co-create value, organisations have to identify the 'right' stakeholders and establish relationships with them in order to utilise these competencies to their full potential (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Vernetıe & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). This however is a vicious circle: the literature does not indicate who these 'right' stakeholders are and how to identify them. Moreover, there is no guarantee that consumers that in the past may have acted as trustworthy co-creators will do so in the future (Achrol & Kotler, 2006; Gummesson, 2006; Grönroos, 2006a). A further difficulty that emerges and is discussed by various authors (Knudsen, 2007; Magnussen, 2009) is: even if consumers were willing to co-create a product/service they would be unable to support the process, due to a lack of imagining a new product that currently is not in existence. This leads back to the criticism made about S-DL, as the 'co-creates' are not explicitly described (Grönroos, 2006a).

In summary, value co-creation is a complex process that can have the potential, if successfully implemented, to create a USP and competitive advantage for an organisation. However, thus far there is no common checklist that enables organisations to identify who trustworthy co-creators are. The relevance of value co-creation within this research and how the four micro-organisations chosen deal with benefits and drawbacks associated with value co-creation is discussed in Chapter 5.



## 2.6 Entrepreneurship literature



Similarly to value co-creation the literature on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in more general terms emerged from the data and thus, was added as a section in the literature review after the findings and discussion chapters were completed. Due to the theme emerging strongly from the analysis it was necessary to incorporate this body of literature. The following sections present firstly, a definition of the terms entrepreneur, intrapreneur, and entrepreneurship. Secondly, it presents the origins and milestones within the entrepreneurship literature. And lastly, cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable entrepreneurship are discussed, which, due to the context of this PhD research, complement the overall findings.

### 2.6.1 Entrepreneur, intrapreneur, and entrepreneurship

Before elaborating on the key developments within the entrepreneurship literature, it is vital to gain some background information on the emergence of this field of research, as well as understand what the terms entrepreneur, intrapreneur, and entrepreneurship entail. Similarly to sustainability and value co-creation, entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon, but rather has a long-standing history (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Audretsch, 2012). As a research topic, entrepreneurship finds its origins in a variety of disciplines, including, but not limited to management studies, psychology, sociology, and economics (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Busenitz et al., 2003; Kuratko, 2005; Audretsch, 2012). Although entrepreneurship has received great attention over the past decades, authors (Busenitz et al., 2003; Wickham, 2006) highlighted that there is not one, but multiple definitions commonly agreed upon, depending on the research stance taken. Whilst there are various key characteristics commonly associated with the term, such as risk, uncertainty, innovation, perception, and change (Hérbert & Link, 1989), other associations differ with the various definitions, which is demonstrated in the following sections.

The term *entrepreneur* finds its origins in the French language and can be loosely translated as ‘beginning something or undertaking something’ (Gündoğdu, 2012; Scott, 2012). In medieval times an entrepreneur was described as “someone who is tough and prepared to risk his own life and fortune” (Landström, 2005: 8). This notion of taking risks and, ideally, creating wealth (Ünay & Zehir, 2012) is still current in more contemporary definitions in which “an entrepreneur is [seen as] someone who specialises in taking judgemental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources” (Casson, 2003: 20). Both definitions focus on the ‘entrepreneur’ as an individual as opposed to a team of people, a committee, or even an organisation (Hérbert & Link, 1989). However, within the literature there seems to be a disagreement about this specific aspect, with authors (Garud & Karnøe, 2003; Maguire et al., 2004) emphasising that an entrepreneur does not necessarily have to be an individual, but rather can be a network of people, which seizes an opportunity and develops it into a new venture, product, or service. Although there is no agreement whether an entrepreneur is a singular or plural entity, there seems to be a common notion that the ‘entrepreneur’ takes advantage of opportunities by not only transforming these into a business idea (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Wickham, 2006; Kuratko, 2009), but also actively encourage innovation within a marketplace (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Peneder, 2009; Gündoğdu, 2012).

The terms entrepreneur and intrapreneur are not only closely linked, but also interconnected. The key distinguishing factor between these concepts is that entrepreneurship refers to establishing an opportunity outside of an existing organisation, whilst intrapreneurship implies that ‘entrepreneurial action’ takes place within the company (Lowe & Marriott, 2007; Parker, 2009; Bosma et al., 2010). To explain, individual employees or working teams can take a bottom-up approach to developing new opportunities for the firm they are currently working for and create new, innovative, and pro-active initiatives that drive this company forward (ibid). Pinchot (1987) describes intrapreneurs as “in-house entrepreneurs, those ‘dreamers’ who can increase the speed and cost-effectiveness of technology transfer from R&D to the marketplace” (p. 14). Thus, it can be said that the key focus of intrapreneurial research lies within the notion of internal wealth creation through managers and employees (Brazeal, 1993; Gündoğdu, 2012). A further commonality between entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are the shared personal characteristics, which include, but are not limited to being an “idea champion” (Galbraith, 1982: 8), self-determined,

confident, and opportunistic (Sinha & Srivastava, 2013). These characteristics are key drivers for entrepreneurship.

After having defined the terms entrepreneur and intrapreneur, it is vital to understand what entrepreneurship means within different contexts. Entrepreneurship implies a process that enables individuals to take advantage of opportunities in a marketplace, develop ideas further and, ideally, employ them in a way that generates profits (Thompson, 1999). Thus, entrepreneurship “needs enterprising people, who are agents of change but maybe not entrepreneurs in a strict sense” (ibid: 209). In this manner, it is a dynamic process that is based on ideas and guided by a clear vision, which develops either an existing business further or establishes a new one, whilst at the same time promotes flexibility and creativity (Thompson, 1999; Gündoğdu, 2012; Mortazavi & Bahrami, 2012). Thus, it can be said that the key assumptions underlying entrepreneurship are growth, innovation, and flexibility (Swedberg, 2006; Scott, 2012; Jennings et al., 2012). However, it was pointed out that these traits are not solely exclusive to the concept of entrepreneurship, but rather are desirable attributes that any type of organisation, whether it is small-, medium-, or large-sized, aspires to gain (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990).

Entrepreneurship in the literature is either interpreted following the lines of the definition of the ‘entrepreneur’ or the ‘intrapreneur’. In compliance with the term ‘entrepreneur’, entrepreneurship is described as an action taken by an individual that is external to an organisation and either self-employed or the owner of an entity (Hamilton, 2000; Berglann et al., 2009). Stated alternatively, entrepreneurship describes the action an entrepreneur is taking to create a new venture (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Audretsch, 2012). On the other hand, entrepreneurship can also take a slightly broader view and incorporate the notion of the ‘intrapreneur’. In this instance, entrepreneurship is defined as the “scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited” (Venekataraman, 1997: 120). This definition of entrepreneurship can be seen as more inclusive, as it allows for multiple entrepreneurial options to be incorporated, such as start-ups, new ventures, spin-offs of already existing ventures, and production innovation within and external to the company (Jennings et al., 2012).

In summary, the terms entrepreneur, intrapreneur, and entrepreneurship are strongly interconnected. In essence, they either describe an entity (individual or

group) that drives new innovations or the process of creating these new ventures. The following section focuses on the milestones and key authors of entrepreneurship.

### 2.6.1 Origins and milestones

The previous section highlighted that the notion of entrepreneurship derives from various research disciplines (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Busenitz et al., 2003; Kuratko, 2005; Audretsch, 2012), which “has resulted in an academic field that is complex and heterogeneous with respect to approaches, methodologies and even the understanding about what exactly constitutes entrepreneurship” (Audretsch, 2012: 756). A careful examination of the literature reveals that ‘entrepreneurship’ finds its origins within the field of economics and spread from there to other disciplines within the humanities and social sciences (Duke, 2004). Hérbert and Link (1989) indicate that traditionally the economic body of literature held twelve diverse approaches of the role of an entrepreneur (p. 41):

1. The entrepreneur is the person who assumes the risk associated with uncertainty.
2. The entrepreneur is the person who supplies financial capital.
3. The entrepreneur is an innovator.
4. The entrepreneur is a decision maker.
5. The entrepreneur is an industrial leader.
6. The entrepreneur is a manager or superintendent.
7. The entrepreneur is an organiser and co-ordinator of economic resources.
8. The entrepreneur is owner of an enterprise.
9. The entrepreneur is an employer of factors of production.
10. The entrepreneur is a contractor.
11. The entrepreneur is an arbitrageur.
12. The entrepreneur is an allocator of resources among alternative uses.

A distinguishing factor between these approaches is that statements 2, 6, 8, and 9 see the entrepreneur as someone who does not move forward, but rather is ‘static’. To reiterate this point further, within the capacity of, for example, the financial supplier or manager/superintendent the ‘entrepreneur’ itself is seen as undertaking a passive role. In this sense, these statements do not allow for flexibility and/or creativity, but rather emphasise on already acquired skills/elements that “constitute repetitions of past procedures and techniques” (Hérbert & Link, 1989: 41). All other statements imply a dynamic world in which the entrepreneur is seen as an innovator and producer of new ideas (Audretsch, 2012). Although there are various interpretations of what constitutes entrepreneurship and innovation within the management and

economics literature (Ünay & Zehir, 2012), there seems to be a common agreement that the early body of research draws upon three dominant traditions: the German, the Chicago, and the Austrian (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Cowen, 2003; de Soto, 2008; Rocha, 2012).

Canillon is seen as the ‘father’ of entrepreneurship, having been the first to coin the term (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Cantillon’s work describes the entrepreneur as an essential economic actor (Hérbert & Link, 1989), thereby stressing the functional aspects of being an entrepreneur, rather than personality traits that may be associated with the individual (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Various authors (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Gündoğdu, 2012) indicated that, although not entirely proven, Cantillon’s work could be seen as providing the basis for the development of entrepreneurial theory and literature.

Joseph Schumpeter is a representative of the German tradition and widely cited within the literature on entrepreneurship (Hérbert & Link, 1989; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Audretsch, 2012; Bezemer, 2014). Schumpeter highlights that the entrepreneur plays a vital role within the market place, in that he/she drives economic development (Schumpeter, 1911; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). This implies that Schumpeter sees innovation as a key characteristic of entrepreneurs (Schumpeter, 1928). He highlights that “carrying out of new combinations we call ‘enterprise’, the individual whose function it is to carry them out we call ‘entrepreneurs’” (Schumpeter, 1934: 734). Schumpeter’s contribution to the theory of entrepreneurship lies with reducing the theory to three pairs of opposites (Hérbert & Link, 1989: 44):

- 1) Economic routine versus change in economic routine;
- 2) Static versus dynamic environment;
- 3) Entrepreneurship versus management.

Whilst this view is generally accepted by researchers in the field of entrepreneurship, it has also been criticised by Schultz, who is a representative of the Chicago tradition. Schultz (1980) highlights that Schumpeter’s thought process was moving in the right direction, but did not take the theory far enough. According to Schultz (1975), who sees his theoretical approach embedded in human capital, there are four aspects that can be critiqued about previous research on entrepreneurship (p. 832):

1. The concept is restricted to businessmen;

2. It does not take into account the differences in allocative abilities among entrepreneurs;
3. The supply of entrepreneurship is not treated as a scarce resource; and
4. There is no need for entrepreneurship in general equilibrium theory.

Thus, it can be said that Schultz (1975, 1980) brought forward two key advancements: Firstly, he indicated that entrepreneurship implies that entrepreneurs are able to deal with disequilibria in a market environment, whilst furthermore broadening the area to non-market and market based activities. Secondly, his investigations highlighted that education plays a vital role in people being able to not only identify disequilibria, but also respond to them (Schultz, 1975).

Kirzner (1985) represents the Austrian tradition. In his earlier work Kirzner (1985) implies that uncertainty is not necessarily a key characteristic of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship. This thought process however was heavily criticised by the likes of fellow theorist von Mises (2008), who highlights that “there is a simple rule of thumb to tell entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs are those on whom the incidence of losses on the capital employed falls” (p. 13). This poses the question of whether an individual who has nothing to lose would seize an opportunity or take advantage of it? This thought was incorporated in Kirzner’s later work, in which he “contends that uncertainty *is* central to the notion of entrepreneurship actively, but maintains that the relationship is more subtle than formerly supposed” (Hérbert & Link, 1989: 47). Appendix 3 provides a summary of the key points mentioned in this section. It has to be highlighted that there are further representatives in each of the various traditions. Due to the main focus of the PhD research being corporate identity, the review is limited to the four key authors presented.

Although dividing the entrepreneurship literature into three broad traditions is helpful in understanding key advancements being made, Audretsch (2012) suggests a different approach in dividing this research area. The author identifies three categories: entrepreneurship as an organisational context, entrepreneurship based on performance criteria, and entrepreneurship as behaviour (Audretsch, 2012). Entrepreneurship as an organisational context focuses on criteria that constitute entrepreneurship, which include, but are not limited to the size of the company, its age, or whether the company is owned by an individual or a family business. The origin of the size criteria can be traced back to Schumpeter’s (1911) ‘*Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*’ (The theory of economic development). Whilst the organisational context provides an

initial point of reference, a criticism that can be brought forward is that multiple of these criteria strongly overlap and even contradict one another. To explain, whilst a start-up can be an entrepreneurial venture this does not imply that every single new company has entrepreneurial potential (Gartner, 1989; Audretsch, 2012; Henrekson & Sanandaji, 2014). Similarly, growth, innovation, and flexibility (Swedberg, 2006; Scott, 2012; Jennings et al., 2012) are not attributes solely associated with micro- or small-businesses, but rather can affect companies of any size (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Although this categorisation provides an initial starting point to identify what organisation can be classified as entrepreneurial, there are various challenges associated with this approach.

Entrepreneurship as a performance criteria is a further way to make sense of what businesses are entrepreneurial. The key distinguishing factors within this category are innovation (Schumpeter, 1928) and growth (Audretsch, 2012), which links back to Cantillon, who describes entrepreneurs as key economic drivers (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Lowe & Marriotte, 2007), and Schumpeter (1911), who sees economic growth as a determinant of entrepreneurial behaviour. It is implied that entrepreneurs are the dynamic force that break through a static market environment and create a new equilibrium, until this cycle is repeated (Audretsch, 2012). In contrast to the organisational context, performance criteria are seen as independent of the size, age, and legal status of the entity, but rather focuses on their activity in the market environment (Audrestch, 2012). However, a challenge with this view is the emergence of a new body of literature focusing on ‘social entrepreneurship’. Social entrepreneurship is an “entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose” (Austin et al., 2006: 1). To explain, rather than focusing on economic growth and innovation that leads to profit maximisation, this approach has a strong focus on the social perspective (Santos, 2012) and addresses human needs (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Entrepreneurship as behaviour can be seen as the most inclusive approach out of the three categorisations brought forward by Audretsch (2012). It is embedded in the idea that individuals can on the one hand recognize an opportunity and on the other hand also create opportunities if there is a need in the market (Alvarez et al., 2010). To reiterate this point further, rather than focusing on an organisational context or economic performance, this approach focuses on the traits and characteristics of an individual to move a company forward.

In summary, although the field of entrepreneurship is still emerging (Audretsch, 2012; Santos, 2012) and thus, there is no common, clear-cut definition of how to define entrepreneurship or an entrepreneur, there are commonalities within all definitions. This PhD research sees entrepreneurship in terms of a behaviour due to the nature of this project. As highlighted in the introduction, the fashion industry is a highly competitive market (EC, 2012; Martin, 2013). This implies that in order to survive as a micro-organisation, it is important to distinguish oneself from the competition and create a USP. The fashion industry, which is often associated and characterised through its seasonal trends (Nenni et al., 2013), emphasises on the need for entrepreneurialism in that designers, business owners, and creators have continuously to develop garments that not only satisfy their customers' needs and wants, but also are distinguishable and 'avant-garde' to their competition. The following section focuses on the cultural and sustainable entrepreneur, which complement this research's context of sitting within the cultural industries.

### **2.6.2 Cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable entrepreneurship**

The fashion industry is a highly volatile market that, throughout history, has seen various fashion trends and innovations emerge (Ünay & Zehir, 2012). Having been described as one of the only industries that is still truly competitive (Easy, 2009; Europa, 2013), it is not surprising that businesses operating in this sector continuously seek to develop garments that are fashionable, whilst at the same time create a sustainable business (Ünay & Zehir, 2012). With customers becoming more conscious about the environment (Belz & Peattie, 2012) the fashion landscape has seen a dramatic change, in that more and more businesses actively seek out new production techniques that support their drive in becoming more environmentally conscious (Ünay & Zehir, 2012). Thus, the "the fashion business is essentially a forward-thinking sector and one of the core characteristics of fashion brands is innovation" (Ünay & Zehir, 2012: 315).

Characteristics associated with entrepreneurialism, such as innovation (Schumpeter, 1911) and growth (Audretsch, 2012), can also be found in the fashion industry. Before elaborating on the link between the fashion industry and (cultural) entrepreneurship, it is vital to understand what 'fashion' entails. The term can be viewed as either an art form or as a science (Poon & Fatt, 2001). First, fashion as an



art is concerned with the actual sewing and stitching techniques that provide garments with a unique character (Norrell et al., 1967). This implies, that the underlying essence in producing a piece of clothing is creativity, which creates a USP by portraying the designer's individuality and personality traits (Poon & Fatt, 2001). On the other hand, fashion can also be seen as a science, due to the fact that technological developments and sustainability drive innovation in terms of production techniques (Poon & Fatt, 2001). Thus, a conclusion that could be drawn from this is that an individual or organisation operating in the fashion industry needs to be creative in order to take advantage of opportunities and, ideally, transform them into a profitable business (Mills, 2012).

Thus far, it can be said that the cultural industry and more specifically the fashion industry requires creative individuals that, in order to survive in the competitive environment, are able to take advantage of opportunities and create new ones. These aspects complement the notion of entrepreneurialism as described by Alvarez et al. (2010). Transferring this to the context of the creative and cultural industries, the notion of the cultural entrepreneur emerged. A cultural entrepreneur is defined by combining the following three characteristics (Scott, 2012): Firstly, the individual creates a new product, in this case, fashion items or whole lines. Secondly, a cultural entrepreneur is seen as “a taste-maker, an *arbiter elegantium* whose transgressions are not mistakes but the annunciation of a new fashion” (Bourdieu, 1984: 255). And lastly, they are able to create an opportunity with limited resources and capital that demonstrates high levels of innovation (Ellmeier, 2003). In this manner, Swedberg (2006) concludes that “cultural entrepreneurship, as I see it, may therefore be defined as carrying out of novel combination that results in something new and appreciated in the cultural sphere” (p. 260).

Cultural entrepreneurialism complements Audretsch's (2012) characterisation of entrepreneurship as a behaviour. Individuals described as cultural entrepreneurs embrace opportunities whether they are highly profitable in economic terms or provide them with exposure to a wider/new audience or experience of working with new materials, people, or techniques (Scott, 2012). Ideally, these opportunities influence the designers' creations and can be translated into their business as tangible and intangible assets and become a competitive advantage (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Moreover, these cultural entrepreneurs are:

[M]ulti-skilled in hand work, design work, publicity and promotions, management and business and having some idea of manufacture, as well as being in possession of creative vision, imagination and all the other qualities associated with fashion design (McRobbie, 1998: 188).

Thus, it might not be surprising that entrepreneurial ventures within this context are build around their founders (Shi et al., 2012), who are motivated not only by an economic interested, but also by their drive of innovation and creativity (Scott, 2012).

With the fashion landscaping changing dramatically and environmental concerns emerging as top global priority (Coles, 2013) issues concerning sustainability and sustainable development have become an essential part of the agenda of fashion companies. Similarly to cultural entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship is not solely driven by economic profits, but rather the social and natural environment are also taken into consideration (Jacobs, 1995; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Stated alternatively, sustainable entrepreneurs provide the response to the increasing demand of “meeting needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their needs” (UN, 2011). Thus, the term itself brings together two key concepts that have emerged from this PhD research’s data: sustainability and entrepreneurship. Due to sustainable entrepreneurship still being considered an emerging field (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011) there is neither clear-cut definition of the term, nor a common agreement what it actually implies to be a sustainable entrepreneur (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Broadly speaking, the term ‘sustainable entrepreneurship’ can be defined as

[A]n innovative, market-oriented and personality driven form of creating economic and societal value by means of break-through environmentally or socially beneficial market or institutional innovations (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011: 226).

This interpretation follows in the line of Venekataraman (1997) and thus, can be seen as taking into account both entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial actions (Gapp & Fisher, 2007; Jennings et al., 2012) in developing innovation that complements the Brundtland initiative (Zhao, 2005).

In summary, cultural and sustainable entrepreneurs share key characteristics with ‘normal’ entrepreneurs in that individuals or groups of people are driven by innovation and creativity. However, contrary to the notion of wealth creation that is the key focus for entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurs are driven by their passion for their own creations. Rather than only seeking to make profits, the main focus is on

gaining exposure and recognition for their work and, ideally, create a niche for themselves in a volatile market environment. The sustainable entrepreneur, similarly to the cultural entrepreneur is driven by passion, not only for their own business, but also for aspects of the Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1998). The findings in this PhD research are strongly linked to the characteristics of both the cultural and sustainable entrepreneur, in that the O/Ms were found to be passionate about their collections and ‘sustainable attributes’ in terms of selecting environmentally friendly materials and attempting to reduce their overall impact. Moreover, the O/Ms are driven by creativity in that they continuously re-invent themselves. Thus, it can be said that the findings of this PhD research are supported within both the cultural and sustainable entrepreneurship literature and therefore are justified to be included in the literature review.

## **2.7 Justification to exclude green consumer behaviour literature**

This PhD research originally set out to focus on only two focal case studies and later extended to concentrate on four (two customer facing and two non-customer facing), which is discussed in-depth in Chapter 3. The inclusion of two customer-facing co-operatives into the research allowed the collection of data from customers in the form of questionnaires and follow up interviews. Although it could be argued that the inclusion of customers merits a review of green consumer behaviour literature, the contrary is argued. The data collected from the consumer research adds to a holistic approach in viewing corporate identity and allows exploration of the corporate image of the individual organisations. The main focus of this PhD research is the role of corporate identity within the contexts of the UK’s green slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations, which implies that whilst the consumer data enhanced the research findings, in this specific case consumer behaviour theory does not add further value to the overall model created.

## Chapter 3: Methodology



### 3.1 Overview

This PhD research utilises a case study approach looking at four micro-organisations operating in the UK’s green slow-fashion industry. Section 3.5.1 provides an overview of the individual cases and their selection process.

In order to accomplish solid and valid research, it is vital to have a well-defined methodology that harmonises with the overall research structure, the aim and objectives (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The research methodology is defined as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods” (Crotty, 2003: 3), providing skills and knowledge needed to focus on the research (Blumberg et al., 2005; Clough & Nutbrown, 2008). As valid research is characterised by a clearly-defined purpose, a detailed research process and thoroughly planned research design (Blumberg et al., 2005) “involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among what population, with what research methods, for what purpose” (Babbie, 2008: 122).

Generally speaking, good research is embedded in an ontological stance, which may take either an objectivistic or constructionist position. Ontology lays the foundation for the philosophical position (epistemology) of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The epistemology chosen determines which methodological tools to utilise within the research project. Epistemology can be placed anywhere along a spectrum between the two extremes of positivism and interpretivism. Furthermore, the overall research follows either an inductive or a deductive approach, implying it is either based on a theoretical framework, or tries to create a new theory from the findings. Following the research design, it has to be decided whether the study is reporting, descriptive, explanatory, or predictive.

## 3.2 Research Philosophy



### 3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology derives from the Greek words *ontos* (being) and *logos* (knowledge, study, account) (McAuley et al., 2007) and can be loosely translated to *the study of reality*. It seeks to answer: “what kinds of things there are in the world” (Benton & Craig, 2011: 4), and thus describes the elements needed for a specific philosophical approach or theory to be true (Blumberg et al., 2005; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Ontology deals with assumptions made about *the reality* (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; McAuley et al., 2007), which can be split into two premises:

- a) Is the social world considered to be objective and therefore external to the researcher?
- b) Can the social world only be conceived by explaining the observations made by the human beings involved (Hussey & Hussey, 1997)?

Stated alternatively, ontology can be divided into two paradigms: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is based on assumption **a)**, which implies that the social phenomena observed exist independently of their social actors and thus are external to the researcher (Bryman, 2004; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Constructionism, as opposed to objectivism, follows assumption **b)**. Ergo, constructionism is based on the assumption that the social reality is the outcome of the individual’s conceptualisation (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002).

Ontology and epistemology are strongly interlinked, informing the theoretical perspective of a research project (Crotty, 2003). Table 2 shows that the notion of objectivism feeds into positivism, as it claims that the social phenomena exist independently of their social actors (Bryman, 2004), whilst constructionism is compatible with interpretivism (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Data for this PhD research were gathered in form of a case study approach, utilising various methodological tools, including, but not limited to semiotics, in-depth semi-structured interviews, employee shadowing, and questionnaires. These methodological tools provide the evidence needed to understand what micro-organisations stand for, using a multiple perspective approach. This follows the belief that the social world *is* created by

individuals. Thus, constructionism is the most appropriate ontological approach for this research.

Table 2: Assumptions of the two key paradigms (adapted from Creswell, 1994: 5)

Assumption	Question	Positivism	Interpretivism
<b>Ontology</b>	What is the nature of the reality?	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study
<b>Epistemology</b>	What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?	Researcher is independent from that being researched	Researcher interacts with that being researched
<b>Axiology</b>	What is the role of values?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased
<b>Rhetorical</b>	What is the language of research?	Formal Based on set definitions Impersonal voice Use of accepted quantitative words	Informal Evolving decisions Personal Voice Use of accepted qualitative words
<b>Methodology</b>	What is the process of research?	Deductive process Cause and effect  Static design – categories isolated before study  Context-free Generalisation leading to prediction, explanation and understanding Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability	Inductive process Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors Emerging design – categories identified during research process Context-bound Patterns, theories developed for understanding Accurate and reliable through verification

### 3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology originates from the Greek words *epistēmē* (science, knowledge) (Eikeland, 2007) and *ology* (the study of) (McAuley et al., 2007). Epistemology deals with “knowing how you can know” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006: 13), thereby establishes the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). In essence, epistemology is a key area within the philosophy of social science research and is “concerned with the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge” (Klein, 2005) and the possibilities knowledge can provide (Hamlyn, 1995). Furthermore, it is “embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 2003: 3). Taking on a philosophical position within *any* research project is vital, as it affects the research design and the methodology as a whole (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Within epistemology of social science research there are two predominant paradigms: positivism and interpretivism (Schutz, 1962).

### 3.2.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is an archetype that has been adapted from and is closely linked to the natural sciences (Crotty, 2003; Blumberg et al., 2005). It is mostly concerned with generating a set of hypotheses, which can be tested and form the basis of explanations of laws (Bryman, 2004). Positivist research is primarily based on quantitative research methods (Benton & Craig, 2011), “reflect[ing] an objective, independent reality and [...] provid[ing] the foundation for human knowledge” (Weber, 2004: vi).

Various authors (Bryman, 2004; Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006) see a strong link between positivism and objectivity. In terms of organisational theory, positivist epistemology assumes that one “can discover what truly happens in organisations through the categorisation and scientific measurement of the behaviour of people and systems” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006: 13). Thus, positivism strongly supports the use of quantitative research methods, allowing for the generalisation of findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

### 3.2.2.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism, contrarily to positivism, believes that research cannot be objective, but rather is subjective, as the researcher is part of the observation process (Schutz, 1962; Blumberg et al., 2005). An example of the interpretivist philosophy is phenomenology (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006). The interpretivist view acknowledges that the social world *is* constructed by the individual herself and therefore subjective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), whilst the phenomenological position takes this even further highlighting that it is vital to understand the individual’s actions and thoughts in relation to their own reality (Husserl, 1929). Phenomenology can be both, a research philosophy and a methodological approach (Goulding, 2005). In this sense, it has been utilised not only in case study (Henry et al., 2008) and marketing research (Thompson & Haytko, 1997), but also underpinned projects that have focused on corporate identity (Ashman & Winstanley, 2007), which is a further justification for choosing this stance.

Schütz (1972) expands on and develops Husserl’s (1929) interpretation of phenomenology by emphasising the need for *reflexivity*, which implies that the researcher needs to be aware of her role within the project and evaluate the situation accordingly – within its context.

The fact that social action is meaningfully related to the behaviour of others implies that the actor (since [s]he is Other-oriented in [her] action) turns [her] attention to the subjective experiences of the Other in their constitutive structure (Schütz, 1972: 148).

The phenomenological paradigm views the social world as a human creation. It emphasises differences between individuals as vitally important, and highlights that they need to be taken into account to unravel the complexity of the environment as a whole (Bryman, 2004). Phenomenology stresses the need to understand the individual's behaviour and attitudes rather than trying to predict how people will act in a certain situation (Harrison & Reilly, 2011). Subsequently,

[P]henomenology asks us not to take our received notions for granted but to call into question our whole culture, our manner of seeing the world and being in the world in the way we have learned it growing up (Wolff, 1984: 192).

Accordingly, it assumes that knowledge generation can only be guaranteed when the researcher understands the opinions and beliefs of an individual living and working in a certain culture or organisation, and acknowledges these within the research (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

This thesis utilises a case study approach (section 3.5.1) to understand the role of sustainability on corporate identity in the context of the green slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations, which makes it essential to take the organisation's culture and background into account. On this basis a phenomenological stance forms the epistemological background.

### *3.2.2.3 Justification for phenomenology*

Choosing the *right* philosophical stance is vital for any research project (Bryman & Bell, 2007), as it not only determines the methodological tools used, but also influences the way data is analysed. Within case study research various philosophical stances have previously been adopted, ranging from pragmatism, critical realism, and various forms of the interpretivist philosophy (Easton, 2010). The following section briefly discusses these epistemological stances and concludes with a justification for selecting phenomenology as the basis for this PhD research.

#### Pragmatism

Pragmatism combines attributes from both the positivist and interpretivist philosophy and was originally developed by Peirce, James, and Dewey (Hookway, 2013). In this



sense, this philosophy was developed to move away from the continuous debate to either follow a strictly positivist or interpretivist paradigm. Pragmatism neither supports a purely quantitative (positivist) nor a solely qualitative (interpretivist) research and analysis method, but rather allows for a combination of both within a specific research context (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In the same vein, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) emphasise that within pragmatism the discussion about what constitutes the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ takes a back seat to the project’s overall research question. This implies that the “truth is what is useful to people researching in a field, what helps the research project, what can be accepted and defended, what is open to criticism and renewal” (Easton, 2010: 119). Thus, pragmatism not only supports a case study approach and a manifold of research methods, but also allows for phenomena to be investigated in-depth (Easton, 2010).

However, after careful consideration this philosophical stance was seen as unsuitable for this research project. Although pragmatism supports and even encourages a mixed methods approach, which is utilised in this thesis, it also “accepts the natural scientific methodology, [...] which arises from an examination of what the scientist *does*, not what [s]he asserts in [her] findings” (Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1977: 57). This goes hand in hand with what Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have emphasised: the pragmatist philosophy seems to be predominantly concerned with adapting and amending existing theories and back any results with empirical data. Stated alternatively, following a pragmatist approach implies interpreting and analysing research findings in a more ‘objective’ manner, thereby not taking the ‘reality’ of others into account (Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1977; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders et al., 2009). On this basis, this specific philosophy was deemed unsuitable for this research project, as understanding the participants’ view of the micro-organisation’s corporate identity and their working environment is vital for this research.

### Critical realism

Critical realism roots in the work of Bhaskar and Lawson and combines philosophies from both the natural sciences (transcendental realism) and the social sciences (critical naturalism) (Archer et al., 1998; Jefferies, 2011; Gorski, 2013). Similarly to pragmatism, critical realism also allows for qualitative and quantitative research methods to be combined (Mingers, 2002). This paradigm “wants to get beneath the

surface to understand and explain *why* things are as they are, to hypothesize the structures and mechanisms that shape observable events” (Mingers, 2002: 302). Moreover, critical realism recognises that a phenomenon can be studied from various different viewpoints (e.g. O/Ms, employees, consumers), which enables the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the case under investigation (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, critical realism emphasises that the social world is continuously changing, which “is [...] in line with [...] management research[:] [...] to understand the reasons for phenomena as a precursor to recommending change” (Saunders et al., 2009: 7).

Although critical realism seems to be well suited for this research project, this philosophy is more concerned with “what caused the events associated with the phenomenon to occur” (Easton, 2010: 123) rather than establishing what makes the phenomenon, how it is created and why it occurred. Stated alternatively, this PhD research does not simply seek to explain a phenomenon, which links to the critical realist philosophy, but also tries to describe what constitutes corporate identity in micro-organisations operating in the green-slow fashion industry, what influences corporate identity, and what the individual components are. Thus, the critical realist philosophy is too limiting in nature for this specific thesis.

### Phenomenology

Phenomenology can be described as (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Waters, 2013):

- Producing rich, subjective qualitative data;
- Utilising an inductive approach that develops theories;
- Using small samples;
- Incorporating a manifold of methodological tools.

There are various reasons why phenomenology was chosen as the philosophical stance underpinning this PhD research: Firstly, reflexivity plays a key role in this project, which is supported by phenomenology. This implies that the researcher actively engages in the research process and is part of it, whilst continuously reflecting on and asking herself why she received the responses she got and how her persona influenced her data collection. Secondly, similarly to pragmatism and critical realism, phenomenology has previously been utilised as a baseline for case study research. Moreover, this specific philosophical approach has underpinned research projects and articles within a similar context to this thesis (Sanders, 1982; Ashman & Winstanley, 2007; He & Balmer, 2013). Thirdly, adopting

a phenomenological approach implies that the researcher investigates an issue by “return[ing] to phenomena as they are lived” (Wertz, 2005: 168). The goal is not only to gain knowledge about a phenomenon, but also to understand it, thus it is vital to take into account experiences from people who work and live within a specific environment (Lindgren & Kehoe, 1981; Spiegelberg, 1982).

In summary, phenomenology allows the researcher to position herself in the project, thereby gaining knowledge to understand the phenomenon under study from the viewpoint of people involved. Furthermore, this philosophical stance complements a multiple case study approach and mixed methodology, which was chosen to investigate the components of a micro-company’s corporate identity operating in the green-slow fashion industry.

### **3.2.3 Objectivity and subjectivity**

#### ***3.2.3.1 Objectivity***

Objectivity can be defined by taking three characteristics into account (van Heertum, 2005). Firstly, objectivity implies that the research itself is value-free and independent of any personal feelings or opinions. As such, it is detached from the researcher and her experience and therefore unbiased. Secondly, it is seen as the antipode to *subjectivity* and thus, able to provide factual evidence, by stressing the predictable element of the research project (Potter, 2000). This is mostly done through the use of quantitative methodological tools (Daft, 1983). Thirdly, objectivity implies that the researcher takes an ‘outsider’ perspective (Evered & Louis, 1981). This indicates a phenomenon being observed factually without any emotions noted down by stating every detail and analysed in a value-free manner (van Heertum, 2005).

#### ***3.2.3.2 Subjectivity***

Subjectivity is characterised in terms of having an ‘insider’ perspective. This suggests that the researcher is part of the research process and therefore involved. In other words, the researcher observes an event or a specific case and actively reflects on the observations made, drawing from the researcher’s own reality. The predicted results of the observations made depend on the researcher’s background and experience (Evered & Louis, 1981; Wolff, 1984; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006), as cultural factors can influence the way one behaves in any given situation (Hofstede, 2009). Accordingly,

“knowledge can only be created and understood from the point of view of the individuals who live and work in a particular culture” (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006: 13). Peshkin (1988) supports this view stating, “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17), and therefore, one’s social environment and knowledge will always be part of the research and the research process. This implies an acceptance that objectivity in itself does not exist in a *pure* form. Ergo, the researcher needs to be aware that results substantiated through qualitative data or observed data, and thus seen as more subjective, will be seen as inferior (Giroux, 1983).

### 3.2.3.3 *Justification for subjectivity*

Phenomenology was chosen for this thesis, as the researcher’s observations involve situating herself in the research process, by trying to establish a collegial relationship with the employees to encourage comfort and openness with regards to the researcher-subject processes. This relationship allows eliciting information about the brand perceptions held by individual stakeholders, whilst furthermore gain a greater understanding of the organisation’s culture, which helps *explain* why things happen in a certain manner. It is therefore not only inevitable, but also beneficial, for the data collected to be interpreted in a more *subjective* manner. However, it is vital to understand how this affects the appropriate research distance of the study (Ratner, 2002).

This thesis utilises a qualitative focused methodology, following in the footsteps of previous research in corporate identity, sustainability, and value co-creation (e.g. Bernstein, 1984; Balmer & Soenen, 1999; Akaka et al., 2013; Iglesias et al., 2013). While qualitative research tools produce rich data sets, they cannot provide generalisable statistical facts and figures in the same way that quantitative analysis allows. Bana e Costa and Pirlot (1997) posit that within the decision-making process the notion of subjectivity is always present, therefore it is vital to acknowledge limitations to a *pure* objective approach. The researcher needs to become actively involved in the process, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the organisations themselves (David, 2006).

Furthermore, the use of SNS (Twitter, Facebook) were useful tools to help the researcher keep up-to-date with current events in the industry, as well as newsworthy press releases and direct interactions with the public regarding the companies studied.

Moreover being able to read stakeholders’ public comments and company replies on these SNS enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the organisation’s communication processes. The firm’s identity, in this case, can best be described as a “set of interdependent characteristics of the organisation that give it specificity, stability and coherence” (Larçon & Reitter 1979: 43). Existing, new, or potential customers and employees are able to comment on these sites revealing their emotions, passions, and opinions about topics, photographs, or newly published collections. In other words, SNS provide subjective, opinionated media, rather than objective or quantitative data.

It can be concluded that this PhD research does not seek to be considered objective, and that due to its philosophical stance of *phenomenology* and the methodological tools chosen, it is inherently subjective. Furthermore, social science as a broader field is purpose-driven, as it tries to explain social phenomena, and often provides an in-depth understanding of a specific event (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Winch, 2003). In other words, social science should not be considered objective, but rather subjective.

### 3.3 Research approach



#### 3.3.1 Deductive approach

A deductive approach looks at an already existing theory, from which a researcher deduces a set of hypotheses. Through conducting research, data is collected, which either supports the hypotheses to be true, thereby supporting the existing theory, or rejects the hypotheses on the premise to be false and thus suggests improvements to the theory (Bryman, 2004; Blumberg et al., 2005). The criteria, to either confirm or reject hypotheses, are on a simple pass/fail scale, whereby the research result either matches what has been analysed or it does not. Amendments to existing theory are made according to the outcome of the research project. In order for a deduction to be true, the premises (hypotheses) made and the conclusions (results) drawn must be true and valid (Blumberg et al., 2005). However, using a deductive approach has a major disadvantage, as it does not allow for an explanation of *outliers* (Thomas, 2006). This

implies that any abnormalities within a specific data set may be ignored as the researcher looks at the information given with a preconception and pre-imposed analysis procedure. Subsequently, a deductive approach is not concerned with the exceptions to the rule (Thomas, 2006).

### **3.3.2 Inductive approach**

In an inductive approach “the researcher begins with an area of study and allows for the theory to emerge from the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 12). Thus, it can best be described as a “systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data” (Thomas, 2006: 238). The primary purpose of induction is to analyse raw data sets, looking for themes of frequency, dominance, or significance to emerge and to create theory through the analysis of these findings and observations (Thomas, 2006). This implies that the outcome can be generalised (Bryman, 2004) on a larger scale, as observations occur on a wider population sample.

### **3.3.3 Research approach in this PhD research**

Although deductive and inductive research approaches can be clearly defined on a theoretical basis - in reality the boundaries between the two concepts are not as clear-cut and cannot necessarily exist in a ‘pure’ form (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Carey, 2013). As highlighted in Chapter 2, corporate identity frameworks were utilised as points of reference, which implies that some questions asked in interviews were guided by the literature. Whilst it could be argued that questions guided by the literature is not compatible with an inductive, but rather a deductive approach, the contrary is argued, as the questions asked were kept broad and vague. Examples of interview questions include, but are not limited to:

- Can you tell me about your organisation?
- What does it feel like to work at the organisation?
- What aspects about the organisation do you like best and why?
- How would you describe working in the organisation to an outsider?

These open ended questions allowed participants to describe their feelings, emotions, and experiences, whilst also identifying aspects that are most important to them, the business, and their O/M. Thus, it can be said that this PhD research uses a predominantly inductive approach – identifying common patterns and themes within the data sets collected – complimenting the phenomenological stance of this research.

### 3.4 Research design



#### 3.4.1 Research design styles

Business research is conducted due to an inquiry being made or an issue being raised by an individual or a group of individuals. It aims to provide a manager with detailed information regarding the specific problem that needs solving (Blumberg et al., 2005). Put another way, business research can be conducted for a specific purpose and therefore take on a *reporting*, a *descriptive*, an *explanatory*, a *predictive*, or an *exploratory* style.

A *reporting* style implies that data is gathered and evidence is presented showing statistical proof and writing a report highlighting the key findings (Blumberg et al., 2005). The report form is most commonly found within natural science research projects. *Descriptive* research tries to explore answers to ‘w-question words’ including who, what, when, and where. Hence, it provides a more detailed insight into the specific case studied by looking at the context in which it exists (Robson, 2002; Blumberg et al., 2005). However, this approach does not allow for a detailed answer as to why something occurs. *Explanatory* research is embedded in a theoretical framework, answering the research problem through creating hypotheses (Blumberg et al., 2005). It tries to look at the relationship between variables and therefore goes beyond the descriptive approach, by giving an explanation as to ‘why’ and ‘how’ an event has happened (Saunders et al., 2003; Blumberg et al., 2005). *Predictive* research has similarities with explanatory research, as it tries to provide an answer for an event that has occurred in the past (Blumberg et al., 2005). Lastly, *exploratory* research aims to “discover ideas and insights” (Brown & Suter, 2012) about a specific phenomenon, thereby developing new theory (Davies, 2013a).

#### 3.4.2 Research design in this PhD research

This thesis takes on a mixed approach combining *predictive* and *exploratory* research designs. The key focus within this research is corporate identity, which is analysed

and described using an inductive approach. Corporate identity cannot be seen as an isolated concept but rather as an important puzzle piece that takes various aspects of a business into account. As mentioned, the *predictive* style tries to provide an answer to *why something occurred* and *how it happened* (Blumberg et al., 2005), whilst the *exploratory* style is used when the researcher needs to familiarise herself with “basic details, settings and concerns” (Lynn & Lynn, 2013).

With this in mind, it is vital for this research to look at each of the organisations individually in terms of their social and natural environments, in order to gain a better understanding of their environment, culture, and social interactions. Additionally, through its subjective stance and qualitative approach, this research assesses how participants construct their organisational environment and thus a vital part of the firm’s corporate identity. Consequently, in order to understand *how* and *why* something occurs within an organisation, it is vital to take the broader context into account. Hence, phenomenology and *predictive* and *exploratory* research complement each other.

### 3.5 Research methods



#### 3.5.1 Case study

A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003: 13). “The goal is to practice sound research while capturing both a phenomenon (the real life event) and its context (the natural setting)” (Yin, 2004: xii).

The case study then is not a specific technique; it is a way of organising social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied (Goode & Hatt, 1952: 331).

One can distinguish between three types of case study research: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 1994). Both, the intrinsic case study, which tries to better understand a case and the instrumental case study, which seeks to gain an insight into a specific issue, are based on a *single* exemplification. The collective case study, as implied in the name, covers *multiple* cases and can be seen as an extension



of the instrumental approach (Stake, 1994). This specific research method allows not only for a broader understanding (Punch, 2005) of the individual companies but also for an in-depth analysis of the stakeholders' perceptions.

Generally speaking, case study research implies that the researcher has access to the individual companies in question (Veal, 2006). Stake (1995) mentions that this kind of research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of an organisation and is of particular use where the research topic needs to be studied within its context. Every company operates within a specific environment, which should be analysed in order to distinguish the specific needs and outcomes of the research project. According to Bryman and Bell (2007) multiple case study approaches have become more common in recent years, as they offer the opportunity to compare and contrast different companies on a cross-cultural or cross-national basis.

This PhD research looks at four cases, which have undergone a careful selection process: Firstly, all organisations chosen are based in the UK and manufacture their goods locally. Secondly, the companies are operating within the green slow-fashion industry. Thirdly, the firms can be classified as micro-companies.

#### *3.5.1.1 Sample size justification*

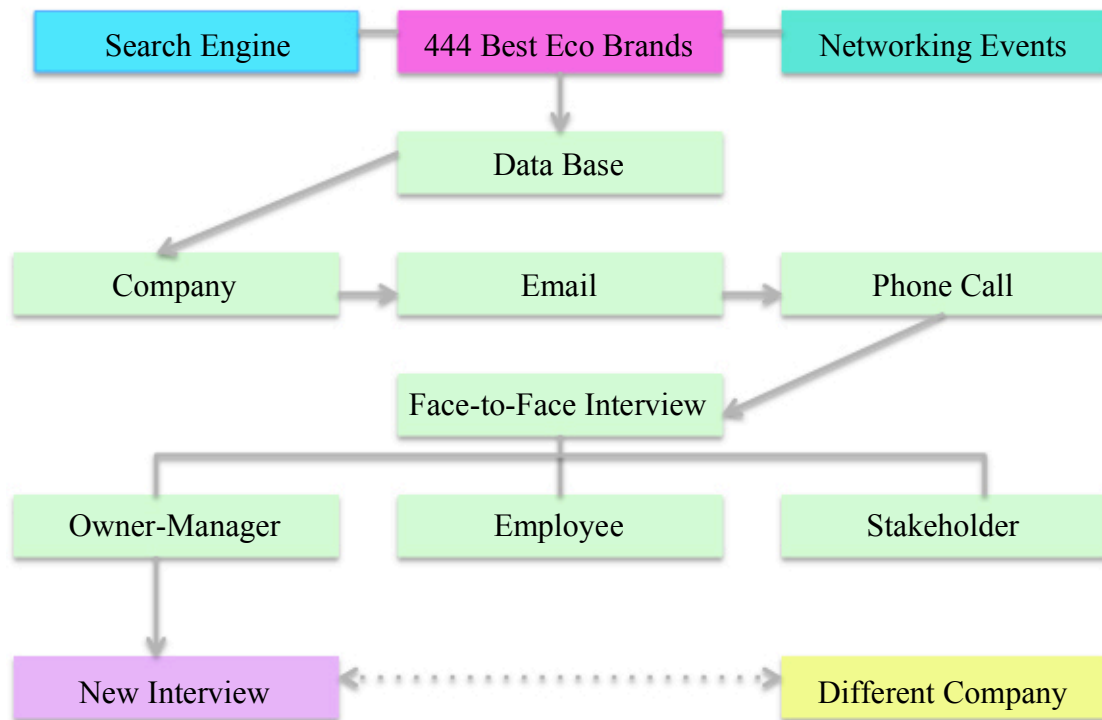
Marshall (1996) highlights that “an appropriate sample size for qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question” (p. 523). Qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative methodologies, has to be flexible in terms of its research design, the approach to sampling and as a result in terms of the data analysis and interpretation (Marshall, 1996). This implies that the researcher might not know at the beginning of the project how many ‘subjects’ are needed in order to fully answer the research questions posed, as new themes and explanations of various phenomena come to a natural stop, which is also referred to as data saturation (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This research project started off with only two focal organisations in mind, and was extended to four cases and various interviews with experts in the field. Looking at two organisations only left parts of the objectives unanswered, whilst conducting research within the four firms, the industry experts, and consumers of the customer-facing organisations provided rich data sets that managed to answer, and in some

ways exceed, the aim, research questions, and objectives set for this thesis, whilst also reaching a natural data saturation.

### 3.5.1.2 Sampling of case studies

The sampling method for the four cases followed a judgment sampling process combined with convenience sampling. Judgement sampling, which is often referred to as purposeful sampling, implies that the researcher recruits cases that help to best answer the research questions set for a project (Marshall, 1996). Thus, the recruitment of the focal companies, followed the case process, highlighted in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Case study selection process



The recruitment process followed a combination of key phrase searches, networking events, and a list of the ‘444 best eco-fashion brands’ published in Diekamp and Koch (2010)’s *Eco Fashion – Top-Labels entdecken Grüne Mode*<sup>1</sup>. A key phrase search was conducted on Google, Twitter, and Facebook, which included, but was not limited to: eco(-)fashion, ethical clothing, organic fashion, sustainable clothing, (eco-)labels in fashion industry, sustainable fashion company, and green

<sup>1</sup> Eco fashion, top brands discover green fashion

company. The SNS have proven to be very useful, as a snowball sampling method could be utilised with these platforms. *Liking* a company profile on Facebook allows access to their *liked* pages, which enabled the researcher to discover other brands that fulfilled the criteria set for potential participants in this project, and thus were added to the list of organisations to be contacted. Furthermore, the researcher attended various networking events in Leeds, Manchester, and Nottingham, some of which were advertised on SNS, dedicated to eco- and ethical-fashion, whilst others were promoted through the EMTEX Design Forum, an institution that supports “creative professionals and forward thinking businesses” (Design Forum, 2013) and the CIM (Chartered Institute of Marketing). The list of ‘444 best eco-fashion brands’ provided contact details for organisations across the globe. The search results of these three approaches were combined into a database of firms that were of interest for this thesis.

Once the database was compiled, the researcher ensured that each individual company in the database matched the criteria set for this PhD research. Afterwards desk research in the form of reading up on the individual firm’s website and SNS, allowed cutting down the initial database to a more manageable size. Judgement sampling and convenience sampling combined were implemented to establish, which organisations would on the one hand help to answer this thesis’ research questions, and on the other hand were easily accessible to the researcher. The researcher emailed the individual organisation with a brief outline of her project and followed up with a phone call. The four focal organisations for this thesis were chosen out of a small pool of companies, who responded positively to the research brief. The final four firms were selected through convenience sampling, which implies that these organisations were most accessible to the researcher, in terms of customer facing and non-customer facing companies, travelling cost, and availability within a certain timeframe.

### *3.5.1.3 Background of case studies*

Although the four companies are similar in nature their organisational structures differ. Organisation 1 is owned and run by a single designer (O/M1) and was established in 2007. Currently one full-time and four part-time staff are employed at the firm. Organisation 2 is a ‘family run’ and owned business, in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of existence. Since established in 2002, the organisation has grown steadily and now

employs 10 full-time workers. It has to be highlighted that although O/M2 calls it a ‘family business’, no actual family members are working in the company. Organisations 3 and 4 are cooperatives. Although it could be argued that a cooperative is not necessarily a micro-company, in the case of the two firms chosen it remains true. Organisation 3 is run and owned by one individual (O/M3). It was established in December 2012, in conjunction with the Mary Portas fund and governmental support, helping to revive the high street. The shop currently provides employment for four members of staff on a full-time basis. The fourth and last organisation is owned by a group of ten people and managed by one (O/M4). It was founded in August 2012, with only personal funds utilised. The company does not employ any workers per se, but is operated by the founding members.

Organisations 1 and 2 are both non-customer facing, which implies that their products are sold either online or through a network of distributors. The companies do not run or own a physical shop. Organisations 3 and 4 on the other hand are both customer facing, with their physical store being located within city centre locations.

#### *3.5.1.4 Case study process*

The researcher worked with the individual firms over a three-month period, thereby collecting materials used for semiological analysis, including, but not limited to, photographs of the physical work space, the natural surroundings of the company’s physical space, and promotional material, and conducted interviews with stakeholders. In the case of the two customer facing entities the researcher furthermore collected consumer responses through questionnaires, which were partly followed-up by in-person discussions. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in the field to gain more evidence and to substantiate the findings of this research project outside of the four focal cases. Figure 18 is a visualisation of the research process: the data collected from the four case studies, combined with various expert and consumer interviews led to the ‘research results’ (Chapters 4 and 5). Table 3 provides a time line of the data collection.

Figure 18: Case study process

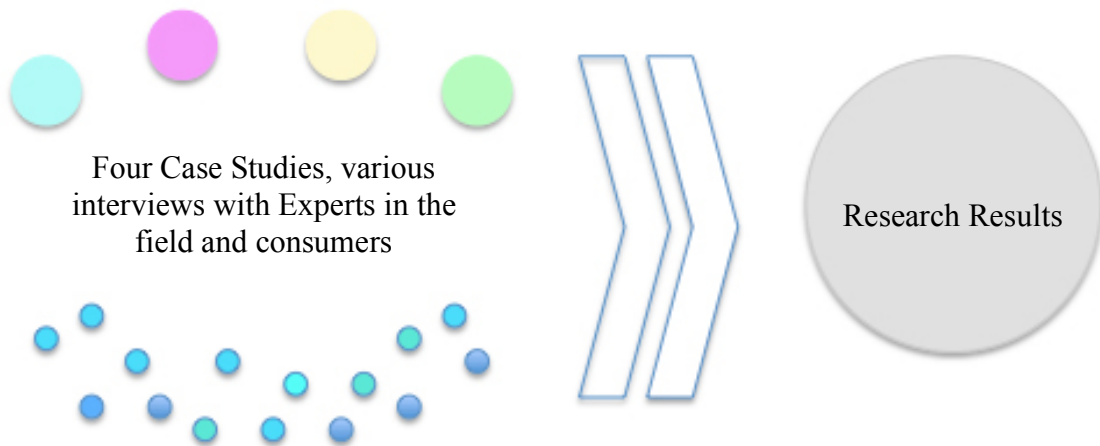


Table 3: Timeline of data collection

	Sept '12	Oct '12	Nov '12	Dec '12	Jan '13	Feb '13	Mar '13	Apr '13	May '13	June '13	July '13
Organisation 1											
Organisation 2											
Organisation 3											
Organisation 4											
Experts											
Consumers											

A detailed list of all data collected for this research project, including a short summary on the individual cases – corresponding to the colour coordination seen in Figure 16 - can be found in Appendix 4.

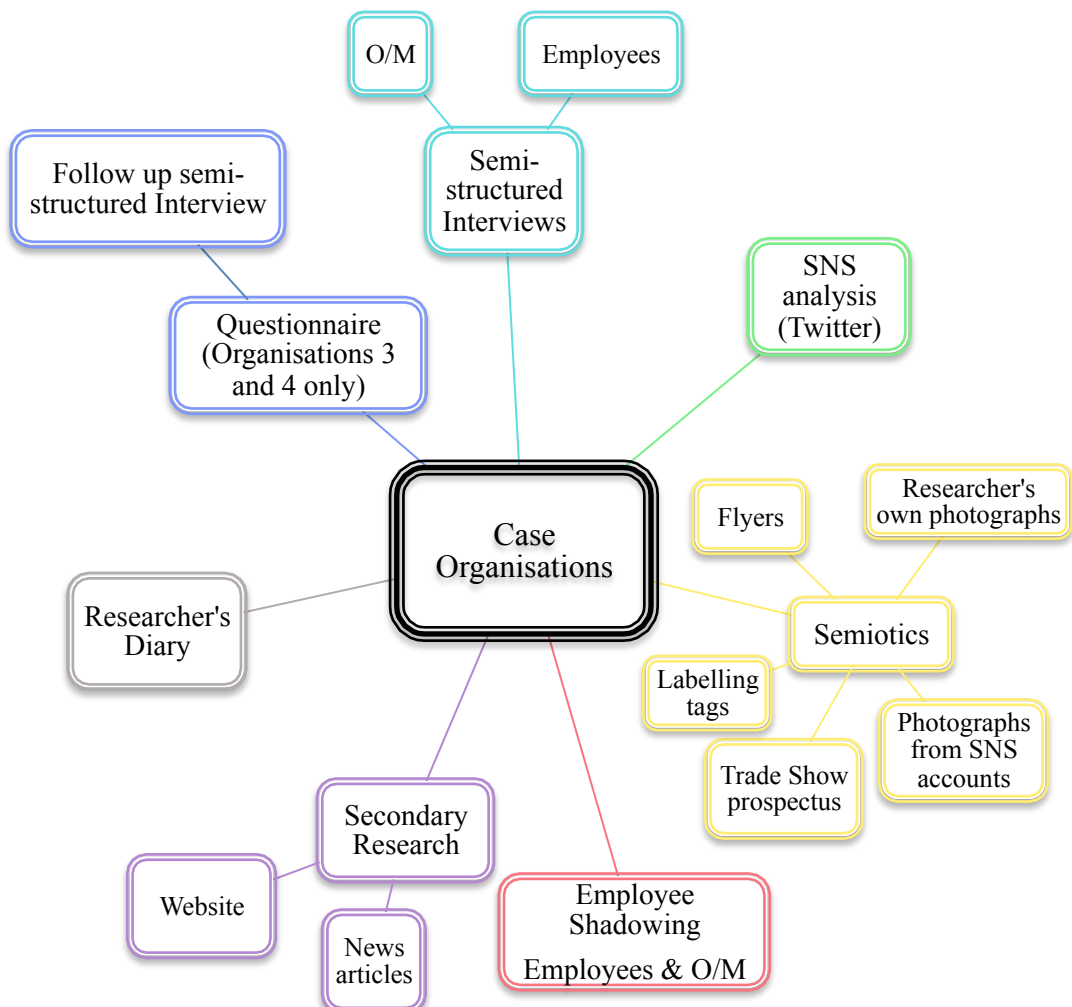
### 3.5.1.5 Case study justification

Although case study research has not been very popular within the area of marketing, various authors (Kennedy, 1977; Balmer & Stotvig, 1997; Markwick & Fill, 1997; Melewar & Akel, 2005; Borgerson et al., 2009) have used this method within the field of corporate identity. The researcher feels this method is appropriate for her research, in order to get an insight into the creation of corporate identity. Furthermore, utilising a case study approach provides the platform on which several qualitative and quantitative methods may be combined and therefore the reliance on one single approach is eliminated (Knights & McCabe, 1997).

### 3.5.2 Multiple-methods approach

This research is classified as a multiple-methods approach and not a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods approach is characterised by combining aspects of qualitative and quantitative methods “for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007: 123). Although qualitative and quantitative methods were used within this project, they were not equally weighted, but rather the qualitative methodology dominates this project, with the survey being used to support research findings. In other words, questionnaires were utilised for ‘completeness’, “which refers to the notion that the research can bring together a more comprehensive account of the area of enquiry [...] if both quantitative and qualitative research are employed” (Bryman, 2006: 106). Stated alternatively, the multiple-methods approach allows for rich data to be gathered as well as incorporating a more holistic approach looking not only at the organisation as a whole but also at external stakeholders involved. Figure 19 provides a visualisation of the various research tool utilised in the individual cases.

Figure 19: Visualisation of multiple-methods approach



Multiple- and mixed-methods approaches are very similar in nature, but differ in terms of how integrated the individual methods (qualitative and quantitative) are (Bryman, 2006). In this case, they are loosely linked, with quantitative data completing qualitative findings. Nevertheless the different methodological approaches taken within a research project also help to uncover a new angle or perspective (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003) and create a broader picture of the case (Flick, 1992; Sale et al., 2002). Furthermore, using various tools within the research process helps overcome potential bias that might occur. An explanation for this could be that a multiple-methods approach allows the researcher to be “more flexible, integrative, and holistic in their investigative techniques, as they strive to address a range of complex research questions which arise” (Powell et al., 2008: 306). The methods used in this thesis are explored in the following.

### 3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

Before elaborating on the financing, structure, selection process, and analysis of semi-structure interviews, Table 5 provide a brief summary of all interviews conducted for this research project.

Table 5: Summary of interviews conducted

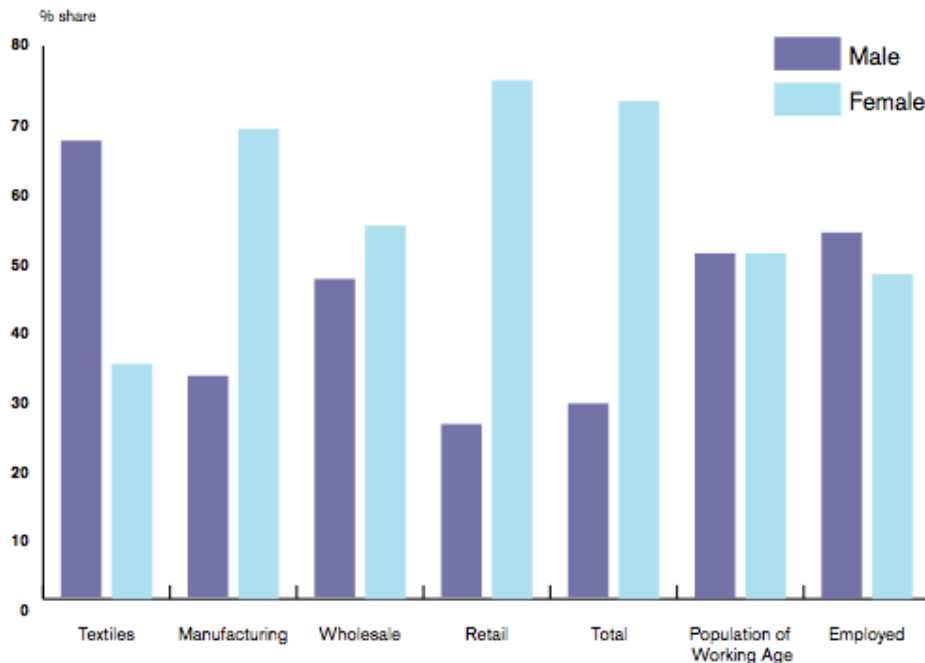
	Minimum Duration of Interviews	Maximum Duration of Interviews	Number of Interviews
Organisation 1	13:33min	57:22min	5
Organisation 2	10min	60min	8
Organisation 3	7:51min	45:35min	6
Organisation 4	10:52min	34:10min	4
Experts	25:26min	52:16	7
Consumers	14:32min	32:02min	6
Secondary Interviews	2:14min	62min	3

#### 3.5.3.1 Micro-organisations and the fashion industry

A noteworthy aspect about the UK fashion industry that also influenced the case study selection process is the fact that the majority of people working in this industry – approximately 71.6% - are female (BFC, 2010). According to the BFC (2010), the fashion sector can best be described, as one that has a young workforce, which is dominated by female professionals. This stands in contrast to the overall distribution of male to female ratios within the UK’s workforce (BFC, 2010). To further illustrate,

Figure 20 provides an overview of the gender breakdown in the clothing and textile industry.

Figure 20: Fashion employees broken down by gender (BFC, 2010: 70)



A further noteworthy aspect that links to micro-organisations is that although women only represent approximately 30% of those that are classified as self-employed, their number has accounted for more than 50% of the increase in self-employment since 2008, when the recession hit the UK (ONS, 2013; Prowess, 2013). This implies that “between 2008 and 2011 most of the increase in self-employment was among women (accounting for 80% of the increase)” (ONS, 2013). (In this context, being self-employed also implies setting up a business.) Surprisingly then, only 17% of all businesses are female-owned (Marlow et al., 2013). This can be explained due to the fact that women are more likely to start up a business and close it down again due to ‘personal reasons’, which is especially prominent amongst females aged 24-35 (Marlow et al., 2013; Prowess, 2013).

Thus, it can be said that there are four factors that influenced this research:

- Two in three people employed in the fashion industry are female (BFC, 2010);
- The Fashion industry is dominated by female professionals (BFC, 2010);
- In recent years more women have had a start-up business than men (ONS, 2013; Prowess, 2013); And
- Micro-organisations have become increasingly important in the fashion industry (BIS, 2011; Nathan, 2011; Pasquinelli, 2012a)



Although the role of gender is not a key focus of this thesis, this background information is vital in understanding how these issues are reflected in the overall research: firstly, out of 37 interviews conducted, only two participants were male and secondly, all four participating organisations are managed by female professionals (Table 5). For this reason, and in order to be able to comply with ethical implications (see section 3.7), all participants are referred to as ‘she’.

Table 5: Overview of male to female ratio in research

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Consumer	Experts
Type	Single Person Venture	‘Family run business’ (it has to be highlighted that although the O/M calls it a family business, no actual members of the family are working in the company)	Co-operative	Co-operative		
No. of Interviews	5	8	6	4	6	7
No. of Female Interviewees	5	7	6	4	5	6
No. of Male Interviewees	0	1	0	0	1	1

In conclusion, whilst the fact that the male to female ratio is highly imbalanced and thus may be seen as a limitation to this project, the researcher feels that it reflects the overall situation of the UK fashion industry. Therefore this ‘imbalance’ can be seen as portraying a ‘representative’ picture of the sector. Moreover, as will be highlighted in Chapter 3, all participation in this research was on a voluntary basis, thus the researcher was reliant on O/Ms to take part in the study. Although micro-organisations with male O/Ms were contacted, they either were not willing to participate in the main study, or were not available within the timeframe set to complete this research.

### 3.5.3.2 *Financing of interviews*

Interviews within the individual case organisations and with their consumers were conducted face-to-face, which allowed for participant observation, and to get a feel for the environment in which the O/Ms and their employees were working. Interviews with experts in the field were partly face-to-face or via phone. Face-to-face more so than phone interviews imply a financial constraint in terms of traveling costs within

the UK, as the majority of organisations were based in the Greater London and Manchester area, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and Shropshire, whilst the researcher herself is situated in Sheffield. Although face-to-face interviews implied a financial constraint, the interviewer felt it was vital to establish a *personal link* with the interviewees. It should be mentioned that the researcher did not provide any monetary rewards for any participant taking part in the research project, and furthermore all participation was on a voluntary basis.

### *3.5.3.3 Structure of interviews: case organisation*

Semi-structured interviews were seen as most suited for this study, as they not only allow for an in-depth engagement with the research participants, but also provide the opportunity to explore various topics surrounding corporate identity, sustainability, value co-creation, and eco-labels in-depth. This PhD research focuses on micro-organisations, establishing a collegial, friendly relationship is vital in order to obtain key information helping to analyse the objectives set. On this basis, strictly structured interviews were not employed, due to the lack of in-depth engagement being possible during the interview process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Semi-structured interviews consist of a sequence of questions, which do not have to be asked in any particular order. The interviewees therefore, were able to put forward their own experience and opinions to the interviewer. This allows employees to engage in-depth over topics of specific interest (Treece & Treece, 1986; Bailey, 1987; Barribal & While, 1994). Moreover, the interviewer is able to change the order of the questions and is able to probe for further clarifications on any issues that arose. Jones (1985) suggests creating a list of questions, which allows the interview to be conducted in a loose structure while maintaining specific points of reference.

Nevertheless, conducting semi-structured interviews poses limitations concerning credibility and reliability (Brink, 1989). While the loose structure allows for a flexible approach and a “conversational, flexible and fluid” (Mason, 2002: 225) style, the issues of credibility and reliability (Brink, 1989) are not assured within case study research. In order to overcome this challenge, all semi-structured interviews were recorded and fully transcribed in a verbatim format. This ensures that the researcher and first and second interview coder can go back to the raw data as necessary during the analysis, ensuring that no detail is missed. This process can be

described as achieving an ‘inter-rater reliability’, which allows “to establish the consistency of findings from an analysis conducted by two or more researchers” (Armstrong et al., 1997: 598). Although inter-rater reliability is seen as a quantitative method that accommodates the positivist philosophical stance, it has been argued that this technique enhances the qualitative data analysis “by organising an independent assessment of transcripts by additional skilled qualitative researchers and comparing agreement between the raters” (Mays & Pope, 1995: 110). While it is unlikely that all coders will identify the exact same codes, they may nevertheless find similar patterns emerging from the data. These patterns in turn can be compared, contrasted, and discussed, ensuring that no information is missed from the transcripts. Ethical implications, including recording interviews and assuring anonymity are discussed in section 3.9.

#### *3.5.3.4 Recruitment and selection of interviewees: case organisation*

As highlighted in section 3.5.1, four cases were chosen to match the following criteria: based and manufacturing in the UK, operating in the green slow-fashion industry, and classified as micro-companies.

The selected cases were contacted and face-to-face interviews were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. All interviews took place either at the participants’ work place or in public spaces, including but not limited to cafes, restaurants, and parks. For ethical implications see section 3.9. Furthermore, interviews with experts in the field (primary data: six O/Ms of micro-companies, the manager of a trend setting agency in the UK, and secondary data: three video recordings broadcasted on BBC Democracy (BBC Democracy, 2013), the Guardian (Guardian, 2013) and the NY Times (NY Times, 2013)) were ‘conducted’. The expert interviews followed a judgment sampling process combined with snowball and convenience sampling. Most companies seemed to have a strong link with other like-minded fashion brands and recommended contacting those in the research process, which could be defined as snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a specific technique utilised when members of a desired population cannot be easily identified (Saunders et al. 2003). Due to the fact that not all fashion brands fit into the criteria mentioned, this technique was seen as highly valuable.

### *3.5.3.5 Structure of interviews: consumer*

Consumer interviews followed the same format as those conducted within the case organisations: semi-structured. The conversational and relaxed format of semi-structured interviews creates a more informal relationship with the interviewees, which provides the researcher with richer and more detailed information about their experiences and feelings. All participants felt comfortable to talk about their experiences and elaborated on their answers in-depth. Moreover, all interviewees were informed that participation is on a strictly voluntary basis and that they have the option to opt-out of the research at any point in time.

Interviews with consumers were conducted within Organisations 3 and 4, due to being the only customer-facing organisations in the research project. The selection process for potential participants followed a slightly different approach: participants for these interviews were chosen after the questionnaire data collection in Organisations 3 and 4 was completed. Section 3.5.7 provides a detailed overview of the questionnaire distribution, the sampling size, and the analysis process.

Before the selection process of potential interviewees, the completed questionnaires were divided into two piles: those with and those without contact details. Purposeful sampling was applied in form of maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990; Vitcu et al., 2007), which implies that there is a great heterogeneity within the sample chosen. Patton (1990) mentions that by focusing on individuals having had a different experience “it is possible to more thoroughly describe the variation in the group and to understand variations in experiences while also investigating core elements and shared outcomes” (p. 172). In order to achieve maximum variation sampling the questionnaires were split into piles distinguishing male and female participants and within these piles into different age brackets. The researcher then selected a group of potential participants, which were contacted and agreed an interview date with anyone responding positively to the request of participation. (For ethical implications see section 3.9)

Each participant was asked a series of questions that were related to the responses they gave in the questionnaire, providing an opportunity for the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences and opinions. Further to the questions asked, the participants were shown three different exhibits containing images. Exhibit A showed 18 different ‘labels’ (Appendix 2). The interviewees were asked if they recognized any of these labels, in which context they might have seen them before,

and whether they would be able to explain what these certifications stand for. This exercise helped to answer one of the researcher's questions set for this thesis: What is the role of eco-labels in the green slow-fashion industry? Exhibit B shows a photograph of the physical store space of Organisations 3 and 4 (depending on where the participant filled in the questionnaire the equivalent picture was shown). Providing the participant with the store picture was done purposefully to help re-visualise their experience inside the store and share how they felt about the individual case organisation. Exhibit C contained a picture of the *Made in Britain* logo (Appendix 2). This label is currently being reviewed, as it may soon be introduced into the fashion industry, enabling consumers to distinguish between 'home-grown' products and those that are not. Interviewees were asked to state their opinion and feelings on introducing a *Made in Britain* logo in the fashion industry. Moreover, participants had the opportunity to elaborate on their personal associations of this logo, for which the government is currently petitioning (HM Government, 2013).

#### 3.5.3.6 Interview analysis

The interview analysis proceeds with a systematic approach to allow for rich, thorough, in-depth information to be collected (Dey, 1993; Robson, 2002). This provides the basis for developing a framework out of common themes and patterns that emerge (Saunders et al., 2009). Analysing interviews is not a *one off* procedure, but rather a continuous effort, starting with the first interview (Kvale, 1996). In the verbatim transcripts non-verbal and verbal emphasis of words and phrases were *italicised*. Moreover, self-memos, interim summaries, and a researcher's diary were drawn-up and added to the individual interviews in green and smaller font, which further enriched the data collected (Saunders et al., 2009).

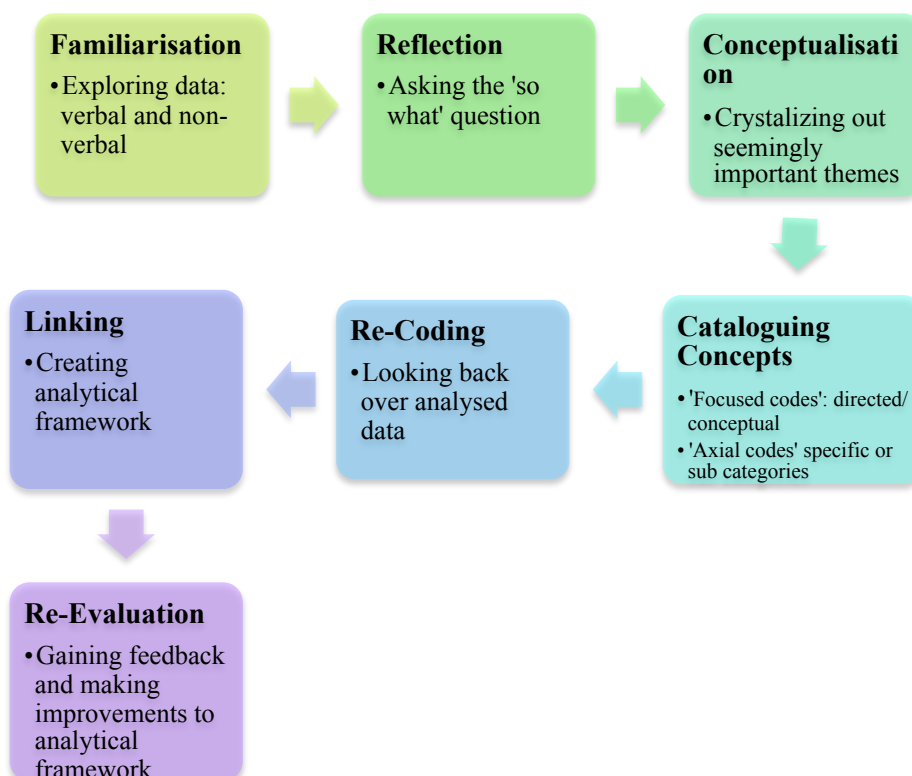
Similarly to choosing research methods that complement the philosophical stance of a project, the methods of analysis also need to be consistent "with the philosophical and methodological assumptions made in the research design that underpin the study" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008: 172). Within this thesis the interview analysis was managed in two cycles. The primary coding-cycle aims to extract key words from the qualitative data, thereby capturing "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attributes for [...] language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2009: 3). In other words, these key phrases provide the answer to "what is

present in the data” (Tracy, 2013).

The second coding-cycle looks at extracting key themes and patterns from the interviews. Miles and Huberman (1994) introduced an interactive model, which consists of three main components: data reduction, data display and drawing, and verifying conclusions. The main aim of this model is to provide a basis for “tracing out lawful and stable relationships among social phenomena, based on regularities and sequences that link these phenomena” (Punch, 2009). *Data reduction* is seen as a continuous process occurring throughout the analysis process, whereby themes, clusters and patterns are identified. These themes and patterns will then be organised and compiled in a manner that allows the researcher to *display data* as seen most fitting with the research, for example as graphs, charts, or networks. *Data reduction* and *data display* allow for conclusions to be drawn and verified within the project. Thus this model shows a continuous process that can only reach its finishing stages once all data is collected.

A further model, which helps to extract key themes and patterns from the interviews, is a grounded analysis approach. Grounded analysis is based on a seven-step process (Figure 21): familiarisation, reflection, conceptualisation, cataloguing concepts, re-coding, linking, re-evaluation. Utilising this framework implies “that the data is systematically analysed so as to tease themes, patterns and categories that will be declared in the findings” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008: 175).

Figure 21: Seven-step guide to interview analysis (adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., 2008)



Both models, Miles and Huberman's (1994) and Easterby-Smith et al.'s (2008), compliment the phenomenological stance of this PhD research, as both allow for interpretation to be made and common themes to emerge, rather than to impose a framework onto the data collected (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

In this PhD research, interviews were coded following Easterby-Smith et al.'s (2008) model for various reasons: Firstly, utilising a grounded analysis approach enables the researcher to stay close to the actual data, thereby carefully interpreting the information gathered within the context (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). Following the seven-steps cautiously ensures that the researcher constantly re-reads the interviews and thus becomes more familiar with the emerging data. Secondly, past research in a similar field of study (management research) employed this framework. Thirdly, a multiple case study approach forms the basis of this thesis. The seven-step guide provides an opportunity to compare and contrast data collected from the four focal cases at any stage. Thus, the researcher is able to see whether similar patterns, clusters, and themes emerge during the individual stages. This implies interviews within the individual cases can also be specifically re-coded and checked for themes that might have not been as obvious in one organisation as it has been in another. Fourthly, if data is presented in a transparent way, whereby the entirety of the researcher's analysis is made clear, the reviewer is able to verify the researcher's conclusions in a more holistic manner. An excerpt example of an analysed interview can be found in Appendix 5.

#### *The seven-step guide to interview analysis explained*

This section illustrates how the individual interviews were analysed and coded using the seven-steps guide.

#### **1. Familiarisation**

This step implies the re-reading, and re-listening to the interviews as well as looking over any photographs and notes taken during the course of the interview. Within this process, the researcher reflects on the aim, the research questions, and objectives set for this thesis, as well as the relationship with the interviewees (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

### Interview Abstract

C: Ok, my first question is when did you establish your brand?

I2: Ok. So I [...] I had been upcycling and recycling all the way through my BA degree and... [...] I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started [...] I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and [...] it wasn't branded at that point it was just experimentation. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with different materials and [...] different machinery and that kind of stuff. [...] and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. [...] and [...] I decide to do a Master at London College of fashion for two years. So I... I kind of incubated the brand, in research for two years. And then we became a business in January 2010, but by that point a lot of the brand development, initial brand development had been done. [...] and then over the last two years it's been at... so much brand development really, compared to were we were two years ago... it's amazing.

## 2. Reflection

As highlighted in the philosophy section, phenomenology puts a strong emphasis on reflexivity, thus the second step within the process analysis is to *reflect* on the situation and the role of the researcher within this context. Furthermore, the reflection process tries to answer the *what*-questions, including *what* knowledge has been gained, *what* questions that were previously unanswered have been answered, and *what* is different within this research.

### Interview Abstract

C: Ok, my first question is when did you establish your brand?

I2: Ok. So I uhm... I had been upcycling and recycling all the way through my BA degree and... uhm... I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started uhm... I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and uhhh... it wasn't branded at that point it was just experimentation. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with different materials and uhm... different machinery and that kind of stuff. Uhm... and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. Uhm... and uhm... I decide to do a Master at London College of fashion for two years. So I... I kind of incubated the brand, in research for two years. And then we became a business in January 2010, but by that point a lot of the brand development, initial brand development had been done. Ah... and then over the last two years it's been at... so much brand development really, compared to were we were two years ago... it's amazing.

#### Notes:

What knowledge has been gained?

- Upcycling and recycling technique
- Experimentation
- Incubated the brand in research
- Initial brand development

What is different within the research?

- Personal attachment?
- Continuous development?
- Experimentation - started off as something else?
- Different attitude towards creating brand?



### **3. Conceptualisation**

By trying to answer the questions mention in the second step, the researcher is able to identify patterns, themes and key phrases. These patterns and key phrases have been written into the second column of the interview analysis framework.

<b><u>Interview Abstract</u></b>	
<p>C: Ok, my first question is when did you establish your brand?</p> <p>I2: Ok. So I uhm... I had been upcycling and recycling all the way through my BA degree and... uhm... I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started uhm... I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and uhmm... it wasn't branded at that point it was just experimentation. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with different materials and uhm... different machinery and that kind of stuff. Uhm... and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do.Uhm... and uhm... I decide to do a Master at London College of fashion for two years. So I... I kind of incubated the brand, in research for two years. And then we became a business in January 2010, but by that point a lot of the brand development, initial brand development had been done. Ah... and then over the last two years it's been at... so much brand development really, compared to were we were two years ago... it's amazing.</p>	<p>Had been upcycling and recycling all through BA degree</p> <p>All through BA degree... Wasn't branded but more of an experiment Just experimentation</p> <p>Experimented with different materials and machinery At that point had first very formation of idea of what I was gonna do Decided to do a masters, incubated the bran in research for two years Became a brand in January 2010 By that point a lot of brand development had been done Over the last 2 years much brand development</p>

### **4. Cataloguing Concepts**

This step includes creating categories for previously highlighted key phrases. Categories can take on one of two forms: they may be 'focused codes' and therefore answer a question directly and in an analytical manner, or they may be 'axial codes' and therefore provide a better insight into the individual categories created.

<b>Interview Abstract</b>		
<p>I2: Ok. So I uhm... I had been <b>upcycling and recycling</b> all the way through my <b>BA degree</b> and... uhm... I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started uhm... I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and uhm... it wasn't branded at that point it was <b>just experimentation</b>. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with <b>different materials and uhm... different machinery and that kind of stuff</b>. Uhm... <b>and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do.</b> Uhm... and uhm... I decide to do a <b>Master at London College of fashion</b> for two years. So I... I kind of <b>incubated the brand</b>, in research for two years. And then we became a business in <b>January 2010</b>, but by that point a lot of the <b>brand development</b>, initial brand development had been done. Ah... and then over the last two years it's been at... so much brand development really, compared to were we were two years ago... it's amazing.</p>	<p>Had been upcycling and recycling all through BA degree</p> <p>All through BA degree... Wasn't branded but more of an experiment Just experimentation</p> <p>Experimented with different materials and machinery (Look at collection, does this still come out in current collection?!) At that point had first very formation of idea of what I was gonna do At that point had first very formation of idea of what I was gonna do</p> <p>Decided to do a masters, <b>incubated the brand</b> in research for two years Interesting choice of word... something more to it to explore! Became a brand in January 2010 By that point a lot of brand development had been done</p> <p>Over the last 2 years much brand development</p>	<p><b>Production:</b> Sustainable techniques <b>Education:</b> knowledge acquired in BA degree</p> <p><b>Company History:</b> initial idea of brand developed through BA program, but at that point more of an experiment rather than a full development. Education seems to play a vital role, opens up possibilities. Education helps to gain vital knowledge to develop brand <b>Production:</b> Different materials <b>Creativity:</b> Passion in voice – more to it than just idea</p> <p><b>Education:</b> Brand as research project. Brand development through higher education. Education seems to be playing a key part of brand development <b>London College of Fashion – Linked to CSF -&gt; Influencer?!</b> <b>Founding History:</b> Brand officially registered in 2010 <b>Brand development:</b> constant brand development, going with the time and flow. Also with experience brand grows. Education and experience key part of brand development. It seems to be important to reflect on brand and re-evaluate goals and aims</p>

## 5. Re-Coding

As mentioned earlier, reflexivity is key within any research, thus once step one through four were completed, it was important to go over the analysis again, making sure nothing was missed. This process of re-reading and re-familiarising oneself with steps one through to four is highlighted in the re-coding stage.

## 6. Linking

This stage links patterns together and allows for the creation of a framework (Charmaz, 2006).

<p><b>Interview Abstract</b></p> <p>C: Ok, my first question is when did you establish your brand?</p> <p>I2: Ok. So I uhm... I had been <b>upcycling and recycling</b> all the way through my <b>BA degree</b> and... uhm... I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started uhm... I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and uhm... it wasn't branded at that point it was <b>just experimentation</b>. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with <b>different materials and uhm... different machinery and that kind of stuff</b>. Uhm... <b>and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. Uhm... and at that point I kind of</b> had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. Uhm... and uhm... I decide to do a <b>Master at London</b> College of fashion for two years. So I... I kind of <b>incubated the brand</b>, in research for two years. And then we became a business in <b>January 2010</b>, but by that point a lot of the <b>brand development</b>, initial brand development had been done. Ah... and then over the last two years it's been at... so much brand development really, compared to were we were two years ago... it's amazing.</p>	<p><b>Production:</b> Sustainable techniques</p> <p><b>Education:</b> knowledge acquired in BA degree</p> <p><b>Company History:</b> initial idea of brand developed through BA program, but at that point more of an experiment rather than a full development. Education seems to play a vital role, opens up possibilities. Education helps to gain vital knowledge to develop brand</p> <p><b>Production:</b> Different materials</p> <p><b>Creativity:</b> Passion in voice – more to it than just idea</p> <p><b>Education:</b> Brand as research project. Brand development through higher education. Education seems to be playing a key part of brand development</p> <p><u>London College of Fashion – Linked to CSF -&gt; Influencer?!</u></p> <p><b>Founding History:</b> Brand officially registered in 2010</p> <p><b>Brand development:</b> constant brand development, going with the time and flow. Also with experience brand grows. Education and experience key part of brand development. It seems to be important to reflect on brand and re-evaluate goals and aims</p>	<p>Potential links after first Interview:</p> <p>Production &amp; Education - Linked? - Education influencing production process?</p> <p>Company History &amp; Founding History - Potentially the same?</p> <p>Creativity reflected in various aspects?</p>
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## 7. Re-Evaluation

The final step in the process takes reviews and comments into account, which help to improve the quality of the work overall (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

As demonstrated, coding within this PhD research was done thematically utilising colour coordination, *italicised*, **bold**, and underlined emphasis. The coding process was conducted manually in word documents rather than through a Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo. Although CAQDAS have manifold advantages, the researcher deemed manual coding as a more appropriate method. This research looks at multiple cases, using an inductive approach, which implies themes, patterns and clusters emerge from the data. Interviewees might use different phrases and terms to describe a similar phenomenon,

“the existence of multiple synonyms would [than] lead to partial retrieval of information” (Brown et al., 1990: 136), which can be avoided when coding manually. Furthermore, the researcher works with a Mac computer, which – at the time - was not compatible with the NVivo software. Although computer spaces were provided by the university (within the library and the doctoral centre), which had access to NVivo, uploading transcripts to a publicly accessible facility would have not complied with the ethical framework utilised in this research. All interview transcripts, the voice recordings, and any documents containing analysis of these interviews were saved on the researcher’s personal external hard drive, which can only be accessed with the researcher’s password.

#### **3.5.4 Employee shadowing**

Shadowing in managerial research is not a new phenomenon and has been used by Mintzberg (1970) in previous studies investigating managers. “Shadowing is a research technique, which involves a researcher closely following a member of an organisation over an extended period of time” (McDonald, 2005: 456). In this thesis this implies that the researcher stayed close to employees and the O/Ms and observed them in an unobtrusive way (similar to a shadow) within each case organisation (DET, 2009). Over a three months period, the researcher was able to build collegial relationships with the participants, enabling her to complete five days of observations in each of the organisations, noting down an employee’s average working day. Building trust and relationships with the workers is essential in order to understand the world (micro-company) from someone else’s perspective, thereby following along Mintzberg’s (1970) study on management behaviour.

Throughout the shadowing process the researcher took notes, prompting the individual being shadowed with questions in order to gain a running commentary of their working day (McDonald, 2005). Continuous note taking allows for rich data sets, “which gives a detailed first-hand and multidimensional picture of the role, approach, philosophy and tasks of the person being studied” (McDonald, 2005: 457). By *shadowing* various employees and the O/Ms within the individual micro-organisations, the researcher was able to gain a holistic image of the organisations themselves and what they stand for. At this point, the researcher realised that the findings collected provide data for much more than simply the companies’ corporate

identity, but rather sheds light onto their supply chain, their operations, and their overall corporate identity/corporate image.

However, using *shadowing* as a research technique has various challenges. McDonald (2005) sees the notion of access as a potential hurdle, which needs to be overcome. For this PhD research, full access to the organisations was granted by the O/Ms and the individual employees shadowed. Furthermore, shadowing can produce rich data sets, which may take a considerable amount of time to analyse (Forsblad, 1984). The researcher typed up her notes on the same day of the observations, making sure no detail was missed. The following day the researcher re-read the shadowing transcript and added comments/notes into the text, thereby reflecting on her own experience. Moreover, each transcript was shown to the individual participant shadowed, providing them with the opportunity to read through them and reconfirming that their working day was accurately portrayed. Afterwards, the shadowing transcripts were analysed using the seven-step guide (see 3.5.3.5). The following section provides an example of the analysis procedure.

#### *Example of shadowing analysis*

##### **1. Familiarisation**

The researcher provided the participants with their respective shadowing transcripts, reconfirming that the working day was accurately portrayed (Figure 22). Interviews taken in the studio/workspace were looked over at the same time (McDonald, 2005; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

It's 9:45, the shop is normally not open till about 10:30am. E1 just arrived at the studio and was the first one to come in. She is sitting on the first desk right behind the ironing board. She got comfortable and switching on the machinery... She mentions that she is coming in early as she is trying to finish things off tasks she started two weeks ago, as long as she has got time and there are not any further orders in. She mentions that their first order of SS13 designs is about to be sent out this week already. She mentions that she has been working on these creations all this week and last week and is nearly finished now. She says she only needs to get some dresses hemmed and afterwards the quality check has to be made. She is putting the first dress on the hemming machine and starts her task. She mentions she is very happy that this time it was not a rush to do everything, but she had quite a lot of time to get everything sorted out. She is taking her time with the hem, holding it with both hands. She is taking the dress out of the machine and shakes it in the air. She is looking through the hem. She tells me she is checking for loose threads first. She puts the dress on the middle table next to her. She now looks carefully over the hem.

Figure 22: Organisation 1's workspace (researcher's own photograph)



E1 workspace is situated on left hand side of studio, close to the entrance door. Workspace is right by the window allowing for natural light the station. Every workstation is kept tidy and cleaned before the workers leave. The studio itself is open plan, which implies everyone can see everyone and knows what is happening at any point in time. The studio itself is furnished with essentials only, no pictures, no wall décor, and no cupboards that are unnecessary.

## **2. Reflection**

This step enables the researcher to reflect on the workspace, the employees' routines, and their working day, thereby looking at the 'what'-questions and the knowledge that was gained.

It's 9:45, the shop is normally not open till about 10:30am. E1 just arrived at the studio and was the first one to come in. She is sitting on the first desk right behind the ironing board. She got comfortable and switching on the machinery.. She mentions that she is coming in early as she is trying to finish things off tasks she started two weeks ago, as long as she has got time and there are not any further orders in. She mentions that their first order of SS13 designs is about to be sent out this week already. She mentions that she has been working on these creations all this week and last week and is nearly finished now. She says she only needs to get some dresses hemmed and afterwards the quality check has to be made. She is putting the first dress on the hemming machine and starts her task. She mentions she is very happy that this time it was not a rush to do everything, but she had quite a lot of time to get everything sorted out. She is taking her time with the hem, holding it with both hands. She is taking the dress out of the machine and shakes it in the air. She is looking through the hem. She tells me she is checking for loose threads first. She puts the dress on the middle table next to her. She now looks carefully over the hem.

## **3. and 4. conceptualization & cataloguing concepts**

In these two steps phrases are highlighted and codes created, thereby trying to answer the questions mention in the second step.

<p>It's 9:45, the shop is normally not open till about 10:30am. Eljust arrived at the studio and was the first one to come in. She is sitting on the first desk right behind the ironing board. She got comfortable and switching on the machinery.. <b>She mentions that she is coming in early as she is trying to finish things off tasks she started two weeks ago, as long as she has got time and there are not any further orders in. She mentions that their first order of SS13 designs is about to be sent out this week already.</b> She mentions that she has been working on these creations all this week and last week and is nearly finished now. She says she only needs to get some dresses hemmed and afterwards the quality check has to be made. <b>She is putting the first dress on the hemming machine and starts her task.</b> She mentions she is very happy that this time it was not a rush to do everything, but she had quite a lot of time to get everything sorted out. She is taking her time with the hem, holding it with both hands. She is taking the dress out of the machine and shakes it in the air. <b>She is looking through the hem. She tells me she is checking for loose threads first.</b> She puts the dress on the middle table next to her. She now looks carefully over the hem.</p>	<p><b>Work Ethics</b> staff dedicated to finish items for orders, coming in early in the morning – highlights that they must have job satisfaction</p> <p><b>Production</b> producing the new collection already and have orders – highlights that the products are popular and sell</p> <p><b>Processes</b> First going to hemming machine.</p> <p><b>Processes</b> quality checks are key – reputation and making sure standing out</p>
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## **5. Re-Coding**

The shadowing transcripts are recoded in accordance with any themes found in the interview analysis and vice versa.

## **6. Linking**

This stage links patterns together and allows for the creation of a framework (Charmaz, 2006).

<p>It's 9:45, the shop is normally not open till about 10:30am. El just arrived at the studio and was the first one to come in. She is sitting on the first desk right behind the ironing board. She got comfortable and switching on the machinery.. <b>She mentions that she is coming in early as she is trying to finish things off tasks she started two weeks ago, as long as she has got time and there are not any further orders in. She mentions that their first order of SS13 designs is about to be sent out this week already.</b> She mentions that she has been working on these creations all this week and last week and is nearly finished now. She says she only needs to get some dresses hemmed and afterwards the quality check has to be made. <b>She is putting the first dress on the hemming machine and starts her task.</b> She mentions she is very happy that this time it was not a rush to do everything, but she had quite a lot of time to get everything sorted out. She is taking her time with the hem, holding it with both hands. She is taking the dress out of the machine and shakes it in the air. <b>She is looking through the hem. She tells me she is checking for loose threads first.</b> She puts the dress on the middle table next to her. She now looks carefully over the hem.</p>	<p><b>Work Ethics</b> staff dedicated to finish items for orders, coming in early in the morning – highlights that they must have job satisfaction</p> <p><b>Production</b> producing the new collection already and have orders – highlights that the products are popular and sell</p> <p><b>Processes</b> First going to hemming machine.</p> <p><b>Processes</b> quality checks are key – reputation and making sure standing out</p>	<p>Work Ethics &amp; Production: - Linked?</p> <p>Production &amp; Process &amp; Founding History - Linked? - Set up on purpose in a way that creates commitment?</p>
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## **7. Re-Evaluation**

The final step in the process takes reviews and comments into account, which help to improve the quality of the work overall (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

### **3.5.5 Semiology**

Visual data analysis is often referred to as *semiology* or *semiotics* (Rose, 2007) and is broadly defined as the “science of produced meaning” (Danesi, 2007: 3) based on structural analysis and cognitive science (Hoshino, 2012). The overarching aim of semiology is “to unravel the meanings that are built into all kinds of human products, from words, symbols, [and] narratives, [...] to scientific theories and mathematical



theorems” (Danesi, 2007: 3). In this manner, semiological analysis in this PhD research can be utilised to analyse the visual component making up a company’s corporate identity (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007). Although past studies in the field of corporate identity have, to the researcher’s knowledge, not incorporated semiotics as a methodological tool, Christensen and Askegaard (2001) insist that the symbolic meaning of organisations becomes increasingly important, which needs to be investigated and taken into account when analysing their corporate identity. To reiterate this further, various key authors in the field of corporate identity (Abratt, 1989; Balmer, 1995; Olins, 1995) emphasise the idea that what an organisation stands for is represented through a series of visual cues. These symbols provide meaning to the end-consumer and other stakeholders, thereby enabling them to distinguish one organisation from its competition.

Furthermore, the data analysis suggested incorporating the literature of value co-creation into this PhD research. In-depth investigations into this subject area revealed that semiotics has, in the past, been utilised in connection with value co-creation (Akaka et al., 2013). This fact provides a further justification for having looked at semiotics as a research methodology in detail.

*Semiology* is not a new phenomenon *per se*, but rather finds its origins in ancient Greece (Oswald & Mick, 2006), where it was understood as the science that looks at signs and symbols (McAuley et al., 2007), incorporating various “theoretical stances and methodological tools” (Chandler, 2007: 2). In other words, “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco, 1976: 7). The term *sign* in this context can have manifold interpretations, as it may take any form, including, but not limited to, words, gestures, sounds, objects, and images (Chandler, 2007). Semiology, as an analytical tool, seeks to decode texts as structured wholes. This approach to analysis is qualitative in nature (Chandler, 2007), which complies with the phenomenological stance of this research project.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a rise of semiotics in Europe and America with two independent researchers developing today’s dominant paradigms in the theories of semiology (Mick, 1986; Mick et al. 2004; Oswald & Mick, 2006). The linguist Saussure developed a dialectical relationship concept that focuses on the signified and the signifier (Mick, 1986; Oswald & Mick, 2004). Saussure’s school of thought believes that the meaning of a sign or symbol is dependent on the context and the combination of signs used (Mick, 1986). Stated alternatively, he believed that “what

we learn is not the world, but particular codes into which it has been structured so that we may ‘share’ our experience of it” (Thayer, 1982: 30). This implies that this specific model follows an interpretivist stance, which indicates that the meaning of a sign is dependent on the individual’s interpretation (Clark, 1997) and thus, is not only constructed by the individual, but also subjective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Saussure’s model has been popular in the field of marketing, specifically within consumer research (Floch, 2001). European researchers such as Greimas (1983) and Floch (2001) have built upon the dialectical framework (Mick et al., 2004) and created a ‘semiotic square’ that allows mapping “the brand world both as it is communicated in advertising [...] and as it is perceived by consumers” (Oswald & Mick, 2004: 39). Greimas (1989) said that “we know nothing about meaning except that we can talk about it in terms of signification” (p. 539), thus he developed the semiotic square, which interprets a sign in terms of its opposition and contrary pairings (Greimas et al., 1989).

The second dominant paradigm of semiotics was founded by Peirce and finds its origins in philosophy and physical science, as opposed to linguistics (Oswald & Mick, 2004). In contrast to Saussure’s dialectical model, Peirce (cited in Mick, 1986) develops a triadic relationship between the object, the interpreter, and the context (Mick, 1986). Sebeok (2001) emphasises that Peirce’s “interpretant can be either an equivalent sign or ‘perhaps a more developed sign’, which is where novelty enters the system, enabling us to increase our understanding of the immediate object” (p. 34). Authors, such as Kawama (1990) and Vihma (1995) built on Peirce’s work and apply the triadic relationship to the context of product design. Both, Saussure’s and Peirce’s model are discussed in-depth in section 3.5.5.1.

Morris (1946) has brought semiotics to the next level by establishing what is now known as behaviourist semiotics (Chandler, 2014). Morris (1946) defines semiology as a way to talk about symbols and signs, thereby distinguishes three subdivisions: semantics, which is a sign-sign relation, syntactics, which focuses on Saussure’s dialectic relation, and pragmatics, which is concerned with Peirce’s triadic relations (Mick, 1986).

Although semiotics has a longstanding history, it was not until the late 1960s that it was introduced into the marketing discipline (Oswald & Mick, 2004). Barthes (1986) is seen as one of the first authors to discuss semiotics within the field of marketing, which developed further in the 1980s/90s (Mick, 1986; Mick et al., 2004).

According to Chandler (2014) key authors in the field of modern semiotics are “Roland Barthes (1915-1980), Algirdas Greimas (1917-1992), Yuri Lotman (1922-1993), Christian Metz (1931-1993), Umberto Eco (1932) and Julia Kristeva (1941)”. A noteworthy observation that can be made is that whilst semiotics has its origins in ancient Greece, to date there is still only a few studies that incorporate a semiological methodology within consumer and marketing theory (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). This is also reflected in the fact that there are only 53 titles published world wide on semiotics, of which “many of the journals have not lasted for long” (Kull & Maran, 2013: 140). An explanation for this could be a criticism brought forward by Lewis (1992), who highlighted that semiotics “advocates have written in a style that ranges from the obscure to the incomprehensible” (Lewis, 1991: 25). Although semiotics has been criticised, Mick et al. (2004) insist that semiology as a field has increased in importance within marketing research and needs to be developed further (Oswald & Mick, 2006).

Within this research semiology plays a vital part for various reasons: Firstly, it is a key element within the fashion industry - any fashion company is producing images to show their collection and publishes these either as part of their print advertising or online. In the same manner, Moore (2003) emphasises that due to “semiotic potential, brands and branded products are vulnerable to contingency in any number of ways – indeed, the vast majority of brands fail, and disappear forever from the earth!” (p. 334). This statement further supports the use of semiotics, as fashion organisations operate in a highly competitive environment in which it is vital to distinguish one self from the competition through the use of imagery, which in turns is a key part of corporate identity. Secondly, this research is focusing on micro-companies, who generally speaking, have a smaller marketing budget than large organisations (Bianchi et al., 2011). A firm’s visibility online can be enhanced utilising images on their SNS, thus making semiology a key component of their marketing strategy. And lastly, *visuals* are used to enhance a company’s identity, which links back to the literature on corporate identity and labels. The following section provides and overview on how organisations utilise semiotics.

### 3.5.5.1 Use of semiology

A company's corporate identity is reflected in their symbolism and corporate communication used within their marketing strategy (van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Imagery can be found ubiquitous in a society and therefore, plays a vital role in analysing a firm's corporate identity (Banks, 2007).

Figure 23: Operational model for managing corporate reputation and image (Gray & Balmer, 1998)

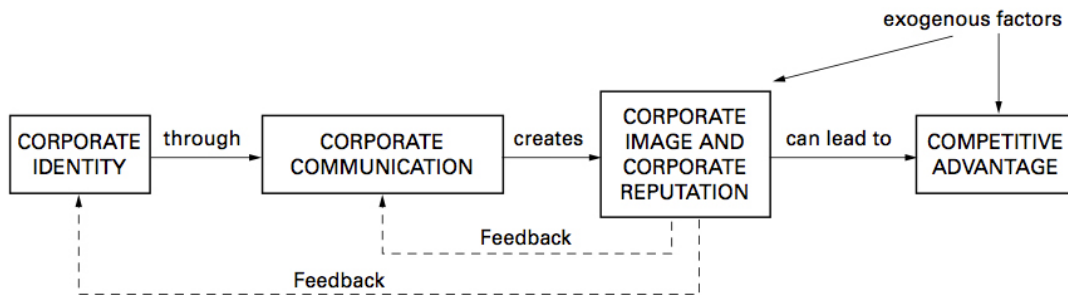


Figure 23 shows the relationship between corporate identity and corporate communication. It shows the ways an organisation designs an identity for their company/brand and communicates this identity to their target audience, thereby creating a corporate image (Gray & Balmer, 1998). Corporate communication is influenced by corporate design (or visual identity), which is also known as semiotics (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006). Semiotic analysis is employed to provide supporting data for objective 1) looking at the key components of corporate identity. Furthermore, it is utilised to provide data for objective 3), which maps the relationship between eco-labels and the green slow-fashion industry. Data is gathered in form of collecting promotional material distributed by the participating companies, signing up for their newsletters, taking pictures of the physical workspace and surrounding areas, and looking at their social media accounts. Table 6 provides a summary of time scale semiotic material was collected and the number and type of pieces collected. This provides an insight in the organisation's communication strategy and visual identity.

Figure 24 shows how communication theory works on a theoretical basis. The organisation (source) is encoding a message and forwards it to a transmitter, before being picked up by the receiver (audience/stakeholders) who then decodes the message again and makes sense of it. The *message* in this model is the *sign* within semiology. Semiotics has two main schools of thought, one led by de Saussure, who

developed a dyadic model, and the other led by Peirce, who developed a triadic model (Figure 25).

Table 6: Summary of semiotic material collected for analysis

	Twitter Feed	Company Flyer	Pictures of Workspace	Pictures of Surrounding Areas	Company Newsletter	Exhibition Leaflet
<b>Organisation 1</b>	<b>3 months</b> (07/09/12-25/10/12 & 02/11/12-06/01/13)	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b> (3 pictures of workspace, 3 pictures of overall studio, 4 pictures of collection)	<b>3</b> (Picture of the studio's outside, picture of street leading to and from studio)	<b>4</b> (Monthly news letters: September – December)	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Organisation 2</b>	<b>3 months</b> (18/12/12 – 22/03/13)	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b> (5 pictures of collection, 6 pictures of workspace, 2 pictures of machinery, 2 pictures of raw material/waste management)	<b>4</b> (Pictures of surrounding area)	<b>5</b> (Monthly news letters: January – May)	<b>1</b>
<b>Organisation 3</b>	<b>3 months</b> (06/12/12 – 11/02/13)	<b>4</b> (Includes 3 event flyers)	<b>5</b> (All pictures are of physical store and collections)	<b>2</b> (Picture of the studio's outside, picture of street leading to and from studio)	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Organisation 4</b>	<b>3 months</b> (01/05/13 – 30/06/13)	<b>N/A</b>	<b>8</b> (All pictures are of physical store and collections)	<b>2</b> (Picture of the studio's outside, picture of street leading to and from studio)	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Figure 24: Concepts of communication theory (based on Schramm (1955) and Shannon & Weaver (1962), as cited in Fill (2009: 42))

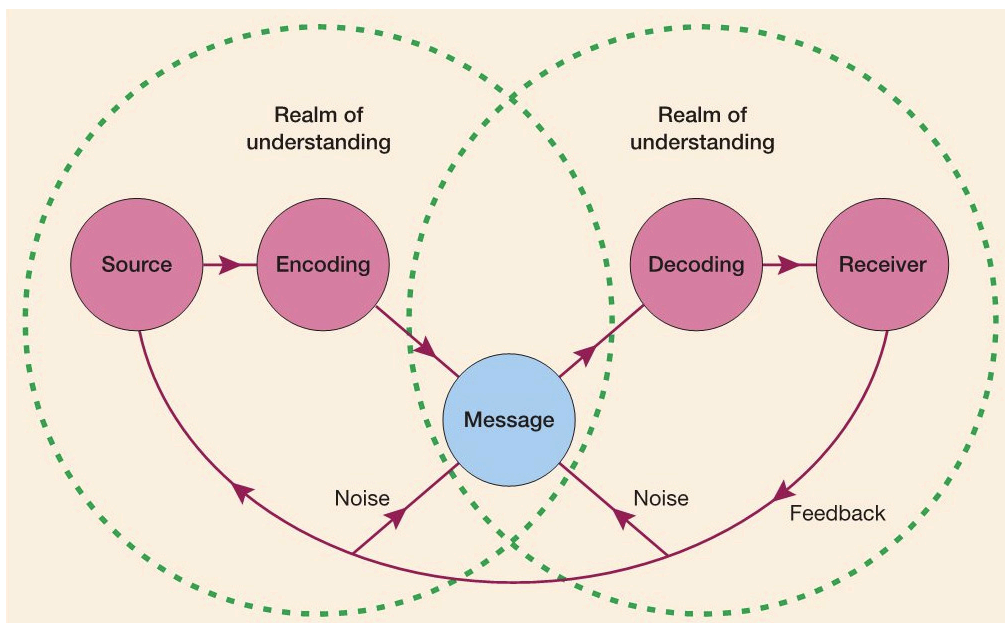


Figure 25: Saussure's model of the sign and Peirce's semiotic triangle (adapted from Chandler, 2007)



The *signifier* in Saussure's model represents the form, which the sign takes, whilst the *signified* is the concept it represents (Chandler, 2009). To better understand the concept, Chandler (2009) uses the example of the word *open*. The signifier in this case is the word *open* itself, whilst the *signified* concept can imply 'that the shop is open for business' or 'a position just opened up'. Thus, it can be said that signifiers can have different meanings depending on the contexts they are used in. Peirce (1955) on the other hand sees the *sign* as "something, which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. [...] It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea" (p. 99). This research follows Saussure's model (Chandler, 2009) of semiology, as it focuses on the sign within a specific context. It is not only important to understand how the organisation aims to represent itself, but also how it is perceived, which is highlighted by Saussure (Chandler, 2009). Therefore, pictures are incorporated into the interviews, which are conducted as a follow up on the questionnaires, distributed to consumers, who visit Organisations 3 and 4.

In order to understand how and what an organisation is integrating within their communication strategy and how it is perceived, it is vital to understand their corporate communication, of which the visual identity is a major part. Visual research has two main goals: On the one hand analysing and decoding visuals produced by the organisation itself; and, on the other hand analysing visuals such as photographs the researcher acquired throughout the course of her research (Banks, 2007). Geertz (1973) points out that visual material should be associated with the organisation itself and what this organisation is telling about itself. Alternatively stated, the researcher needs to understand the context of the image or symbol as well as understand the picture itself (Banks, 2007).

### 3.5.5.2 Visual data analysis

The data collected was analysed following Chandler's (2007) five-step semiotic method (Figure 26), which has been used and recommended by Otubanjo and Melewar (2007) analysing a Benetton advertisement. This model will be explained in-depth using Organisation 1's company flyer as an example (Figure 27).

Figure 26: The five stage semiotic process (adapted from Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007)

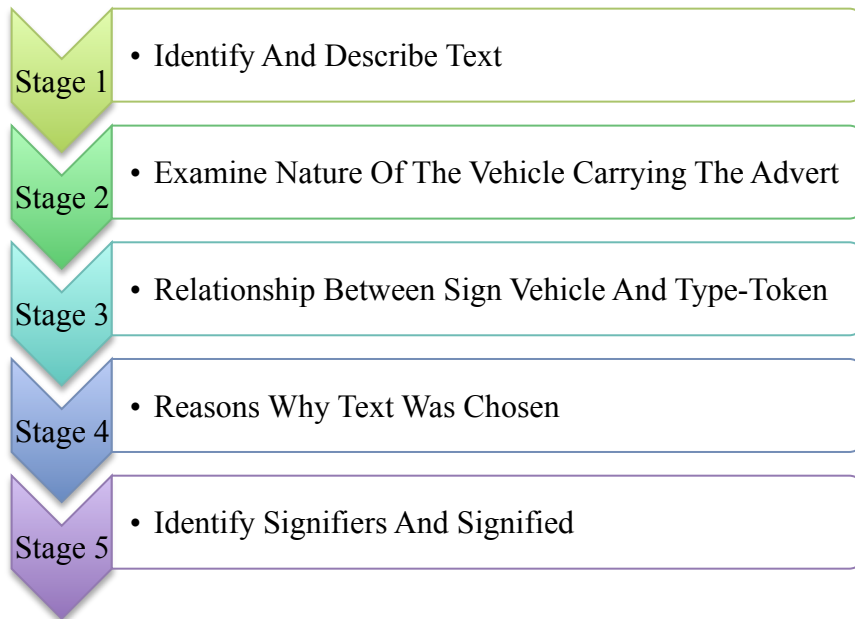


Figure 27: Organisation 1 company flyer



Stage 1 (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007) sets out the context of the image analysed by answering the two ‘w’-questions: Where did the picture come from? (e.g. prospect, flyer, SNS); and: What does the picture show? (e.g. a detailed description of what can be seen on the picture, positioning of any text and logos, usage of colour). In

**Stage1: Identify and Describe Text**

The flyer is printed on a DIN A5 photo paper. It is printed double sided. The first side shows a dress form mannequin, positioned in the middle of the photograph. A white frame surrounds the picture. The dress form mannequin was photographed in front of a white coloured brick wall. The mannequin itself has a ‘used-look’, and shows damaged areas on the chest and around the shoulder area. The damaged areas show ripped pieces of textile material and brownish stains. The following words can still be read on the bottom of the mannequin: *Kannett & Lindsell Ltd.*, which could be the manufacturer producing these mannequins. The second side of the flyer is dominated by text. The company name *Organisation 1* is printed as a heading, with the website being highlighted on the bottom of the page.

The text is split into various sections, firstly the heading, the first paragraph, a one-line sentence followed by four more paragraphs. The five paragraphs are justified, whilst the heading, the company name, the one-line sentence and the web address are centred.

terms of the flyer, the following description can be provided:

Stage 2 (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007) is concerned with the communication vehicle used to present the sign. It looks at the ‘where’-question, by identifying the medium it has been published in, why this medium was chosen and the implications this may have. For instance, has the image been published in a ‘high-class’ fashion magazine (e.g. Vogue), or on SNS (e.g. Twitter/Facebook)? This is vital, as the communication vehicle determines how many people can be reached with a specific campaign. Looking at the company flyer, the following remarks can be made:

**Stage 2: Examine the nature of the vehicle**

The material under investigation is a company flyer. It is on the one hand distributed in store, where the flyer is lying out on the counter for anyone visiting the studio to grab, and on the other hand it is sent out with every online order placed. The reach of the flyer cannot be determined, as neither can predictions can be made on how many people come to the studio and/or take a flyer, nor can predictions be made about online orders.

Stage 3 (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007) states the reason of the analysis, which purpose it is fulfilling within the research process. It answers why the specific image was chosen and provides the context of what is being analysed: the corporate identity



or the corporate image. This stage is important in discussing and determining how the text influences the interpretation.

**Stage 3: Relationship Between Sign Vehicle And Type-Token**

This flyer was chosen to be analysed as it is one of two print promotional materials used within the organisation. The flyer seems to be of particular value as it communicated the organisation's *mission* and *philosophy*. Both, the image and the text are analysed.

Stage 4 (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007) evaluates the key signifiers in the text and the reasoning behind choosing the particular image, giving the reader a better understanding of the context of the project and the organisation. This has been analysed in the following:

**Stage 4: Examine the purpose of analysing the text**

The flyer itself is very interesting in terms of not having been dated and having an image that is seemingly timeless. The purpose of this flyer is to inform consumers and other stakeholders about the organisation's *mission* and *philosophy*. Thus, it gives an insight into the company, what it stands for and what is important to the company, and respectively the O/M.

Stage 5 (Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007) identifies the audience the image/symbol was intended to attract, as well as the signifiers. The signifiers in this case can be various labels the company uses and claims they associate themselves with, thereby highlighting the organisation's corporate identity as well as the image they would like to portray to their employees and customers. The example shows the analysis of the first 2 lines of the flyer. The actual 'text' of the flyer was further analysed using Easterby-Smith et al.'s (2008) seven-step guide (see Appendix 6).

### **Stage 5: Identify the signifiers and the signified in the advertisement**

*Developing our slow fashion approach, one season at a time:* Contrary to the high street fashion manufacturers/producers *Organisation 1* is following a slow fashion approach. This implies that the turnaround of stock will be less often as will be the case for other fashion brands. This implies that *Organisation 1* is highlighting their sustainable element in producing fashion. The signified in this case are consumers interested in the fashion brand.

*Here at Organisation 1 we have long since abandoned fast fashion. Regardless of the impact it has ethically and environmentally, it has no provenance, it's homogenous, and customer service starts and ends at the till.* This paragraph once more highlights that *Organisation 1* is using a slow fashion and not a fast fashion approach. They indirectly mention that their approach is more ethical and environmentally friendly than a fast fashion approach. Therefore, it is sustainable. It mentions that their clothes have provenance, are individualistic and they provide customer service that starts before the customer is buying and paying for the product. This implies that there could be a better relationship between the brand and their consumers. It highlights that slow fashion or sustainable fashion is unique and trendy.

To sum up, the researcher utilises a semiotic approach to gain a better understanding of the communication strategy used within the four organisations and how this strategy could be improved. Images used in the semiotic analysis process were either taken in the focal organisations during the time of intense study, or collected in the form of promotional material. The pictures taken in the organisations highlight the visual manifestation of the micro-companies (e.g. workspace, location of workspace, clothing collections, raw materials). All material used for semiotic analysis (photographs taken from SNS accounts or taken by researcher) were approved by the individual O/Ms. (For ethical implications see 3.7). The eco-labels chosen for this research were selected as they are most commonly used in the fashion industry according to Diekamp and Koch (2010), which was further validated when conducting secondary desk research. Appendix 2 identifies all standardisations used with this research.

### **3.5.6 Reflexivity and this PhD research**

#### ***3.5.6.1 The role of reflexivity in this PhD research***

The phenomenological stance of this PhD research focuses around the aspect of *reflexivity* (Husserl, 1929; Schütz, 1972). Stated alternatively, it is vital for the researcher to understand her position within the research context and what implications her feelings and beliefs have on her data collection and the way she

interprets the findings. Reflective writing is not a new phenomenon within the context of business and management, but rather can be found commonly within the contexts of organisational behaviour and leadership (Lawrence, 2013). The technique is frequently used to encourage people to discover their own personal attributes and reflect upon their actions, whilst furthermore observe others and their behaviour within the same context. This implies that *reflexivity* provides the opportunity to “validate personal experience[s]” (Lawrence, 2013: 194), by actively reflecting upon the situation or event and future implications. Generally speaking, this philosophical stance enables the researcher to utilise reflective writing as a tool to understand, why participants behaved in a certain manner (Harrison & Reilly, 2011). Moreover, it provides an opportunity to re-familiarize oneself with the previously collected data, as the researcher continuously wrote comments, memos, and journal entries after each interview and shadowing period. These personal reflections, together with the verbatim transcribed interviews helped throughout the data analysis process, by capturing the data collection experience and the complexity of the research environment as a whole (Bryman, 2004).

To sum up, for this research project it is vital to understand the implications of the researcher’s background on the data collected. Thus, this section focuses on reflecting on the circumstances of gaining access to the participating organisations. To emphasise on the personal experience and interpretations, the following passages are written in the first person, as suggested by various authors (Moon, 2006; Lawrence, 2013; Tracy, 2013). This section firstly describes the research environment, secondly interprets the situation, and thirdly elaborates on the outcome.

#### *3.5.6.2 The research environment*

Organisation 1 is run and owned by a single designer, who created her brand during her Bachelor degree and further developed the company as part of her Master’s dissertation. Her organisation is actively engaged with local schools and universities, providing workshops, which teach young kids how to ‘re-vamp’ their wardrobe through upcycling techniques, as well as provide opportunities for fashion and design students to learn more about running a business.

Organisation 2 is based in the West of England. The owner of the business has a web/product design based background and is strongly supporting further education

and local talent. O/M2 is working together with KTL, a company providing people with apprenticeship opportunities and other NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) within the fashion and textile industry.

Organisation 3 is managed by a single person and was established with the help of the local government and the Mary Portas fund. O/M3 runs and partly owns another small business in a neighbouring city. Both of 'her' shops provide young people with the opportunity of gaining work experience through apprenticeships, whilst also offering a platform for local designers, crafters, and makers to promote their creations. Moreover, the stores encourage designers to take initiative and host community-supporting events at the store location.

Organisations 3 and 4 are both relatively new cooperatives - established in 2012 - out of a compassion for fashion. Both cooperatives provide an outlet for crafters to present their own work. Without these shops the individual crafters would not have had an opportunity to showcase their products in a store at a prime city centre location. Organisation 4 also provides workshops and offers weekly knitting groups.

### *3.5.6.3 Interpretation and providing meaning to research environment*

The commonality between all four organisations is that each of them employs a minimum of one, but fewer than 10 workers. Working daily with the same people in close proximity implies that these people get to know each other very well on a professional and personal level. This indicates that there is no opportunity of hiding in an office across a long corridor as can be done in a multinational organisation employing hundreds of workers. Micro-organisations need to be very selective in hiring people as there needs to be a *good fit* within the workplace in order to have a productive working environment (ACAS, 2010). This factor highly impacted this thesis in terms of organisations participating in the research project, as the shadowing process and interviews should not interrupt the daily routines of the individual workers.

I came into each of the organisations as an *outsider*, someone who does not have a background in fashion. However, I was able to utilise this to my advantage throughout my data collection. When approaching potential participants, I explained that my research focuses on the marketing side of micro-companies, more

specifically, at understanding what organisations stand for. I felt that the O/Ms were more inclined to participate in my research project, once I explained about my aim and objectives as well as my background. I ensured the O/Ms that I would not ask for any sensitive information and they would have the chance to opt-out of the research at any point in time. Later, I realised that one reason for allowing me to conduct my research within their organisations was due to the fact that I am a marketing student and not an upcoming fashion designer, therefore the risk of me *copying* company specific product designs or techniques was highly unlikely. (This was stated by one of the O/Ms.)

For me, the most significant experience was meeting the O/Ms for the first time. In the case of Organisation 2 this happened at Bubble London, a renowned biannual kids trade show. I went up to the stand, introduced myself to the O/M and told her about my research project. Later, when my observations were coming to an end in the organisation, O/M2 mentioned that she discussed the organisation's participation in my project with her employees. O/M2 mentioned, they only agreed to participate, as she was very impressed with my dedication, coming all the way from Sheffield to a London-based show to make contacts and the fact that O/M2 thought I had an out-going personality that would fit well in the *team* and within the company. O/M2 mentioned that she believed I was capable to work independently and thus would ensure not to disrupt the day-to-day working routines.

This demonstrates that building relationships and more specifically relationships based on trust in terms of ensuring I was not looking for company secrets and also in the sense that I am not disrupting working routines, was vital to gain access. Both aspects of trust were vital to gather data for my PhD research. Moorman et al. (1992) define this type of commitment as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (p. 136), whilst trust “is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange in whom one has confidence” (p. 82). The notion of *trust* is seen as one of the most influential drivers of interpersonal behaviour (Moorman et al., 1992; Ferrin et al., 2007). Subsequently, I realised that making face-to-face contact and engaging with the organisation was a way of gaining this *trust*. Meeting people for the first time always leaves an impression and “like any good first impression, we hope [to] inspire a ‘meet again’ – a longer get-to-know-you-chat – and conversations that grow into relationships” (DDI, 2013). Thus, the first impression was key in recruiting participants. A mutual understanding of the outcome of the research

project, as well as the benefits gained on both sides (the participants and my own as a researcher) needed to be clearly communicated. Only when this mutual agreement was reached and both parties felt comfortable in working with one another for an extensive period of time, the O/Ms agreed to have their organisation participate and spare time for the research project. The personal connection and *fit* within the company was key in this agreement.

A noteworthy observation was that most O/Ms who participated in my research project had a university degree or were enrolled for a university degree. This implies that the O/Ms either already faced or will be facing the same challenges I was, when I started my PhD research: finding people and organisations that were and are willing to participate in their final dissertations. The fact that they understood these challenges and also seeing my commitment and dedication to the research project, by making the effort to meet face-to-face with each O/M before they agreed to participate in my research, might have been a further contributor to gaining access to these organisations. All four participating companies have shown an interest in my research topic and felt that this type of investigation could provide them with vital feedback on how to improve their business. Feedback provided to the organisations is based on Chapters 4 and 5 and presented to them in report form and/or via a presentation. This is further discussed in Chapter 7.

A further commonality between the organisations that might also have contributed to me gaining access is the fact that each individual company has a strong link to social engagement, actively helping people to move forward and participate within the wider community they are operating in. This drive for social engagement and community work highlights aspects of the TBL, and the commitment to move towards sustainable development.

#### *3.5.6.4 Outcome from investigating this research environment*

Working together with these four organisations has provided me with the opportunity to experience various working environments of companies operating in the green slow-fashion industry. I was able to understand and observe some of the challenges these organisations were and are facing on a daily basis, which was vital when it came to analysing the raw data sets. Being a phenomenologist, it is key to be able to

interpret data, by considering not only my own experiences, but also by understanding the circumstances they are happening in.

I realised that relationships are a vital component of the micro-organisations' daily operations. *Trust* takes centre-stage in all the organisations, in that O/Ms believe that their employees are able to fulfil their tasks even when they are not around and also that people are willing to share knowledge and provide guidance to each other, when needed. This feeling of community and the *trust* amongst the members was something that I deemed highly noteworthy, as newspapers, magazines, and other articles I had read in preparation for a contextual understanding of the fashion industry, emphasised the competitiveness and selfishness that prevails within the fashion industry as a whole.

Whilst conducting my research, I have significantly developed my knowledge of the green slow-fashion industry and improved my understanding of how these businesses were set-up and run.

Nevertheless, because I did not have any prior knowledge nor a background within the fashion industry, I believe it might have taken me longer to get answers to specific questions, as I was unable to ask the *right* questions. It took me more time to express myself in the *fashion* language, with its unique terminology, which meant that questions I thought were straight forward were differently interpreted by the O/Ms. It took me five interviews to master the task of rewording different questions to gain data that answered my research aim and objectives, whilst also not be leading and pre-determining the outcome. Moreover, as this has been my first piece of research that I have gathered data for all on my own, I feel the pilot study I conducted during my first year of research has helped to put a focus on some of my questions, and be prepared to probe for follow-up questions, in order to acquire enough data to provide evidence for all of my objectives. In doing so, I gained more information than I needed to answer my objectives sufficiently and that I knew how to incorporate in the project.

### 3.5.7 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as a further methodological tool within this research project. The questionnaires form the more 'quantitative' influenced part of this PhD research and were distributed to consumers of Organisations 3 and 4. Although it

could be said that surveys do not fit with the phenomenological stance, the contrary is argued. Questionnaires were on the one hand utilised to gain a better understanding of the consumers' perceptions in terms of sustainable fashion and corporate identity, and on the other hand to gain access to customers for follow-up interviews. Moreover, these questionnaires contained qualitative elements, and allowed for further and more subjective research methods to take place. Thus, a phenomenological stance was adhered to within the overarching methodological approach of this research.

The survey used for this research project was paper-based (Appendix 7) as opposed to utilising an online platform. Although paper-based questionnaires are generally seen as being time consuming and due to handwritten elements, hard to interpret (Bryman & Bell, 2007), the researcher felt very strongly about this method for various reasons: Firstly, the employee shadowing periods have shown that people of all ages shop at Organisations 3 and 4 and therefore it was necessary to choose the most inclusive method of reaching all potential consumers. An online survey assumes that the consumers have internet access, know the shop's web address or SNS and are actively engaged with the company via the internet - behaviour that is typically found among a younger generation (Tuten et al., 2000). Thus, a paper-based questionnaire is more inclusive and provides a better representation of the store's clientele. Secondly, personal contact between the researcher and the person filling in a questionnaire was very helpful when conducting a follow-up interview, as there was already an established relationship from which to build upon in the interview, helping consumers to be relaxed and at ease with the process. Thirdly, a paper-based survey ensures that the person chosen filled in the questionnaire, rather than any member of the household. Although participants could choose to walk freely around the shop whilst filling in the survey, the questionnaires did not leave the premises.

#### *3.5.7.1 Questionnaire sampling process*

Sampling is a vital process as it provides the researcher with an indication of what is happening on a larger scale. Quantitative elements seek to draw an accurate sample of the population, in order for the findings to be generalisable (Bryman & Bell, 2007; LSHTM, 2009). Surveys were handed out following a selective sampling process, which is characterised as: "shaped by the time the researcher has available to [her], by [her] framework, by [her] starting and development interests" (Schatzman & Strauss,



1973: 39). As previously mentioned, the researcher engaged with workers through the employee shadowing process, which allowed for observations of the physical shop floor in Organisations 3 and 4. From the observations made it became apparent, who the people are shopping at the individual locations, thus the researcher was aware of whom to sample for the purpose of the study (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The researcher tried to select a representative sample of the population. Although the majority of customers shopping at Organisations 3 and 4 were female, the researcher tried to get responses from male counterparts. In summary, implementing a selective sampling process implies that the sample selected of the population will be more representative.

#### *3.5.7.2 Sample size of questionnaire*

Altogether the researcher collected 302 questionnaires, which were completed in-store with the researcher present to clarify any issues participants had, while not providing any leading answers. The survey was split in a 2:1 ratio: 202 responses were collected from Organisation 3 and 100 from Organisation 4. The employee shadowing experience showed that on average 150 people walked into Organisation 3, while only 60 shopped in Organisation 4. Thus, the number of questionnaires collected from each organisation is proportionally appropriate based on the average consumer figures. Furthermore, questionnaires were handed out over a 2-week period, with the researcher coming on different days of the week, ensuring a more accurate sample of the population. Assuming that on average 150 people visit Organisation 3, this implies that approximately 900 people enter the shop over the course of a 6-day working week. This implies that 23% of the population were asked to fill in questionnaires. In case of Organisation 4, 28% of the population filled in the survey. The researcher's decision to collect 300 responses was done for a specific reason, as statistically speaking this sample provides a 90% confidence that on repletion of the questionnaire the responses differ by a margin of only 4.7% (Davies, 2007). Furthermore, the small sample size is appropriate as the mere reason for conducting the survey was to 'complete' the data sets collected and additionally to access consumers, in order to be able to follow-up with an interview, thereby gaining a broader picture of the companies and the relationship between eco-labels in the fashion industry.

Moreover analysis of questionnaire data showed that the average survey respondent at Organisation 3 was between 22 and 29 years of age, whilst at Organisation 4 the respondents were on average 56 years or older. This confirms observations during the *in situ* research, specifically that Organisation 3 attracts a clientele that is younger than the one in Organisation 4. The average consumer age is a further justification for the 2:1 questionnaire ratio between Organisations 3 and 4. The pilot survey had indicated that younger people were more inclined to fill in a three-page long questionnaire than those who were middle aged and older. This might be due to the fact that people between 18 and 29 might still be in or have just finished (higher) education, thus still remember their own research intense work and the feeling of being reliant on someone else for help.

### 3.5.7.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire designed for this project did not develop a new scale per se, but rather amended already existing surveys by adding key aspects emerging from the literature review, Mintel reports, and the researcher's own data collection. The Ethical Fashion Source (EFS), a key organisation in the green slow-fashion industry, conducted several surveys between 2009 (Levell, 2010) and 2011 looking at the consumers' awareness of "fashion and sustainability" (Marsh, 2012). These questionnaires were used as a baseline for developing the researcher's own questions. The survey (Appendix 7) is divided into three sections: 1) general (Section 1), 2) company specific (Section 2), and 3) data protection (Section 3).

Sections 1 and 2 both make use of a five-point Likert type scale rating (Unimportant-Important and Disagree-Agree). Generally speaking, rating scales are used to allow participants to express their opinions about a certain statement by providing either a positive or negative weighing (Dolnicar et al., 2011). Although it has been argued that larger-point Likert scales allow for a more accurate measure in statistical terms (Pearse, 2011), the researcher believes that for this specific study a five-point scale is sufficient for various reasons: Firstly, the questionnaire designed for this research was based on previous work conducted through the EFS. In their survey, the EFS utilised a five-point rating scale, thus this Likert scale was deemed appropriate. Secondly, the role of the questionnaires utilised for this thesis is predominantly to gain access to consumers for follow-up interviews. Whilst the

statistical measurements might not be as accurate as when using a 15- or 21-point scale, it allows for stating a general direction of their opinion, which can be explored further during the interview process. And thirdly, the five-point scale, although criticised, is still prevalent in questionnaire design (Dawes, 2008; Lee & Soutar, 2010).

The first part of Section 1 provides an overview of various product aspects that people deem important when shopping for clothes, which – in the corporate identity literature – can be categorised within corporate design, corporate communication, and corporate strategy. This section helps to understand customers and their needs, which is vital for micro-organisations. The second part focuses on sustainable fashion in general terms and the perception and understanding of sustainable fashion. Furthermore, the question ‘What does sustainable fashion mean to you’, was asked to provide context for answering the previous questions in Section 1, as well as to provide a definition of the term sustainable fashion that thus far has not been commonly defined (Liggett, 2010). A more detailed analysis of the questionnaire, highlighting the original source of each component can be found in Appendix 8.

Section 2 looks at Organisations 3 and 4 in more detail, asking about brand specific aspects. This part aims to understand how the organisations are perceived in terms of their visual identity and the corporate culture. Section 3 provides more information on the customers’ demographics.

#### *3.5.7.4 Questionnaire validation*

After the initial questionnaire design, the survey was tested for its validity. Although the researcher did not develop a new scale, it still deemed necessary to test the new elements for their reliability. The term *validity* means that the methodological tool used for a study can measure the various components and attributes that are examined (de Von et al., 2007). There are various types of *validity*, including but not limited to: construct, face, and content validity (Trochim, 2001).

Construct validity looks at the degree to which a questionnaire is able to measure the theory/construct it was intended to evaluate. Face validity, the weakest form within the ‘validity family’ (Trochim, 2001), is concerned with the subjective assessment of the construct. It takes into consideration how potential participants will

answer the questionnaire (de Von, 2007; Kazi, 2012). Content validity examines whether the survey is taking every aspect of the construct under study into account or if more questions need to be asked. Netemeyer et al. (2003) recommend creating a pool of questions answering a specific aspect and having it reviewed by an expert panel or through qualitative research (Hogan et al., 2001).

A draft version of the questionnaire was distributed to a panel of 10 people, split evenly between male and female, experts and lay people. The first task for the lay people was to comment on the questionnaire’s grammar and syntax, and the flow of the questions within the survey. Furthermore, they were asked to interpret the questions, ensuring that everyone understood them in the same manner, which is part of establishing *face validity*. The experts in the field were encouraged to comment on the content of the questionnaire, which links to content and construct validity. Moreover, within the survey similar questions were asked, expecting participants to answer these in the same manner (Howard 2008), which is referred to as internal validity.

The questionnaire was reviewed and amended according to suggestions made by the panel, which led to the finished version (Appendix 7). The survey was then piloted with 21 participants. The questionnaire was analysed utilising a factor analysis. The first part of Section 1 (using a Likert scale rated from very unimportant to very important) looks at a product’s attributes that consumers may deem important. Table 7 highlights that the factor analysis run in SPSS was significant (Sig: .000) and the KMO test of measuring sampling adequacy is .485. Table 8 performs the same tests for the second part of the general question section, which looked at the consumer’s attitude towards sustainable fashion. The level of significance stays the same, whilst the KMO result comes to .339. Table 9 looks at the stores attributes and consumer perceptions of the physical space. The significance remains .000 and the KMO test went up to .503.

Table 7: Factor analysis: product attributes

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.485
	Approx. Chi-Square	182.970
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table 8: Factor analysis: consumer attitude towards sustainable fashion

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.339
	Approx. Chi-Square	146.484
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	66
	Sig.	.000

Table 9: Factor analysis: perception of physical space

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.503
	Approx. Chi-Square	88.157
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	36
	Sig.	.000

To sum up, the results in the pilot study were significant (Sig: .000), with the KMO test ranging between .339 to .503, which for a response rate of 21 can be seen as satisfactory. Thus, the questionnaire was seen as acceptable to be distributed.

### 3.5.8 Reporting research findings in PhD research

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the findings of this PhD research, which are developed through comparing direct quotes from interviews, presenting questionnaire results, employee shadowing, and drawing reference from semiological and social media analysis. As is discussed in section 3.7 all participants remain anonymous in this thesis, which is ensured by using acronyms throughout the following chapters. Each acronym used for referencing purposes consists of three parts: e.g. [Org2I37: 1](#). The first part identifies which 'group' they belong to: consumer (C), expert (E), or the focal case studies (Org1, Org2, Org3, Org4). The second part corresponds to the type of data analysed: semiotics (SE), Twitterfeed (TF), interview (I), employee shadowing (ES). The third and last part refers to the line number, which can be found in Appendix 12. In the example provided previously, the quote originates from [Organisation 2](#), [Interview 37](#), line number [1](#).

### 3.6 Working definition of sustainable fashion



Chapter 1 provided interpretations of sustainable fashion and has identified that there is a gap in existing literature concerning a common definition of *what* sustainable fashion entails. Key aspects associated with the concept are:

- Fashion with a conscience (Friedman, 2010; Liggett, 2010)
- Production of clothes has low impact on the natural environment (Friedman, 2010)
- Focus on utilizing renewable materials and local sources (Johnston, 2012)
- A commitment to traditional techniques (Friedman, 2010)

During the first year of this thesis, the researcher conducted a pilot study consisting of five interviews. The participants were chosen, utilising the same approach described in section 3.5.3.3. This implies that the pilot study organisations were UK micro-companies, based in London, Leeds and Manchester, and manufacture in the UK. Four out of the five participants were O/Ms and one participant was an employee. The pilot study interviews were fully incorporated into the main study, with interviewees I(C), I(S), who operate SPEs, and I(E), who has seven employees, are part of the expert group, due to their knowledge of and their experience in the green slow-fashion industry. Interviewee I2 agreed to be part of the focal companies (Organisation 1).

Table 10 provides more details on the participants contacted for the pilot study, the additional data collected, the length of the interviews and the role of the interviewee within the organisation. The ✓ emphasises where data for for semiotic analysis was collected and which organisation aquired a label.

Table 10: Details of pilot study interviews

Interview	Duration	Role	Type	Location	Semiotic	Founded	Eco-Label
I(S) (Face to Face)	43:42	O/M	SPC	Manchester	✓	2008	
I2 (Face to Face)	53:52	O/M	Micro	Leeds	✓	2010	
I4 (Face to Face)	57:23	E					
I(C) (Face to Face)	32:14	O/M	SPC	Leeds	✓	2011	
I(E) (Phone)	27:49	O/M	Micro	London		2005	✓

The pilot study participants were asked what aspects and/or characteristics they associate with *sustainable fashion*. Asking this question provided the basis to understand, how experts who operate in the sustainable fashion industry perceive and talk about their products. Altogether five aspects were mentioned:

- Sustainable fashion implies that products are fairly traded, which means paying appropriate (fair) wages and provide a good working environment (sweatshop free) (EI(E): 1)
- Utilising recycled materials, where possible, or sustainable material to manufacture garments (EI(S): 3; Org112: 4; Org114: 5)
- The UK second-hand culture can be seen as the first step towards educating consumers to be more sustainable – ‘pre-loved’ garments are turned into ‘love-me-again’ products (EI(S): 3; Org112: 4)
- Sustainable fashion clothes have a *sustainable* design, which implies versatility and/or timelessness in terms of style (EI(S): 3; Org114: 5)
- The products produced can be described as interesting, which links back to sustainable design (Org114: 5)

Thus far it can be said that one common thread within these interpretations is the aspect of being environmentally conscious – utilising renewable and recyclable materials. Throughout the research process stakeholders within the focal organisations, experts in the field, and consumers were asked to define sustainable fashion, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

### 3.7 Ethics - utilitarian framework



Within any research project it is vital to consider potential ethical implications. Various authors (Soltis, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) have emphasised the need to consider varying degrees of ethical considerations depending on the research carried out. Ethical issues in social science show the “difficult[y] to conduct much research at all without running into ethical arguments” (Coolican, 1992: 249). This research is considering a utilitarian framework, which incorporates three main concepts: confidentiality, informed consent, and avoidance of harm (Flinders, 1992). The University of Sheffield research ethics application form was

approved and updated on a regular basis throughout the research process (Appendix 9).

### **3.7.1 Confidentiality**

The first concept is confidentiality, which allows research participants to remain anonymous. Although this thesis does not focus on any sensitive issues, it is nevertheless important to *protect* those who take part in the study (Flinders, 1992). Employees, for example, might be uncomfortable to speak openly, or might feel uneasy to be in the spotlight of a research project. Moreover, they might feel embarrassed or simply fear that the results could have a negative impact on their job (Flinders, 1992). Therefore, acronyms were created and used for all interview participants, names mentioned within the interview itself have been changed and the interviewee's role within the organisation will not be disclosed. All interviewee names/participants mentioned were changed to female names/persona, to provide further anonymity. Individual pieces of information that could reveal the interviewees identity are not shared with the organisations themselves or in this PhD research unless otherwise stated. Rather, general results and suggestions will be provided to the organisations.

### **3.7.2 Informed consent**

The second concept, informed consent, is based on legal requirements (Reynolds, 1979). This calls for explaining the research in detail to participants, including employees, managers, and consumers involved, ensuring that they are aware of the aim and objectives on which this research is based. Furthermore, all participation was on a voluntary basis and in the case of employees not linked to job performance. To fully address this, the researcher had the participants sign confidentiality and consent agreements, which included a data protection clause stating that the research participants remain anonymous and that none of the data is passed on to a third party (Appendix 9). This implies that not only the organisation, unless stated otherwise, but also the individual people remain anonymous. All research participants were provided with a leaflet (Appendix 10), explaining the research and how to get in touch with the researcher.



All participants were assured that their responses and expressed opinions remain anonymous in accordance with the confidentiality agreement, which further enhanced the trust relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, encouraging “greater freedom of expression and more open responses” (Collis & Hussey, 2009: 46). It should be noted that as the participation in the interviews and surveys was on a voluntary basis only, no financial aids were given. Furthermore, a challenge in guaranteeing confidentiality was that in various instances providing a person’s name and position within the company/industry environment may have been of great value, in order to highlight the importance of their opinion in a specific context (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Nevertheless, names and company names were only stated if the person signed and agreed upon those terms and conditions.

Data collected was stored in a safe and secure manner. All interview recordings were saved on an external hard drive and deleted from any other devices. To access the hard drive a password is needed, which is only known to the researcher. The questionnaires were stored in a lockable box in the researchers office space. After the PhD research is completed the questionnaires will be destroyed, making sure no personal contact information can be extracted, and the interview recordings will be deleted.

### **3.7.3 Avoidance of harm**

The third concept is concerned with the avoidance of harm. It has been argued “weighing potential harms against benefits before research is carried out becomes an exercise in creativity” (Cassell, 1982: 14). Within this specific research project this was not challenging, as participation was on a purely voluntary basis and no sensitive information was asked, which could have potentially caused harm to any of the participants.

In terms of the researcher’s own personal safety, interviews with experts in the field and consumers were conducted in public places, including but not limited to cafes, parks, and restaurants, or via a phone call. Before visiting any of the focal organisations, the researcher familiarized herself with any safety/house keeping instructions provided by the O/M. Furthermore, the researcher kept in regular communication throughout the day with her emergency contact, ensuring that the researcher was safe at all times.

Aware of the implications of these ethical concerns, the researcher saw potential limitations within the research process if employees require managerial permission to take part in the research project, as this would have added time constraints onto the study (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Collis & Hussey, 2009). However, all four case organisations agreed to fully participate in the research, which overcame this challenge.

## Chapter 4: Sustainable fashion and eco-labels

This chapter focuses on the role of eco-labels in green slow-fashion organisations and thus seeks to provide an answer to objectives 1 and 5:

- 1) To explore the question ‘What does sustainable fashion mean?’
- 5) To map the relationship between eco-labels, sustainable fashion, and green slow-fashion organisations

This section is split into two major parts: Firstly, it discusses *sustainable fashion*, thereby focusing on how O/Ms, employees, and consumers characterise the term. Moreover, it explores in how far these *sustainable fashion* ‘definitions’ overlap. Secondly, this chapter looks at *eco-labels* utilised in the fashion industry and within this research (Appendix 2). The FSSD framework is used to understand and interpret the meaning of these eco-labels. Both parts briefly review the literature, before presenting the findings of this project.

### 4.1 Sustainable fashion

#### 4.1.1 Brief summary of sustainable fashion

In the 1980s consumers became more aware of the environmental and social impact the clothing industry as a whole had on the natural environment. In the 1990s Vogue magazine wrote about a new environmental trend emerging in the fashion industry (Moody, 2013), with *sustainable fashion* starting to peak in the 2000s (Moody, 2013). *Sustainable fashion* was and still is used synonymously with ‘green’, ‘ethical’, ‘sustainable’, and ‘eco’ fashion. Over time *sustainable fashion* evolved from being a trend to a movement, addressing the impacts the fashion industry has had on the world’s natural environment (BSR, 2012). Additionally, there was an increased emphasis on ethical aspects of production by putting pressure on the industry to ensure humane working conditions in factories and attempts to banish child labour (Skov, 2008).

The findings presented in Chapter 2 highlight that the key features of *sustainable fashion* are:

- Fashion with a conscience, which implies products were produced ethically and with the environment in mind (Friedman, 2010; Liggett, 2010)
- Fashion production with a low impact on the natural environment, through using natural dyes and fewer chemicals (Friedman, 2010)
- Fashion that utilises renewable materials and/or source raw materials locally (Johnston, 2012)

- A commitment to traditional techniques, including but not limited to weaving, embroiling and using herbal dyes (Friedman, 2010; Carter, 2013)

It can be said that these four points focus on environmental and social aspects as key criteria to define *sustainable fashion*. The emphasis lies on ‘going back to the roots’ (Hangaard Nielsen, 2010), which can best be described as manufacturing goods in the same way as they previously had been prior to the industrial revolution (e.g. no chemicals, no harm to the environment, natural dyes) with post-industrial methods (e.g. sweatshop free, renewable materials and resources, versatile). This fits well with a blog written by Yip (2010) discussing what *sustainable fashion* means. Her five questions posed to define the term are:

- 1) Is it locally made?
- 2) Is it ethically produced?
- 3) Does it incorporate recycled materials?
- 4) Does it use organic and naturally processed materials?
- 5) Is it made to last?

Chapter 3 provided a working definition for *sustainable fashion*. Experts were asked to interpret the term, which brought forward the following five aspects:

- Fairly traded products (fair wages, good working conditions) (EI(E): 1)
- Use of recycled and sustainable material in production process (EI(S): 3; Org1I2: 4; Org1I4: 5)
- Second-hand culture as the first step towards educating consumers to be more sustainable (EI(S): 3; Org1I2: 4)
- Sustainable design (e.g. versatility, timelessness) (EI(S): 3; Org1I4: 5)
- ‘Interesting’ creations (Org1I4: 5)

Findings from both the pilot study and the literature review emphasise that the term *sustainable fashion* focuses on environmental aspects through the use of renewable, pre-owned, and/or environmentally friendly materials, and on social aspects, such as supporting fair trade and fair working conditions.

#### 4.1.2 Reflexivity

It is important to understand the term *sustainable fashion*, which has been described as a “buzzword” (Intelligent Life, 2010; Borromeo, 2013b). From the start of my PhD research in 2011 until now the term has seemingly gained popularity. Headlines such as “London fashion week given ethical slant by Green Carpet Challenge” (Cartner-Morley, 2013), “Sustainable fashion needs to be design-led” (Angel, 2013), and “Upcycling: The New Wave of Sustainable Fashion” (Stewart, 2014) are no longer exceptions. The questions that I asked myself, however, were: What does this mean

for the fashion industry?; What does the term *actually* mean?; Does the concept of *sustainable fashion* actually exist?; and Does *sustainable fashion* have a different meaning depending on the people who are asked?

With these questions in mind, I conducted desk research (Appendix 4) and asked various members of the focal organisations, experts (primary and secondary data), and consumers how they define the term and what *sustainable fashion* means to them. As suggested, I created a list of questions I was interested in examining in-depth (Jones, 1985). The majority of these questions were concerned with exploring the journey of the focal organisation's history, its founder, the supply chain, and the background story to setting up the business. In order to avoid leading questions, I structured the interview in a way that the 'key' question, 'what *sustainable fashion* means to you and how would you define it' was done towards the end. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted to discover their story, and see if the conversation naturally moved onto *sustainable* fashion. Secondly, I wanted to ensure that people would not use the term *sustainability* to describe their principles and supply chain processes, simply because I led them to use the word, thereby potentially falsifying my own research results.

Looking back at the verbatim transcribed interviews, I realised that only a small percentage of the participants explicitly mentioned the term *sustainability* – whilst the majority of interviewees did not use this specific word to describe their business practices. Moreover, it was interesting to observe that various participants, after having provided a 'definition' of *sustainable fashion*, related the term back to their own creations. Furthermore, the conversation flow moved naturally onto the topic of the Green Carpet Challenge and its impact on their business and on the fashion industry as a whole, which is discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.1.3 Sustainable fashion – findings**

This section firstly elaborates upon the findings of the focal organisations; secondly, the responses from the experts in the field are analysed; thirdly, questionnaire responses are discussed; fourthly the differences and similarities between the various participant groups are compared and contrasted; and lastly key aspects from participant responses are highlighted in order to work towards creating an interpretation of *sustainable fashion*.

#### 4.1.3.1 Owner-managers' and employees' insight into sustainable fashion

All four O/Ms were able to provide an answer to what *sustainable fashion* means to them. Some of the employees were willing to share their personal views on *sustainable fashion*, whilst others preferred not to elaborate on the term, as they were unsure of the meaning. When asking the O/Ms what *sustainable fashion* means to them, most participants briefly paused to carefully consider their answer before sharing their insight into the topic.

It is noteworthy that Organisation 1 is the only company that explicitly mentions *sustainability* in their branding. According to their website, they are a:

[F]orward thinking fashion company with an irregular twist, aiming to push the boundaries of ethical, sustainable design by using reclaimed materials and mixing fashion forward shapes with heritage craft. [...] As well as designing and making clothing [they] have an enormous wealth of experience in sustainable fashion design, textiles upcycling and local fashion systems (Org1 website; emphasis added).

Analysing this quote in accordance with the seven-step guide various words seem to play a prominent and important role: forward thinking, irregular, pushing boundaries, heritage, upcycling, and local. These terms seem to insinuate a type of creativity within the fashion creation process, which could be seen as a distinction between them (Organisation 1) and other organisations operating in the same niche market.

Figure 28: Organisation 1's Collection (CEH)



Looking at the visuals collected from Organisation 1, one can see that these words are also 'reflect' in the company's collection (Figure 28).

The jumpers are upcycled creations, using reclaimed silk scarfs and second-hand pullovers, the leggings utilise locally produced jersey material, and the skirts are upcycled (Org1 website; informal conversation with O/M1). With this in mind, the interpretation of the term *sustainable fashion* from the O/M of Organisation 1's (O/M1) viewpoint is analysed. She highlighted that *sustainable fashion* to her is very meaningful. When she was 16 years old she obtained an internship with a London-based fashion

organisation, where she had her first experience with, what she calls, *sustainable fashion*. She feels this particular London-based company was a pioneer of their time by producing “nearly all their products [...] in London, and the ones that were not manufactured [in London] were manufactured in [...] Spain” (Org1I2: 6). This emphasises that most products were produced locally or within the EU. She said further that *sustainable fashion* means “looking at things in a different way [...] thinking about things [...] differently and [re]using things” (Org1I2: 6). During the shadowing period it became apparent that O/M1 internalised this experience by sourcing her raw material in the local area and creating new collections by utilising an upcycling technique (Employee (in this case O/M) Shadowing<sup>2</sup>). This fits in well with what has been highlighted on their website: reclaiming material, upcycling, and local production. The question that arises is, whether internal stakeholders involved in Organisation 1 are aware of the fact that *sustainability* is mentioned in the company’s

Figure 29: Visualisation Of Sustainable Fashion In Organisation 1  
(Picture has been cropped to remove parts of the background)



tagline and also if the term has a similar meaning to them. One of the employees (I4) highlights that it is important to “show [...] that sustainable fashion can be affordable, can be fashion forward, can be versatile and [...] is interesting” (Org1I4: 5). Employee (I6) mentions that sustainability is about “looking at things that maybe people have considered as disposable, [...] not fashionable anymore, and it [is about] kind of saving those things from being just waste products. [...] [It is about] upcycling: [...] changing [items] into a new kind of form” (Org1I6: 7). These statements show similarities with O/M1’s interpretation of the term, by looking at the design and manufacturing process in a different way and reusing/recycling materials and saving them from landfill.

Examining these quotes further, one can see a connection between Organisation 1’s interpretation of *sustainable fashion* and the working definition established in the methodology section. They all mention that sustainable items are *interesting*, *versatile*, *fairly produced & traded*, and *reused*. Figure 29 provides a visualisation of

<sup>2</sup> The employee shadowing notes are not shown in Appendix 9.11, due to the O/M voicing concern that this could risk revealing proprietary information to competitors.

Organisation 1’s interpretation of their “ethical [and] sustainable design” (Org1 website): The jumper was produced locally in Organisation 1’s studio. The material used for this garment is partially reclaimed and partially recycled. The orange sleeves were previously part of a pre-owned garment, whilst the stripy cotton knitwear and golden cuffs are reclaimed materials from a local cotton mill. The fabrics used for this creation were sourced within a 20-mile radius of the studio, creating a unique piece of fashion that is versatile, and looks at fashion in a different way by combining various styles and colours (Org1I2: 4; Org1I8: 79). However, the socks (Figure 29) are neither created out of reclaimed/waste material, nor are they pre-loved artefacts, nor are they organic. Rather they were bought online and only decorated with a colourful cuffs made out of recycled material, which might not necessarily fit with “push[ing] the boundaries of ethical, sustainable design by using reclaimed materials and mixing fashion forward shapes with heritage craft” (Org1 website).

Figure 30: Machinery Used In Organisation 1 (CEH)



From the interviews and employee shadowing experiences it became apparent that O/M1 sees her creations as part of the ‘sustainable fashion movement’. This however contradicts some observations made during the research process: Firstly, the website highlighted that the company is “forward thinking” (Org1

website) and according to O/M1 utilises new techniques to create unique collections (ES). However, the company itself produces these items on machines that have been reclaimed. Whilst this fits within the overarching idea of sustainability - making use of ‘waste’ resources - these machines do not incorporate the newest technological advancements and use a lot of energy (Figure 30) (ES; Organisation 1 blog). Stated alternatively, it is questionable whether using out-dated machinery that is not energy and eco-efficient can necessarily be classified as ‘forward thinking’. Secondly, although the material is reclaimed, recycled, upcycled, and sourced within a 20-mile radius, O/M1 drives a “big old banger car, which probably is [not] that economic[al]” (Org1I2: 4), using a lot of petrol and emits more pollutants than a new car. Thirdly,



employee (I6) emphasises that sustainable fashion should be affordable. However, looking at Organisation 1's website, it becomes apparent that, for example, the box jumper (Figure 26) is priced at £85 and the socks at £10 (Org1 website), which, depending on a person's income, may not be classified as affordable.

The O/M of Organisation 2 (O/M2) stated that she had come across the term *sustainable fashion* on various occasions, but before taking part in this research project had never considered it in-depth (Org2I39: 13). The phrase, for her, implies a high level of transparency, which she believes provides a good fit with her own company. It should be noted that O/M2 automatically related the term back to Organisation 2, without the researcher probing or asking her specifically about the connection between her company and *sustainable fashion*. For her, transparency ranges from knowing where the materials (raw and packaging materials) originate, which dyes were used to colour the materials, which chemicals were used in their recyclable plastic bag packaging (Org2I35: 12), who the people are that are working for her, and knowing the working conditions in which the products are manufactured (Org2I39: 13). This is further emphasised on the company's website highlighting that they "strive to achieve a **green balance** between economics and environmental consciousness, [they] manufacture all [their] products in a 100% sweatshop free environment, here in the UK" (Org2 website). In the interview O/M2 mentions that for her an organisation operating in the green slow-fashion industry has a personal relationship with its stakeholders and receives feedback from these individuals, especially employees, on a daily basis, in order to improve the manufacturing and supply-chain processes, thereby keeping all stakeholders satisfied (Org2I39: 13). Choosing to involve stakeholders in the business is an active choice made by O/M2. Thus, it can be said that O/M2's description of *sustainable fashion* predominantly focuses on the product, the production process, and the supply chain, rather than on the design (e.g. versatility) and sustainable production techniques (e.g. upcycling, recycling), as is the case in Organisation 1. Linking this back to the company's statement, it is noteworthy that although O/M2 mentions the employees and stakeholders as a key part in her business, they are not explicitly mentioned on the website, rather the 'green balance' focuses on economic and environmental, but not the social aspects of the TBL.

The way O/M2 described sustainable fashion is also reflected in Organisation 2's layout and business structure (Figure 31). The picture on the left hand side shows

Figure 31: Visualisation Of Sustainable Fashion In Organisation 2 (CEH And Org2 Facebook)



a white storage cabinet that divides the workspace in two:

The space behind the white cupboards is the seamstresses' workspace, and the cupboard facing side is utilised to package the finished accessories and post them to customers. This open plan structure has two key purposes: Firstly, it enables the employees working in

different sections to see and hear each other at all times and know where everyone is in the workspace, including O/M2 (ES). Secondly, this structure has a strategic purpose as it 'forces' people to work. Stated alternatively, the open plan structure enhances the chances to be watched at any given time and thus keeps workers on task. Each employee has their own dedicated workspace in the company, which they were able to choose when they first moved into the premises (ES). One of the workers highlighted that she sits right behind the white storage cabinet, as she feels a lot more comfortable and not watched constantly (ES). Although the general atmosphere in Organisation 2 was described as positive, various employees highlighted that they enjoy going to the cutting room, which is located in a separate area slightly hidden away, and out of sight for a short while (ES).

Overall it can be said that open plan structures are designed to support a company's culture (McElroy & Morrow, 2010), whilst furthermore encourage teamwork and collaboration due to everyone being at the same level. This highlights that there are multiple-levels of transparency: firstly within sourcing the raw material, as they can be traced back to their origin (UK/EU), and secondly within the internal processes, as each stakeholder is given unfettered access to the entire production process. This indicates a high level of transparency and collaboration. The two photographs on the right hand side of Figure 31 show two employees working on the

organisation's products. The fact that the researcher was able to gain first hand experience of the production process links with O/M2's interpretation of the epitome of *sustainable fashion* as complete transparency. Additionally, O/M2 highlighted that consumers are invited and encouraged to come to the organisation and see the production process for themselves (Org2I31: 87; ES). Although this invite is open-ended and could be taken up by anyone interested, anyone wanting to visit Organisation 2's production site needs to be able to drive there, as the business park, where the company is located, is neither accessible through public transport nor well signposted.

This interpretation of *sustainable fashion* reinforces two key aspects shown in Chapter 2: fashion with a conscience (Friedman, 2010; Liggett, 2010), and the low impact of the production process on the environment (Friedman, 2010). Sourcing materials within the UK and Italy only, as well as manufacturing in the West of England, endeavours to keep the carbon footprint for manufacturing processes to a minimum – this is in comparison to organisations, which source their material from outside the EU. Fashion with a conscience relates to how the general organisational atmosphere creates positive working conditions for all employees. In Organisation 2 this can clearly be seen through the friendly working environment and O/M2's personal relationship with employees in which their voices are heard and acknowledged and suggestions are taken on board (Org2I25+27: 9; Org2I29: 10). In other words, the products are made by satisfied employees in a good working environment (Org2I21+23: 8; Org2I29: 10), rather than on an assembly line with poor working conditions (Org2I25+27: 9). However, as previously indicated employees also feel, at times, uncomfortable as they feel they are watched at all times. Whilst the overall working conditions can be described as positive, the open plan structure also enhances stress levels by putting indirect pressure on the employees (ES). This was not only confirmed by the individual workers emphasising that they feel they cannot take a break when it is very busy, but also past research has indicated that employees in an open plan office space can suffer from stress (Evans & Johnson, 2000; Pearlman, 2013).

Linking back to the production process and raw materials used in Organisation 2, it is noteworthy that their products are either made out of polyester (outside) and cotton (inside) or leather (outside) and cotton (inside). Questions could be raised whether these materials are in line with the 'green balance' advocated on the website,

as leather is an animal fibre and polyester a strong pollutant material (Kaushik et al., 2007; Li et al., 2010; Coen, 2011; Green Choices, 2014). In the same vein, it is interesting that the product description on the website does not explicitly state that the shoes are made out of leather, but throughout the interview process this fact was highlighted by O/M2 (Org2I31: 11).

Although the social and environmental aspects play a key part in the interpretation of producing *sustainable fashion*, O/M2 highlights that such aspects only account for two thirds of the equation, with the final component being economic viability. She sees economic viability as synonymous with being an independent and self-sufficient business (financially and also in terms of not being reliant on anyone else) that is able to employ local workers and thus is a key player in the local community (Org2I39: 13). The Introduction provided a brief overview of the UK fashion industry, emphasising that it is one of the only sectors that is still highly competitive, thus, setting oneself apart from ones competition operating within the same industry is essential. Organisations within the green slow-fashion industry have an advantage in this competitive industry through their commitment to producing locally, and employing a local workforce.

A designer working in Organisation 3 associates the term *sustainable fashion* with “renewable energy and things like that” (Org3I1: 14), whilst O/M3 in an informal conversation highlights that it is all about being local and supporting the community (Org3I7: 16). These aspects are also found in data gathered from Organisation 4 (Org4I20: 17). Both Organisations believe that being environmentally friendly and eco-conscious are vital aspects of *sustainable fashion* (Org3I3: 15). Each participant in the individual cooperatives related the term back to their own creations and highlighted that they use reclaimed materials, upcycle their creations, and are eco-conscious. However, when getting the individual designers talking about their fashion lines it becomes apparent that although they “promise to make environmentally friendly choices, where possible” (Org3 website), “all the footwear is made in China [...] [as producing in the UK] would have made a completely unsustainable business” in financial terms (Org3I3: 15). Moreover, “some of the organic stuff is just too expensive and [...] I try and get some stuff on the cheap side (Org4I24: 18). This highlights a key aspect: although designers may be aware what

*sustainable fashion* entails, due to their own personal circumstances they may not always be able to take aspects into account when producing their fashion items.

To conclude, the findings in this section have shown that *sustainable fashion* is interpreted in a very similar manner. The participants seem to agree that social and environmental factors play a key part in the interpretation of the term. Special focus lies on renewable energy, sourcing of material, and the overall working conditions in the supply chain. It is noteworthy that each participant related the term back to their own creations and provided examples of how their items fit with their interpretation. On the other hand, various aspects of their production and sourcing process do not compliment their interpretations and their personal association with *sustainable fashion*.

Figure 32 provides a summary of the key words mentioned in connection with the term *sustainable fashion* by the O/Ms and employees within the individual organisations. The image was produced using the online tool *Wordle*, which quantifies the words stated most often within any given text and displays them in a bigger font. There are various observations that can be made: Firstly, apart from ‘sustainable’ and ‘fashion’ the terms ‘imposed’, ‘limitations’, ‘innovative’, ‘people’, and ‘interesting’ are the most dominant terms utilised. Imposed and limitations were used together in the interviews, when talking about enhancing creativity and ensuring the products are more sustainable. Innovation was referred to in terms of being fashion forward and using ‘sustainable’ technologies, including but not limited to upcycling and recycling. The term ‘interesting’ related to the garments themselves as a descriptive term describing the various fashion lines.

Secondly, ‘feedback’, ‘design’, ‘viable’, and ‘workforce’ are less frequently mentioned and thus smaller within the infographic. Although the workforce and feedback were mentioned as key influencers within the process of creating sustainable fashion, throughout the interviews these seemed to take a backseat.

Figure 32: Sustainable fashion – key words from the focal organisations



#### 4.1.3.2 Expert insight into sustainable fashion

The quotes utilised for this section are taken from expert interviews that were conducted by the researcher herself and secondary data, in the form of a roundtable discussion broadcasted by the *Guardian* newspaper (Guardian, 2013) (referenced as EI(Guardian)).

The secondary data analysis shows that Doug Miller, a retired Professor in Ethical Fashion, emphasises that “sustainability in fashion is about the development that meets the needs of people now, but without compromising the position of future generations” (EI(Guardian): 19). Although slightly reworded, this definition was also used by the Brundtland Commission to explain *sustainability*, and similarly is oriented towards social and economic issues. In the same vein, Filippo Ricci, co-founder of London’s Estethica, emphasised the key role large organisations play in being a driving force for *sustainable fashion* due to their sheer market share (EI(Guardian): 20). He furthermore highlights that *sustainability* is not achieved “overnight” (EI(Guardian): 20), indicating it cannot happen suddenly – it is not a spontaneous reaction. This fits with what various experts have acknowledged: *sustainable fashion* is “not an emotional thing, [it] is survival” (EI(Guardian): 21). Expanding on this point, the manager of the leading trend setting agency in the UK emphasised that “the product needs to be sustainable from its core” (EI(P): 24) and companies need to see *sustainable fashion* as a long-term commitment (EI(Guardian): 20). The experts see organisations as tools to provide what the driving force (consumers) of *sustainable fashion* demand. This is further highlighted in the following quotes:

We strongly believe that sustainability is in the long term a valid business alternative (EI(Guardian): 20).

It is our responsibility to inform the consumer to show them that our product is made in an ethical way, from a sustainability point of view, from an environmental point of view [...] We are asked to innovate constantly for new materials, processes and new efficiencies in the factory (EI(Guardian): 22 ).

[Consumers] are making a lot more considered choices in what they are [purchasing], one example is the luxury industry, which [...] saw a rise over the recession, [which] showed that actually the people, not just the rich, [...] were making [...] more investment purchases and actually also stems into what you might call sustainable fashion or sustainable practices (EI(P): 24)

Moreover, within the Guardian's video clip the experts also emphasised that *sustainable fashion* is about profitability, transparency, environmental principles, and viability, which were also mentioned in the interviews with the manager of the UK's leading trendsetting agency and expert EI(S):

[A] sustainable business is a business that can really make margin and profit sustainable for their development [...] a valid business model, a model that will bring profit (EI(Guardian): 20).

A brand has to be completely open now [...] with Twitter and everything [...] so you cannot hide all this information [environmental practices], [it] is out there. [...] The product needs to be sustainable from its core [...] You actually literally have to look at the process from A to B and be sustainable from there off [...] this relates not just to the fabrics that are used, but how the product goes from [...] manufacturing to the store and how that affects the [carbon] footprint (EI(P): 24).

[Sustainable fashion means] it [is] based on sustainable design principles. So designing for end-of-life management [...] using waste as a source material and diverting it from landfill. [...] If it was [not] upcycled it would [...] be thrown into landfill where it would rot and give off methane and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (EI(S): 3).

Furthermore, experts describe *sustainable fashion* as being sturdy (EI(D): 23), in terms of the quality of the garment, ethically made (EI(E): 1), which is linked to paying fair wages and providing a safe working environment, and "sourced wisely" (EI(D): 23), by utilising raw materials that are environmentally friendly.

Overall it can be said that the experts have a strong tendency to interpret *sustainable fashion* in terms of an economic and social perspective. Transparency and financial sustainability seem to be key components of the interpretation, whilst also highlighting that everyone operating in the sector needs to work together: large and small organisations (EI(Guardian): 22). In the interviews and secondary data analysis, it became apparent that only if every single organisation is working towards the same

goal, the *sustainable fashion* industry can be truly competitive. Figure 30 provides a quantified summary of the key words used by the experts. Looking at the graphic ‘sustainable’, ‘sustainability’, ‘fashion’, ‘people’, and ‘responsibility’ are the terms most often used within the data sets, whilst ‘environment’, ‘change’, ‘profit’, ‘water’ and ‘technology’ are only mentioned a few times. Sustainability features dominantly in Figure 33, whilst the term was only mentioned a few times in the previous section, thus is presented in a smaller font in Figure 32. It is also noteworthy that the experts talk about showing environmental responsibility, however change and technology, which could enable this process, are not dominant in their interpretation of sustainable fashion.

Figure 33: Sustainable fashion – key words from the experts



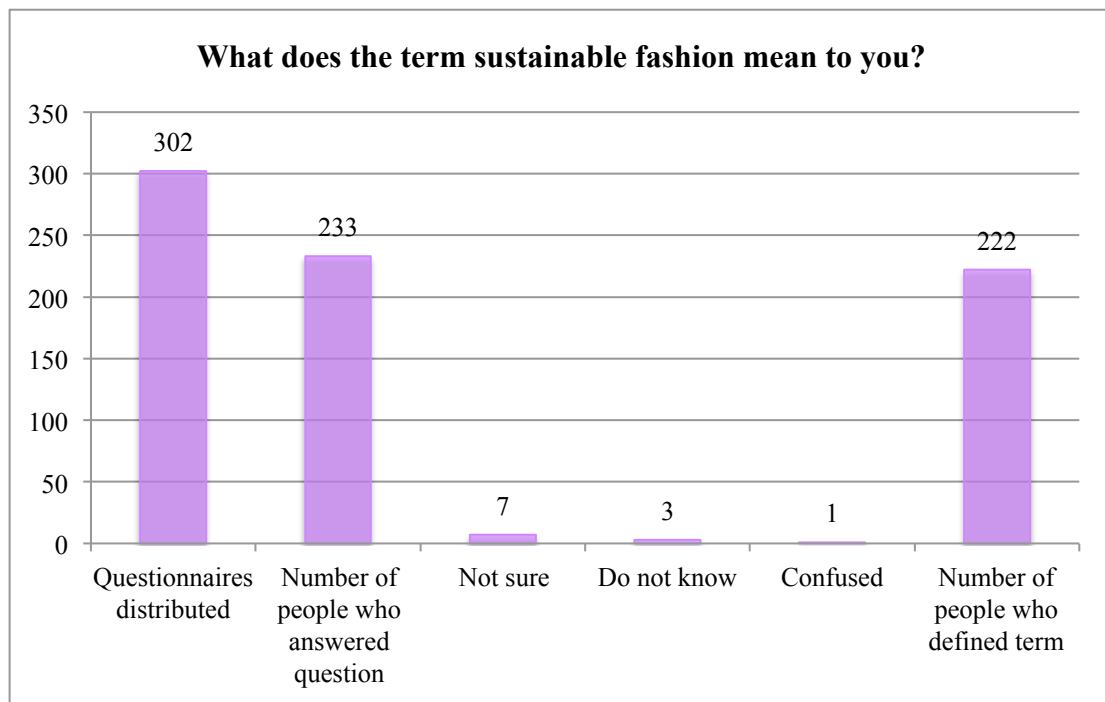
#### 4.1.3.3 Consumer insight into sustainable fashion

Altogether 302 questionnaires were distributed across Organisations 3 and 4, of which 233 people (157 in Organisation 3 and 76 in Organisation 4) answered the question: ‘What does the term *sustainable fashion* mean to you?’. Table 11 highlights that out of these 233 responses 7 stated that they were “not sure”, 3 participants “do not know” and one person mentioned they “have never heard of the term before”, whilst 222 people have written down their interpretation of *sustainable fashion*. This furthermore highlights that 69 participants (45 in Organisation 3 and 24 in Organisation 4) have not attempted to define the term *sustainable fashion*. This could be explained, due to the fact that when the researcher distributed the questionnaire



various people have mentioned that they do not have a lot of time, and thus would only be able to help out with the tick-box exercises, as writing answers would take too much time. Also, some people highlighted that they were unsure what the term *sustainable fashion* meant and left it blank. Moreover, the majority of people who did not answer the open-ended questions, did also not leave contact details for a follow up interview, thus no further conclusions can be drawn on this phenomenon.

Table 11: Questionnaire Response – Sustainable Fashion



The in-store distribution of the questionnaires enabled the researcher to observe most respondents, which brought forward an interesting finding: a majority of participants answering the ‘*sustainable fashion* question’ completed all the tick-box exercises first and followed up on the written questions at the end. Some respondents started a conversation with the researcher and highlighted that although they had heard the term before in the news or seen a shop advertising *sustainable fashion*, they had not thought about the actual meaning of the term in great detail. Moreover, various participants expressed their opinion on what the phrase means to them by using *sustainable* as part of their explanation (emphasis added): “sustainably sourced clothing, fair trade” (Q4Org3: 27), “sourced from sustainable resources and manufactured in a similar fashion” (Q35Org3: 35), or “produced from sustainable materials/materials which are made from sustainable resources” (Q290Org4: 54).

Figure 34 provides a brief overview of quotes that were written by consumers seeking to define the term *sustainable fashion*. Keywords that were consistently repeated throughout the 233 surveys were highlighted in colour and a slightly bigger font:

- Good quality
- Ethical sourcing of raw materials
- Renewable materials and energy
- Environmental and social protection.

Figure 34: Questionnaire quote typography

**Good quality** and readily available  
 Items that will **always be sustained** to wear despite colour/style etc.  
**Good for Environment**  
**Ethically sourced materials** which can be sustainably reproduced  
 Clothing/accessories that are made from **renewable materials** and produced in  
 High Street/designer shops, created with materials that can be produced **without harming**  
 the environment/people who live there  
 An oxymoron  
 Means that it is **environmentally friendly** fashion, which is also **ethical**  
**Not mass produced**, using **recycled** materials, **natural** materials, giving fair price to producers  
**Lasts a long time**, doesn't go out of fashion  
 Supporting **local** suppliers, made **locally** Clothes that are **durable**  
**Not fast** fashion, e.g. Primark; **good ethical** production, **fair wages and treatment**  
 to workers who produce it  
 Fashion that **does not damage** the environment  
 Attempts to source raw materials from **sustainable options** - good for planet, people ,  
 animals and **no exploiting** of the environment  
 It means fashion that was **made in the UK** or in conditions abroad when **fair pay**,  
**fair working conditions** are evident Quality, durable, unique  
**Not using too much** water, electricity, power, cost transported  
 thousands of miles from over producing continents for  
 consumerism which is unsustainable **Different everyday fashion**

The majority of respondents' interpretations have a positive connotation towards the term *sustainable fashion*, with only a minority of participants describing the term as “an oxymoron” (Q12Org3: 31) or a “contradictory term” (Q192Org3: 47). An oxymoron is defined as “a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction” (Oxford Dictionary, 2013a), in this case sustainable and fashion. This could highlight that the participants are aware that the fashion industry itself is often referred to as one of the most polluting industries within the economy (UNEP, 2013). Thus, describing the term *sustainable fashion* as an oxymoron implies a negative connotation, which fits in well with the comments the researcher noted down alongside an informal interview. However, overall the phrase was associated with positive attributes, which re-confirms what has been demonstrated in Chapter 2.

In conclusion it can be said that the consumer interviews and the qualitative parts of the consumers questionnaires have associated *sustainable fashion* mainly with environmental attributes, in terms of the production process and also in terms of social implications. The key words used are ‘environment’, ‘sustainable’, ‘sourced’, and ‘produced’ (Figure 35). Moreover, the terms ‘eco-friendly’, ‘local’, and ‘damaging’ were mentioned, but did not play a key role in the interpretation. Interestingly, the main focus seemed to be on environmental aspects, such as where the material comes from and how it is produced, rather than on the social and economic aspects, which include, but are not limited to working conditions, people, and society at large.

Figure 35: Sustainable fashion – key words from the consumers



In the quantitative part of the questionnaires consumers were asked to rate whether they distrust retailers who claim to have an ethical collection, if they understand what the terms ethical and sustainable fashion mean, and whether they consider themselves to be ethical consumers. These questions provide an insight into the consumers’ understanding of the subject area. Table 12 provides the statistical backings for the Standard Deviation (StD) performed. The individual tables and graphs have been colour coded (**Organisation 3**, **Organisation 4**), which corresponds with Appendix 4.

Table 12: Consumers' understanding of sustainable and ethical fashion

		I distrust fashion retailers that claim to have ethical collection	I am confused about what ethical fashion is	I am confused about what sustainable fashion is	I consider myself an ethical consumer	I distrust fashion retailers that claim to have ethical collection	I am confused about what ethical fashion is	I am confused about what sustainable fashion is	I consider myself an ethical consumer
N	Valid	202	202	202	202	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.98	2.45	2.46	2.94	2.95	2.67	2.66	2.97
Std. Error of Mean		.064	.068	.066	.054	.080	.101	.101	.082
Median		3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Mode		3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3
Std. Deviation		.911	.962	.936	.770	.796	1.006	1.007	.822
Variance		.830	.925	.876	.593	.796	1.006	1.007	.822
Percentiles	25	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	50	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
	75	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00

Table 13 provides details on the rating scales of the four aspects measured on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The results show that consumers in Organisations 3 and 4 responded very similarly, with only minor deflections.

Table 13: Frequency and descriptive statistics

I distrust fashion retailers that claim to have ethical collection									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	62	30.7	30.7	32.7	24	24.0	24.0	27.0
	Neutral	83	41.1	41.1	73.8	49	49.0	49.0	76.0
	Agree	41	20.3	20.3	94.1	23	23.0	23.0	99.0
	Strongly Agree	12	5.9	5.9	100.0	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

I am confused about what ethical fashion is									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	27	13.4	13.4	13.4	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Disagree	94	46.5	46.5	59.9	49	49.0	49.0	55.0
	Neutral	50	24.8	24.8	84.7	22	22.0	22.0	77.0
	Agree	26	12.9	12.9	97.5	18	18.0	18.0	95.0
	Strongly Agree	5	2.5	2.5	100.0	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

I am confused about what sustainable fashion is									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	11.4	11.4	11.4	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Disagree	100	49.5	49.5	60.9	50	50.0	50.0	56.0
	Neutral	47	23.3	23.3	84.2	21	21.0	21.0	77.0
	Agree	28	13.9	13.9	98.0	18	18.0	18.0	95.0
	Strongly Agree	4	2.0	2.0	100.0	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

I consider myself an ethical consumer									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	49	24.3	24.3	26.2	25	25.0	25.0	28.0
	Neutral	109	54.0	54.0	80.2	45	45.0	45.0	73.0
	Agree	35	17.3	17.3	97.5	26	26.0	26.0	99.0
	Strongly Agree	5	2.5	2.5	100.0	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

To further illustrate these results the following Tables provide a visualisation of the descriptive statistics provided: Distrust retailers with ethical collection (Table 14), confused about ethical fashion (Table 15), confused about sustainable fashion (Table 16), ethical consumer (Table 17). (The x-axis in each graph is divided into a

Likert-scale rated: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree. The y-axis reflects the percentage of people who responded in what way to the individual question.)

Table 14: Aspects of distrusting retailers

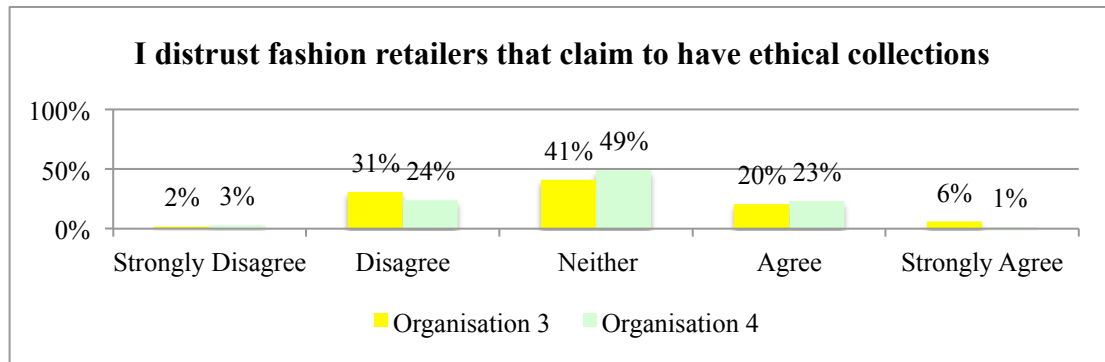


Table 15: Aspects of being confused about ethical fashion

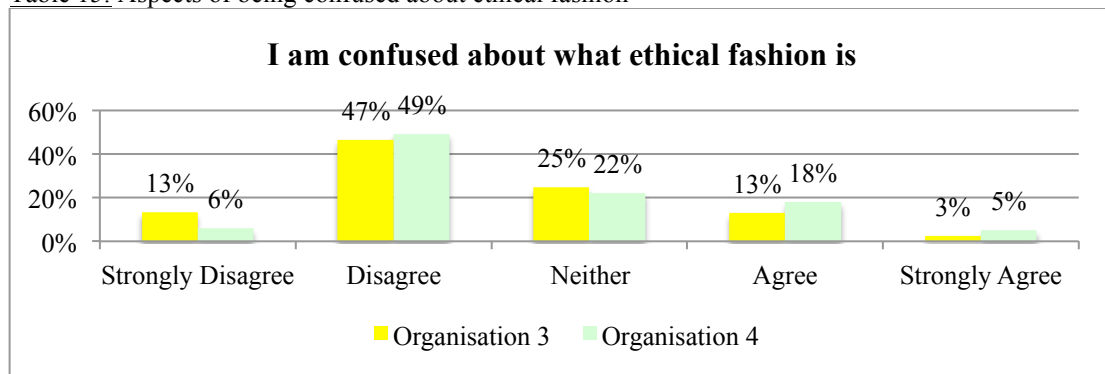


Table 16: Aspects of being confused about sustainable fashion

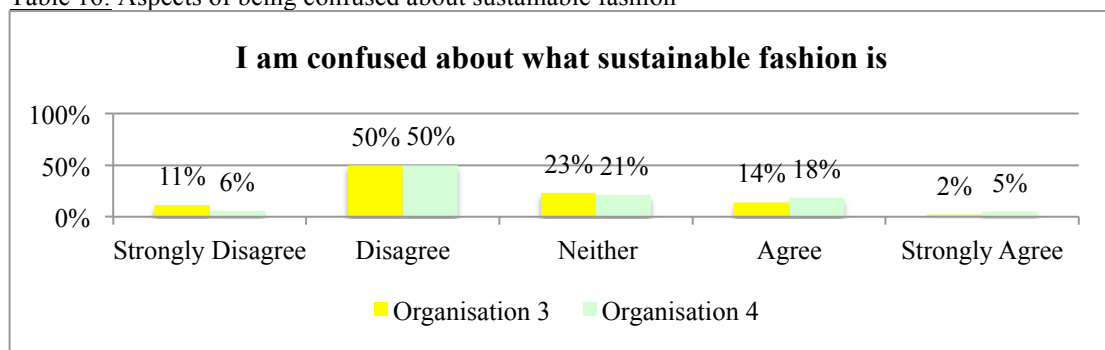
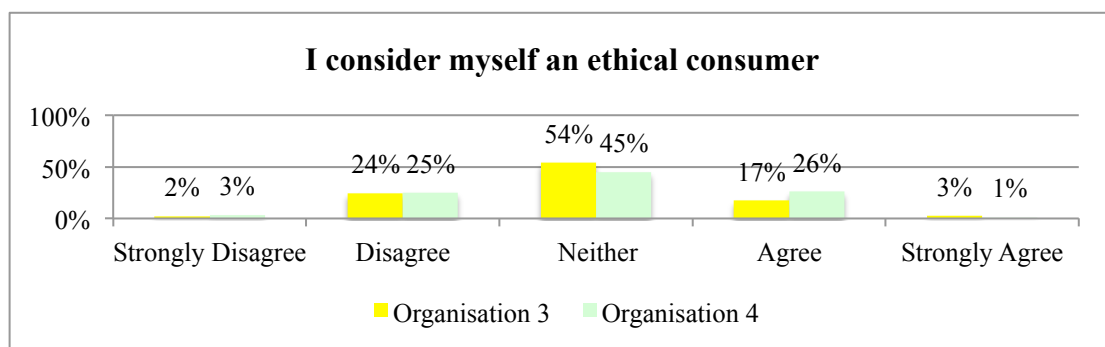


Table 17: Aspects of considering oneself an ethical consumer



An interesting finding is that although consumers highlighted, whilst filling in the questionnaire, that they are not quite sure what sustainable fashion means and how to describe it, the majority of participants highlight that they are not confused about what sustainable and ethical fashion is (Tables 15-16). Following in the same vein, consumers were asked about their associations of sustainable fashion in terms of pricing and their willingness to purchase them. Table 18 provides the statistical backings for the Standard Deviation (StD) performed, whilst Table 19 provides a more detailed analysis highlighting the frequency percentages. Tables 20 to 23 provide a visualisation of the descriptive statistics.

Table 18: Perceptions of sustainable fashion

		Higher prices on organic/ethical clothing discourages me from buying the	There is no difference in price between an organic and non-organic product	I think sustainably produced products are less expensive	If sustainable fashion items have the same price and appearance as non-sustainable fashion items, I would choose the ethical option	Higher prices on organic/ethical clothing discourages me from buying the	There is no difference in price between an organic and non-organic product	I think sustainably produced products are less expensive	If sustainable fashion items have the same price and appearance as non-sustainable fashion items, I would choose the ethical option
N	Valid	202	202	202	202	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.40	2.29	2.31	4.19	3.37	2.42	2.44	3.96
Std. Error of Mean		.069	.050	.047	.057	.094	.075	.067	.088
Median		4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
Mode		4	2	2	5	4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		.983	.717	.674	.809	4	2	2	4
Variance		.967	.514	.454	.654	.939	.755	.671	.875
Percentiles	25	3.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
	50	4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
	75	4.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	5.00

Table 19: Frequency and descriptive statistics

Higher prices on organic/ethical clothing discourages me from buying them									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	3.0	3.0	3.0	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	36	17.8	17.8	20.8	18	18.0	18.0	20.0
	Neutral	51	25.2	25.2	46.0	29	29.0	29.0	49.0
	Agree	90	44.6	44.6	90.6	43	43.0	43.0	92.0
	Strongly Agree	19	9.4	9.4	100.0	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

There is no difference in price between an organic and non-organic product									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	10.4	10.4	10.4	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Disagree	112	55.4	55.4	65.8	55	55.0	55.0	61.0
	Neutral	59	29.2	29.2	95.0	31	31.0	31.0	92.0
	Agree	10	5.0	5.0	100.0	7	7.0	7.0	99.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

I think sustainably produced products are less expensive									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	19	9.4	9.4	9.4	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	106	52.5	52.5	61.9	60	60.0	60.0	62.0
	Neutral	72	35.6	35.6	97.5	30	30.0	30.0	92.0
	Agree	5	2.5	2.5	100.0	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

If sustainable fashion items have the same price and appearance as non-sustainable fashion items, I would choose the ethical option									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Neutral	38	18.8	18.8	20.8	4	4.0	4.0	6.0
	Agree	75	37.1	37.1	57.9	16	16.0	16.0	22.0
	Strongly Agree	85	42.1	42.1	100.0	52	52.0	52.0	74.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		26	26.0	26.0	100.0

Table 20: Aspects of higher price discouraging from purchase

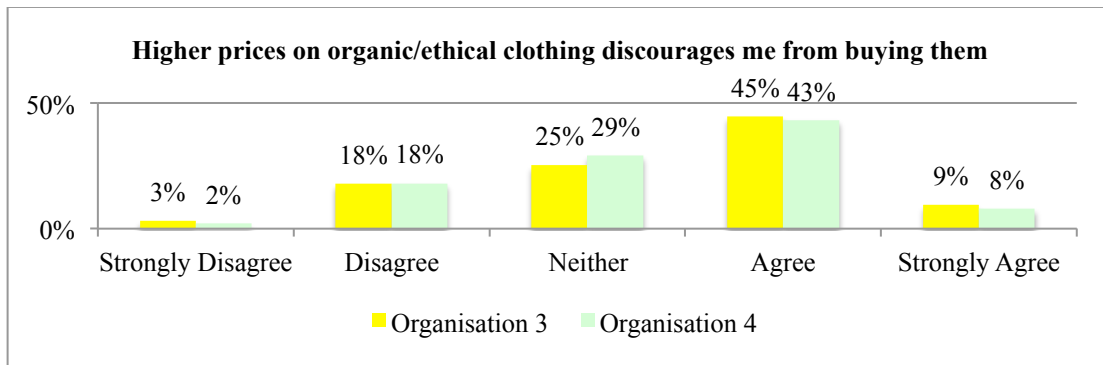


Table 21: Aspects of indifference of price

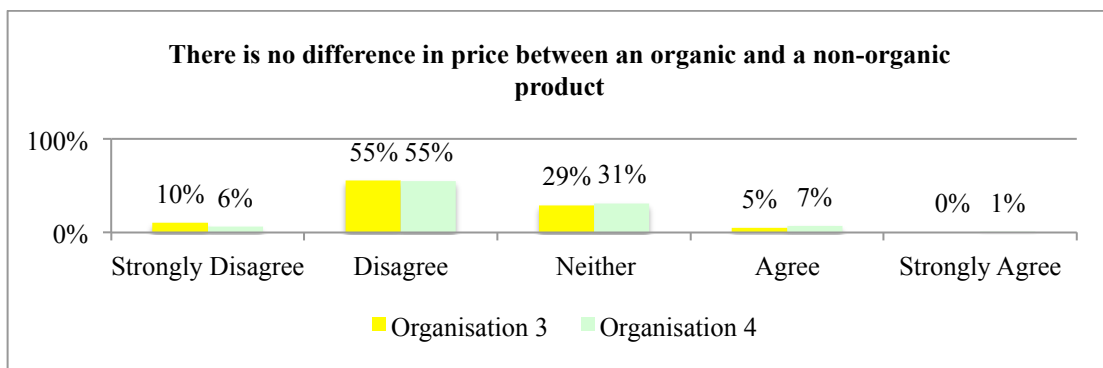


Table 22: Aspects of sustainable fashion being less expensive

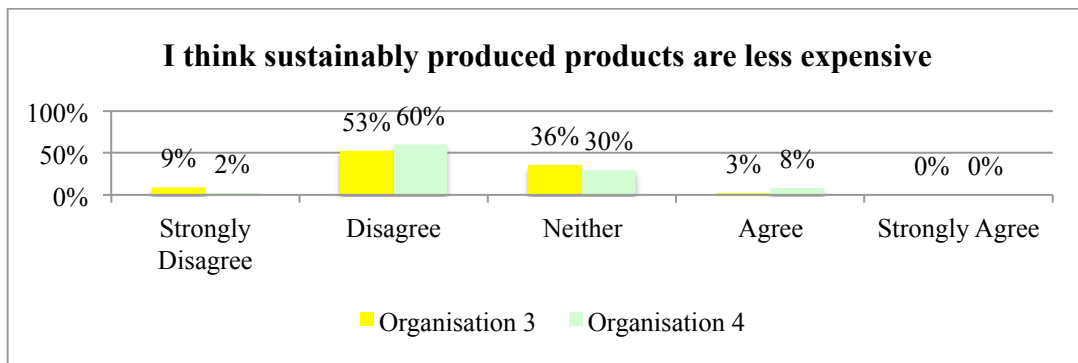
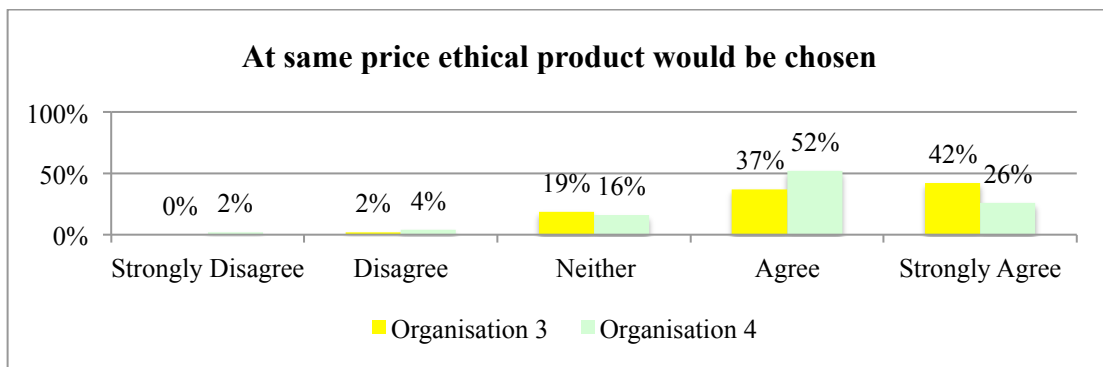


Table 23: Aspects of purchasing sustainable fashion at same price





These findings re-emphasise what has previously been mentioned in Chapter 2: sustainable fashion is associated with a higher price and thus, discourages consumers from purchasing them. Participants were furthermore asked if they believe that organic/sustainable fashion is perceived to have a higher quality than ‘regular’ clothes, whilst also indicating if they are satisfied with the availability of sustainable fashion in the marketplace. Table 24 provides the statistical backings, whilst Table 25 provides a more detailed insight of the statistical meaning, which is visualised in Tables 26 and 27.

Table 24: Perceptions of quality and availability of sustainable fashion

		Organisation 3: Sustainable Fashion Higher Quality?	Organisation 3: Availability Of Sustainable Fashion	Organisation 4: Sustainable Fashion Higher Quality?	Organisation 4: Availability Of Sustainable Fashion
N	Valid	202	202	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.50	2.42	3.45	2.67
Std. Error of Mean		.060	.062	.085	.079
Median		4.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
Mode		4	2	3.00	3.00
Std. Deviation		.860	.878	.845	.792
Variance		.739	.771	.715	.627
Percentiles	25	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
	50	4.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
	75	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00

Table 25: Frequency and descriptive statistics

Sustainable Fashion Higher Quality?									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	3	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Unimportant	21	10.4	10.4	11.9	8	8.0	8.0	10.0
	Neither	68	33.7	33.7	45.5	42	42.0	42.0	52.0
	Important	91	45.0	45.0	90.6	39	39.0	39.0	91.0
	Very Important	19	9.4	9.4	100.0	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total		202	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	

Availability Of Sustainable Fashion									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	26	12.9	12.9	12.9	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	93	46.0	46.0	58.9	37	37.0	37.0	42.0
	Neutral	56	27.7	27.7	86.6	45	45.0	45.0	87.0
	Agree	27	13.4	13.4	100.0	12	12.0	12.0	99.0
	Total		202	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 26: Aspects of higher quality of sustainable fashion

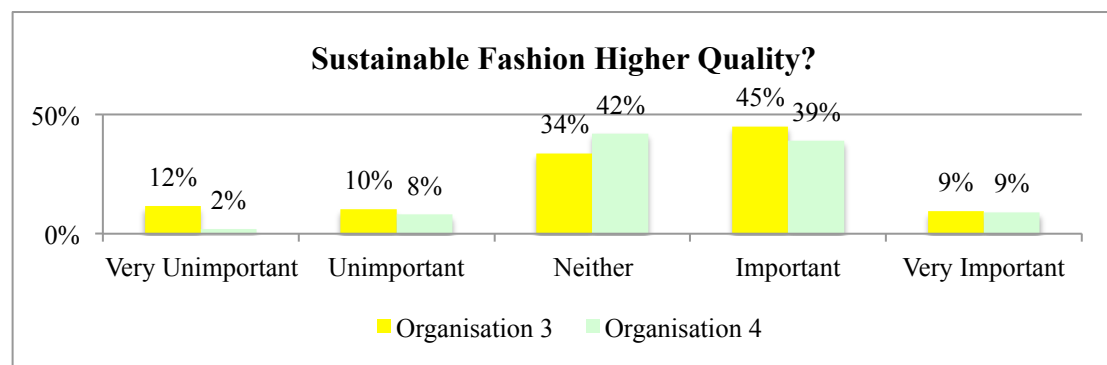
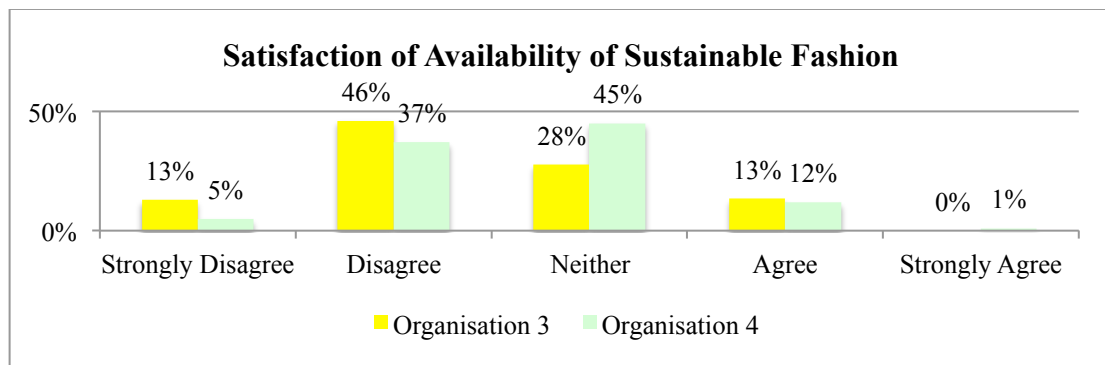




Table 27: Aspects of availability of sustainable fashion



The results indicate that consumers believe that sustainable fashion is of higher quality than garments that are not classified as sustainable fashion. Moreover, a majority of participants do not seem to be satisfied with the availability of sustainable fashion on the market. What is interesting about these findings is that although consumers have indicated that higher prices discourage them from purchasing these garments, they still want to see more sustainably produced garments readily available in the marketplace. This links back to a dilemma described in Chapter 2: if consumers want to see more sustainable fashion in the market place, the demand for these products increases, increased demand implies that more garments will be produced to satisfy this need. This however, is a vicious circle: more supply can also mean fast turnaround times, and thus, is against what the green slow-fashion industry stands for. Following this train of thought further: the green slow-fashion industry is still regarded as a niche market, if more products are available in the marketplace, this might also imply increased competition, which then leads to micro-organisations potentially being unable to survive.

In conclusion, the quantitative parts of the questionnaires have brought forward some noteworthy results that are slightly contradictory. Whilst the observations and qualitative questionnaire parts have indicated confusion about the term *sustainable fashion* and what it entails, the quantitative parts have emphasised the contrary. However, the findings have also supported what has previously been stated in Chapter 2: sustainable fashion is associated with a higher price.

#### 4.1.3.4 Findings thus far

The analysis has highlighted two key aspects: firstly, *sustainable fashion* is hard to define, and secondly, although participants related the term back to their own

creations, it becomes apparent that fulfilling all characteristics associated with the term, is not easy. Overall it can be said that the interpretation of *sustainable fashion* seems to have a slightly more positive connotation among participants. The researcher is aware that the view presented can be seen as potentially biased, as anyone who took part in this thesis either operates within the green slow-fashion industry, or shops in organisations that produce ‘sustainable’ garments. However, this section will explore the term and its meaning further, thereby mapping the characteristics that make up the term *sustainable fashion*. Providing a commonly understood definition or at least an interpretation is vital, as it enables a clear communication process between organisations and stakeholder, in which all parties understand the term in the same manner and can act accordingly. A noteworthy point to be highlighted is that although various opinions have been taken into consideration within the previous section, no two people provided the same interpretation of the term. This reinforces what has been said previously: *sustainable fashion* is hard to define.

As previously demonstrated one of the key terms associated with sustainable fashion in the O/Ms’ and employees’ interviews was *people*, which also featured dominantly in the experts’ definition. The analysis showed that throughout the interviews it was emphasised that the social component is very important to the participating groups. For the organisations this implies that people, employees, and workers are key, as without the help of others, products could neither be made, nor sold. O/M2 emphasises on many occasions that she feels very strongly about the location and the people working for her. She mentions that being able to see her employees make their products, hear them talk and laugh would be what makes the finished product so special (Org2I25+27: 9). Although employees have highlighted that they enjoy working at Organisation 2, they have also voiced that the open plan structure makes them feel slightly uncomfortable. Moreover, especially when large orders have to be created within a short amount of time, workers feel under pressure as they have the feeling of being constantly watched. This links to a further aspect that needs to be highlighted: imposed limitations.

Organisation 2 sources their raw materials from the UK (where possible) and the EU (Italy) and rejects the idea of outsourcing their factory outlet outside the EU. Although Organisation 2 has been approached by various multinational organisations and suppliers producing mainly in Asia, highlighting that Organisation 2 could reduce their supply-chain cost, by outsourcing their production processes, O/M2 feels very

strongly about manufacturing within the UK (Org2I25+27: 9). A theme that emerges here is that of power and control, which can also be observed in the open plan office layout. This could imply that *sustainable fashion* for O/M2 is more than simply a term describing a specific type of fashion; it is a kind of philosophy or strategy on how to produce garments, in which power and control feature heavily. This will be further developed in Chapter 6.

Similarly, O/M1 also has self-imposed limitations: Organisation 1 sources their material within a 20-mile radius of the studio, where all the garments are manufactured (Org1 website). This aspect is key to the company, who emphasise that they are “big on [...] heritage – many of our products are 100% made in [region], right down to the trimmings” (Org1 website). In an informal conversation O/M1 highlights that the 20-mile radius is (Org1I2: 4):

- Wide enough to have various raw material suppliers at hand;
- Does not leave the boundaries of the region they are operating in;
- Cuts down the carbon footprint, as the finished product will not have travelled long distances.

Although O/M1 repeatedly emphasises the importance of reducing the carbon footprint, she also admits on driving an old car, which might not be up to standard in terms of minimising pollutants released. Moreover, O/M1 highlights that she is driving by herself to see the suppliers, as she is afraid of losing one of her business relationships to competitors. Employee I(10) describes O/M1 as “a one man band, she does all the promotion, all the running around, sourcing all the fabrics, she [is] going to all the fashion shoots” (Org1I10: 80). I10 believes that “if she [O/M1] has people doing that [all activities] for her than it [Organisation 1] would be a lot more efficient” (Org1I10: 80). This example further highlights what has been mentioned in Organisation 2: O/M1 similarly to O/M2 feels the need to keep the power and control over Organisation 1 to herself.

Similarly to Organisation 2, O/M1 has arranged an open plan studio space, where people can talk and laugh together, but also ask questions at any time. New employees enjoy this structure, as it is a supportive environment that allows for observations and quick learning processes (ES). On the other hand, employees, who have worked at Organisation 1 for quite some time, feel that this layout does not provide them with creative freedom, as everything has to be done the way O/M1 likes

it (ES). Due to the open plan workspace, O/M1 can observe everyone's work and intervene at any time, if she deems it necessary to do so.

Consumers have emphasised that the sourcing of (raw) materials and the production of the garments are key elements in defining the term *sustainable fashion*. As aforementioned, the local aspect features in all four micro-organisations, which compliments the consumers' interpretation. The case organisations focus on 'home-grown' talent (Org2I25+27: 9); they make use of people and their skills that others may consider "waste" (Org1I2: 4), and they also focus on being creative with available resources (Org1I2: 6). O/M4 emphasises that their products are not only made by the individual members of the co-operative, but also within the region they are based in (Org4I20: 17); and Organisation 3 emphasises that they are the 'local shop for local people' (typology on company shop window). A noteworthy observation that can be made is that this 'local' aspect can also be seen as being quite restrictive, especially in the case of Organisation 3, as a window typology could exclude a wide range of customers that do not associate themselves as 'local people'. Furthermore, Organisation 1 re-emphasises the importance of *sustainable* design, which provides their garments with a uniqueness displayed within their style and design. Moreover, the analysis has shown that innovation is a key part of the production process and the garments' design. The innovative processes lead to creativity, which shows in the micro-organisations' self-imposed limitations in terms of their choice of sourcing raw materials:

- Within a 20-mile radius (Org1I2: 4);
- From 'the region' (Org4I20: 17);
- The product design (interesting, versatile) (Org1I4: 5) (Figure 34);
- Awareness rising of their products (scarf exhibited in Stockport Hat museum (Stockport Council, 2010) (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Stockport redesign fashion exhibition (Stockport Council, 2010) and scarves as hats (Future Frock, 2011)



However, there are two implications that need to be considered: Firstly, the choice of raw material can be seen as an ethical dilemma as, for example, in Organisation 2 the fashion items contain leather and polyester. Leather as an animal fibre may not always be perceived in a positive light, especially among animal rights pressure groups, which might also be one of the reasons why Organisation 2 has not put this information on the website. This however raises the question whether omitting information about raw materials (intentionally or unintentionally) is ethical. Whilst this issue is not the focus of this PhD research, it is vital to discuss this further in Chapter 6 in accordance with the newly developed model. On the other hand, polyester is a plastic that in its synthetic form is not biodegradable and classified as a heavily polluting material (Li et al., 2010; Coen, 2011). Although Organisations 1, 3, and 4 use reclaimed material, which can be seen as more sustainable, it is problematic to track where the actual ‘raw material’ comes from and whether that specific production process fits with their philosophy. For example, the origins of the reclaimed jumpers used in Organisation 1’s creation (Figure 28) cannot be traced back to the original source, as tags were removed. Thus, there is no guarantee that these were originally made in good working conditions and not in a factory such as Rana Plaza (Burke, 2013).

Secondly, these self-imposed limitations may have an impact on the product’s price: limiting production resources will delay availability of the finished products, which can result in a market deficit, due to an unaligned supply and demand curve. In order to balance this deficit, the price-point of these goods may need to be set at a higher level, thereby restricting the customers who can/are willing to pay the price premium. The question that remains is: Is the increased price justified? This may be linked to consumers having emphasised that *sustainable fashion* is “an oxymoron” (Q12Org3: 31) or a “contradictory term” (Q192Org3: 47). Looking at the fashion industry in broader terms, organisations are producing fashion lines to satisfy consumer needs to buy new products. Whilst participants highlighted they organise swop-shops and upcycling workshops (Org1 website; EI(S): 3), they are also promoting their own fashion lines. This is where the vicious circle begins: Dr Kate Fletcher author of the book ‘Sustainable Fashion & Textiles’, states that “we buy many more clothes than we need and the clothes we buy, ‘exploit workers, fuel resource use, increase environmental impact and generate waste’” (O’Connell, 2013). This could lead to the conclusion that *sustainable fashion* cannot exist, because as

soon as fashion garments are produced, consumers are encouraged to buy these products. Developing this thought further, this could imply that the demand for these particular garments may increase over time. Popular demand then leads to producing larger batch sizes, which overtime may result to moving from a slow-fashion to a fast-fashion approach. Thus, opponents may argue that *sustainable fashion* in itself cannot exist, as our economy is led by supply and demand and sooner or later will lead to increased consumerism.

A further argument that can be brought forward for *sustainable fashion* being an oxymoron is the economic viability of such a concept. If the focal organisations' interpretation of the term is considered valid, indicating that the local aspect is key and a slow-fashion approach admirable, this would have various implications for the current industry. Chapter 1 highlighted that the UK fashion industry contributes £21bn directly and £16bn indirectly to the British economy (Fox, 2010). Could it therefore be argued that *sustainable fashion* would mean the British economy could suffer a dramatic decline in terms of their income? Would this furthermore imply that the fashion industry would collapse and no longer be competitive – thus indicating that *sustainable fashion* can only be defined as a 'contradictory term'? That said, *sustainable fashion* then would mean the antidote to fast-fashion and consumerism, implying that it is about encouraging people to buy less, which links back to the definition provided in Chapter 1.

Further aspects that need to be looked at when talking about sustainable fashion as an oxymoron are how the terms fashion and sustainability are defined. Firstly, 'fashion' can be defined as something that is timely and thus, goes *in* and *out* of style and could therefore be seen as an impediment to sustainability, which focuses on a long-term perspective (Walker, 2006). In this manner, the term could be classified as an oxymoron as per definition the terms 'fashion' and 'sustainability' could be defined as two opposing ends of a spectrum that are not compatible. On the other hand, 'fashion' can be defined as an art form that focuses on craftsmanship and artisanry. Thus, it could be said that fashion implies producing a piece of artwork that has a unique character and does not necessarily depend on seasonal trends (Norrell et al., 1967). A piece of clothing would then be transformed from simply being a wearable item to a unique creation that suggests creativity and character, as well as expressing a unique identity (Poon & Fatt, 2001). In this sense, fashion and sustainability may complement one another, as a piece of art can be timeless in

nature, which would be compatible with the long-term perspective of sustainability. Similarly, 'fashion' can be seen as a science that allows for sustainable innovations, in that material production and garment creation are driven by technological change, which supports the sustainable development agenda (Poon & Fatt, 2001).

Secondly, the term 'sustainability', as has been suggested in Chapter 2, does neither have a common clear-cut definition, nor can it be assumed that it is perceived the same way by all participants involved (Klostermann & Cramer, 2006, 2007). Linking this to sustainable fashion, a question that needs to be asked is: 'what makes the garment sustainable?' Are garments that are produced with 'organic' raw materials part of the sustainable fashion movement, or should only clothes that are produced utilising an environmentally friendly production technique be classified as 'sustainable'? Following this train of thought, t-shirts that are produced with organic cotton are more environmentally friendly than their counterparts, as the cotton fields have been treated with less chemicals (Soil Association, 2013). However, cotton plantations are monocultures, which leads to "a degradation of the quality of both, ground and surface water, and to eutrophication" (Directorate General of Agriculture, 2007). Even if cotton is produced 'organically' and may be seen as an alternative to synthetic fibres (Leech, 2013), growing cotton is highly damaging to the environment (Parker, 1999). Moreover, the fashion industry itself, no matter if the focus is on slow- or fast-fashion, is set out to produce clothes that are being sold (Armstrong & LeHew, 2011). The Introduction highlighted that the fashion industry is one of the biggest polluters (Egan, 2011; BSR, 2012), even if fashion is produced in a more 'sustainable' way in terms of organic raw materials and socially responsible working conditions, the raw materials used need to be grown, which can in itself be unsustainable.

Furthermore, looking at the various ways organisations can implement 'sustainability' into their business, a question that arises is who can 'truly' produce sustainable fashion? A company that sees sustainability as an add-on strategy, a 'green company', or a business venture that moves against the capitalist idea and seeks to reuse materials that are already produced? Whilst this PhD research cannot answer these questions based on the data collected, it is vital to keep this debate in mind when looking at a micro-company's identity, which is further explored in Chapter 6.

Looking back at the three ‘word clouds’, it is noteworthy that the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘ethically’ only featured prominently in the consumer part. Nevertheless, the words were also mentioned throughout the interviews with the focal organisations. From the interview context, it can be said the participants associated the following ‘ethical’ aspects with *sustainable fashion*: paying workers fair wages, providing a safe working environment, and good working conditions (Org2I25+27: 9; Org2I39: 13; Org2I29: 86). In this sense, it was vital for both Organisations 1 and 2 to move their production processes to different premises. Employees from both companies have highlighted that the old studios were too cold and would make working very challenging (ES). This can further be illustrated when looking at Figure 37. On the left hand side is Organisation 1’s old studio space, which was located in a residential area. It was a converted garage space that lacked insulation. On the right hand side is the company’s new workspace, a shared facility, designed for the creative industry, and located in the city centre.

Figure 34: Organisation 1’s old and new studio space (CEH & Org1 Website)



Hand in hand with the term ‘ethical’ are the words *responsibility* and *sustainability*. The fashion industry as a whole has produced various ‘scandals’, which have led to rules and regulations attempting to prohibit ‘unethical’ behaviour. The most recent factory accident in Savar, Bangladesh, is an example, whereby action was taken by various retailers, including, but not limited to, John Lewis, The Arcadia Group, and M&S, to improve working conditions and prevent similar accidents from happening again (Davies, 2013b). More than 1100 people lost their lives in the Rana Plaza complex accident, when an eight-story building collapsed during working hours (Burke, 2013; Parveen, 2014); the contract setup by the major corporations mentioned seeks to ensure that workers are safe and these accidents can be prevented in the future.



Although the micro-organisations in this research were not directly affected by this incident, as they manufacture in the UK, these scandals had various implications: Expert I(F) highlights that simply because organisations claim to produce fashion in an ‘ethical’ manner, does not necessarily mean that they will follow through with these measures. She mentions that her organisation does not have any standardisation, but she personally ensures that her employees are treated well, are paid fair wages, and have a safe working environment. She highlights that she knows each and every one of her employees personally, and thus does not need an official certification. This expert talks about her personal experience with companies, who have acquired a Fairtrade Sign, however do not comply with the ethical values associated with the label (EI(F): 62). Thus, for her there is no guarantee that organisations follow through with what they are communicating to their consumers (EI(F): 62).

The experts highlight that *sustainable fashion* is linked to transparency – being able to provide evidence of a product’s origin and the supply chain as a whole (Org1I2: 4; EI(Guardian): 22). They talk about the need of the whole industry to join forces and not simply promote ‘green’, ‘sustainable’, and ‘ethical’ issues, but show proactive behaviour in terms of their company practices (EI(Guardian): 21-22). It is articulated that *sustainable fashion* is the way forward and needs to be incorporated as a strategy into any organisation’s business plan, and thus be the core of the company and its identity. However, questions that remain are: can sustainable fashion be the future? Is this only important to industry experts, or is it equally important for consumers? The argument that can be brought forward is: if *sustainable fashion* was a lucrative business, why would major players in the fashion industry hesitate to change their business practices? The experts highlighted that *sustainable fashion* needs to be supported throughout the industry. Small organisations can easily adapt to changes in the market place, however it is the multinational companies that have a larger share in the industry, and due to their size and setup, cannot adapt to change that quickly. Although the argument that not all multinational companies can suddenly change their business practices spontaneously holds true, change can be seen in the industry through collaborations. As highlighted in Chapter 2 Tesco is working together with the London-based brand *From Somewhere* in an attempt to make use of *waste* textile material in one of Tesco’s textile warehouses (Pasquinelli, 2012a). This shows that key features of *sustainable fashion* are long-term commitments and collaborations between the industry’s key players and smaller companies.

Consumers put a strong emphasis on the natural environment in defining *sustainable fashion*. This group sees a *sustainably* produced fashion product as one that utilises renewable raw materials, has a low carbon footprint, and is long lasting and durable (Appendix 12 Lines: 26, 32, 37, 41, 43, 45-46, 50). Although consumers are also concerned with social aspects, including, but not limited to, labour rights issues, and fair wages, the majority of quotes look at the raw materials and their impact on the natural environment (Appendix 12 Lines: 28-30, 34, 36, 39-40, 42, 44, 48, 51-53). A reason for this could be that the UK and EU have very strict labour laws, and thus a company that is producing and manufacturing fashion in the UK/EU would be assumed to treat their employees well. Environmental issues on the other hand are more apparent in consumers' every day lives, which could be a reason for stronger emphasis on this aspect.

Again, it could be argued that the social aspect is not a sole interest for *sustainable fashion*, but for the fashion industry as a whole. The natural environment, it can be argued, is a further aspect that the industry itself is tackling: with constantly improving technology, the impact fashion production has on the environment will improve. However, organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry emphasise the use of materials that are not only less harmful, but also have an overall lower impact on the natural surroundings. The action of carefully sourcing material and reusing what others may classify as waste is a sole interest of this industry, and is thus unique to *sustainable fashion*.

To reiterate a previous point: media attention around the topic of *sustainable fashion* has risen. More newspapers are reporting on *sustainable fashion* events and *ethical* garments (Cartner-Morley, 2013; Pasquinelli, 2013; Siegle, 2014). One of the most prominent events that has been in the news in September 2013 is the 'Green Carpet Challenge' that "has catapulted Sustainable Style into the spotlight at the world's most high profile events [...] highlighting the issues of sustainability within the fashion industry" (Eco Age, 2013). Experts have two opinions about this specific event: Firstly, they believe the idea behind the Green Carpet Challenge is very positive, as their cause is promoted and consumers are being educated, making it easier for the individual brands to sell their products (Org112: 55; EI(S): 56). O/M1 highlights that multinationals have a great impact on promoting the cause:

If I'm a 100% ethical and I have 5000 customers and ASDA is like .05% ethical and has 5 million customers they are actually reaching more and doing

more good and making better change, even though what they do in entirety is [not] great. [...] I do really think that the big companies need to drive change (Org112: 55).

Secondly, experts also mention that the impact this event has on their own business is almost none. Whilst people might be more familiar with the term, they still see it as a ‘high fashion’ phenomenon. In other words, they believe it is not part of the daily fashion routine, but rather strongly interlinked with high-end, exclusive, and upscale fashion. Although companies such as Burberry, Mulberry, and Stella McCartney do raise the profile and indeed have ‘green/sustainable’ fashion lines, not all of their fashion is produced in the same manner. These designers still produce new lines with an average turnover of 60 days, thereby going against the ‘sustainable fashion principles’. This links to what has been mentioned by the consumers: it is a contradiction, as *sustainable* fashion promotes a slow fashion turnaround.

#### *4.1.3.5 Sustainable fashion – towards an interpretation*

In order to provide an interpretation of the term *sustainable fashion* various questions need to be answered: Can there be a single definition of the term? Does an organisation need to fulfil all or only a selection of the aspects mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to be called a *sustainable* fashion organisation? And what makes *sustainable fashion* different from ‘fast-fashion’?

Before moving on to answering these questions, Table 28 summarises the key findings of what *sustainable fashion* means from Chapter 2, the pilot study, the organisations, the experts, and the consumers. To reiterate a point made previously, creating a common interpretation for the term *sustainable fashion* is vital for various reasons, as it:

- Provides a common understanding upon which various groups (organisations, stakeholders) can act upon;
- Prevents issues associated with *greenwashing*;
- Allows organisations to align their strategies and objectives to meet the key criteria associated with the term.

Table 28: Overview of various aspects of sustainable fashion according to participating groups

	Literature Review (LR)	Pilot Study (PS)	Organisations (O)	Experts (E)	Consumers (C)
Forward thinking			✓		
Innovation				✓	
Ethical/sustainable design	✓	✓	✓		
Ethically sourced				✓	✓
Meaningful, interesting		✓	✓		
Local production	✓		✓		
Production techniques (recycling, upcycling, traditional techniques)	✓	✓	✓		
Versatile		✓	✓		
Promoting fairly traded, fair wages		✓	✓	✓	
Transparency (sourcing raw material, packaging, production process)			✓	✓	
Checks for harmful substances			✓		
Long-term relationships (with stakeholders)			✓	✓	
Environmental standards	✓			✓	✓
Human rights/ working conditions		✓	✓	✓	✓
Community support (employment opportunity)			✓		
Financial sustainability (Independent, self-sufficient, viable)			✓	✓	
Renewable material, environmentally friendly material	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Renewable energy/ energy usage	✓				✓
Limited transportation	✓		✓	✓	
Fashion with conscience	✓				

The previous section has highlighted that the three groups involved (organisations, experts, consumers) define *sustainable fashion* according to three aspects: social, environmental, and economic. This links back to section 2.3 on sustainability, more specifically Elkington’s (1994) TBL model: People, Planet, and Profit. Each of the focal organisations has mentioned their employees, the community, and stakeholders as key parts in creating *sustainable fashion*. Stated alternatively, producing sustainable fashion means knowing how/where items are made and how workers involved are treated, which links to the ‘People’ strand (Elkington, 1994). Although opponents may argue that the social component is not exclusively relevant to *sustainable fashion*, but is rather an issue that is being dealt with across the fashion industry, it seems to be largely associated with this term. The experts focus more on Profit, in terms of providing a business model that has sustainability at the core of the organisation, whilst also being financially viable/sustainable. The consumers as the beneficiaries of the products look at environmental components, including but not limited to, sourcing, production, and the natural environment, which links well with ‘Planet’ (Elkington, 1994).

To conclude, the first part of this Chapter was set out to provide an inclusive interpretation for the term *sustainable fashion*. What has been found and highlighted throughout the previous sections is that the term is difficult to define, and even harder to act upon. Taking these challenges into account it becomes clear that there is not one way of interpreting or defining *sustainable fashion*, but rather, the term seems to be subjective, in that it can mean different things to different people. Whilst one solution could be to provide an interpretation that, in accordance with this PhD research's findings could incorporate the following three aspects:

- The product needs to be produced in an ethical manner: fair wages, good working conditions, and safe environment
- The materials used need to have a low environmental impact: utilising renewable materials (e.g. bamboo, organic cotton, fish skin, plastic bottles), using dyeing methods that are less harmful (e.g. natural dyes), utilising traditional and modern manufacturing techniques (e.g. embroidery, weaving, upcycling)
- A business model that is based on sustainable values, whilst also being financially viable and able to provide jobs in the community

However, a more inclusive solution to the challenge of defining sustainable fashion could be creating a matrix consistent of various criteria. Table 29 provides an example of how this matrix could look. Table 29 is based on this study's findings and provides organisations with an opportunity to prioritise different elements associated with *sustainable fashion*, whilst also providing evidence on how they seek, for example, to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in their production processes. Moreover, the basic components, which have been mentioned by the majority of participants need to be fulfilled, in order to be able to call a fashion line *sustainable*. Benefits of this matrix include, but are not limited to:

- Showing consumers what they (organisations) are doing in terms of moving towards sustainable futures;
- Providing organisations with the opportunity to set themselves targets;
- Allowing for comparisons to be made between different 'sustainable' fashion brands and their various production techniques.

Moreover, this matrix provides a guideline for organisations that want to call their collections *sustainable fashion*. As highlighted in the findings section defining *sustainable fashion* per se is an impossibility, as various organisations use different approaches and techniques to produce *sustainable* garments. Thus, this matrix allows for a more inclusive approach, by incorporating multiple-aspects, which mirror the unique features of the green slow-fashion industry.

Table 29: Example of sustainable fashion matrix

	Basic	Low Priority	Medium Priority	High Priority	Organisational Evidence	3 <sup>rd</sup> party evidence
Forward thinking						
Innovation						
Ethical/sustainable design	✓					
Meaningful, interesting						
Local production						
Production techniques						
Versatile						
Fair trade	✓					
Transparency						
Harmful substances	✓					
Environmental standards	✓					
Human rights	✓					
Community support						
Financial sustainability						
Renewable materials						
Renewable energy						
Carbon emission	✓					
Conscience						

In summary, this matrix provides the baseline for a suggestion to overcome the issue of inclusivity and eco-labels and is further explored and elaborated on in Chapter 7.

## 4.2 Eco-Labels

### 4.2.1 Brief summary of eco-labels

Chapter 2 has highlighted that eco-labels are utilised as communication tools, which have the potential to enhance a company's image of being 'green' (Delmas et al., 2013). They are defined as symbols or signs, awarded to products/services that indicated that they are more environmentally friendly than their competition (Bratt et al., 2011). The overall aim of eco-labels is to provide stakeholders with the necessary tools to make a conscious decision of whether or not to purchase a product/service based on their environmental performance (Sinha & Hussey, 2009).

It was highlighted that over 100 labels (EFF, n.d.) are currently used across the apparel and textile industry. This has led to split opinions about these standardisations: those advocating certifications see them as effective communication tools enriching and highlighting environmentally friendly practises (Bratt et al., 2011), and those opposing certifications, argue they confuse stakeholders and act as barriers of entry into a new or existing market (Haynes, 2012; Austgulen & Stø, 2013).

The following section is split into three parts: firstly, secondary data collected on eco-labels used in this study (Appendix 2) is analysed using the FSSD framework. Secondly, findings from the case organisations, the expert interviews, and the consumer questionnaires are presented. Lastly, this section concludes by mapping the relationship between eco-labels, sustainable fashion, and organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry.

#### **4.2.2 Mapping existing eco-labels**

This section is based on secondary research and analyses the 18 eco-labels (Appendix 2) according to the FSSD framework, which follows in the same vein as a study published by Bratt et al. (2011) for the “Assessment of Eco-labelling Criteria” (p. 1631). Similarly to the interviews, the secondary data were analysed using the principles of the seven-step analysis guide (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Similarities and differences between the individual eco-labels are highlighted and a general overview of these standardisations used within the UK fashion industry is provided. As previously discussed the FSSD consists of five levels: the Systems Level, the Success Level, the Strategic Level, the Actions Level, and the Tools Level.

##### ***4.2.2.1 The systems level***

This level focuses on the context in which eco-labels operate. Aspects measured in this level include, but are not limited to, stakeholder engagement and relationships, rules and regulations, and aspects of time (TNS, n.d.; Bratt et al., 2011). The Systems Level seeks to answer the following questions (adapted from Bratt et al., 2011: 1633):

- What are the aspects that are included within the individual labelling criteria?
- Which criteria are not mentioned, but are specific to the industry?
- Which, if any stakeholders are involved in or affected by the decisions made within criteria development processes?
- What aspects of ‘timing’ are included in the criteria?

#### 4.2.2.1.1 Aspects included within the individual labelling criteria

Secondary analysis has shown that a variety of eco-labels (Bluesign, Oeko-Tex 100, iVN Naturtextil, GOTS) selected for this research focus predominantly on environmental aspects. These certifications seek to reduce the negative impacts products have on their natural surroundings. This is achieved by, for example, eliminating harmful substances used within the textile industry (Oeko-Tex, n.d. a; Bluesign, 2013a). The GOTS and iVN Naturtextil standard (from here on referred to as iVN) go even further than simply testing for harmful substances, emphasising the use of natural fibres and ecological production processes within their requirement section (iVN, 2011; GOTS, 2013a).

The EU Flower assesses the life-cycle of a product based on pass/fail criteria (EC, 2008). In other words, the EU Flower looks at a product/service's performance, from the early stages of production through to completion, thereby providing the consumer with holistic information on the environmental impact of the goods (DEFRA, 2013a). Moreover, it assesses a manifold of aspects within a product's life-cycle, which for instance cover everything from the use of harmful substances, to the use of recycled packaging material, and the use of fertilisers and pesticides (EC, 2013b).

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label "has a verification and certification process similar to that of [Type I] eco-labels but focuses on single issues" (UNOPS, 2009: 10). In this specific case, the standard provides the consumer with the guarantee that the product they are about to buy is not contributing to the destruction of the world's forests (FSC, 2013); thus, it focuses on environmental impacts.

The Fairtrade Sign and SA8000 label focus mainly on social impacts a product/service has on its environment (Zadek et al., 1998). Products awarded with these certifications emphasise that their workers receive fair wages, ensure that no discrimination or child labour practices are employed, and producers within developing countries receive higher income and/or education. The SA8000 standard moreover looks at working hours, remuneration, and Health and Safety requirements within the working environment (SAI, 2012).

The Fair Wear Foundation, Made-By, Labour Behind the Label, World Fairtrade Organisation, and Soil Association and their respective labels focus on both,



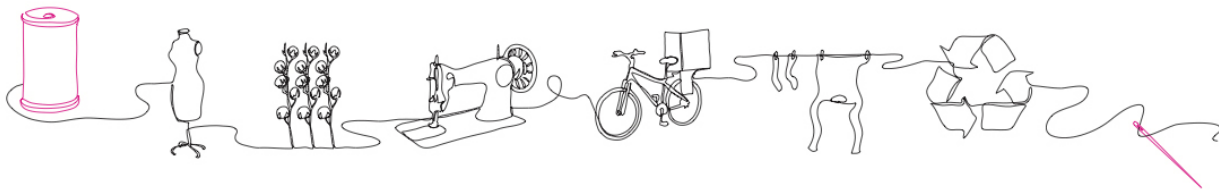
social and environmental aspects. They predominantly look at the employees working environment and their treatment in terms of working hours and wages paid. The WWF and the Carbon Trust represent environmental aspects, with both labels advocating a reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emission in the fashion industry.

The Green Showroom and Estethica are tradeshows that specifically focus on sustainable-/eco-fashion, thus garments showcased at these events need to follow strict criteria (Green Showroom, 2013, direct citations):

- a) Contain certified organic material or recycled materials;
- b) Employ standards such as Cradle to Cradle or similar one;
- c) Produced according to Fairtrade or similar standards and support social projects and traditional textile skills.

Put another way, garments displayed need to follow the principles of the “Sustainability Thread of a Product Lifecycle” (BFC, n.d.) (Figure 38). Thus, these trading events support social and environmental aspects.

Figure 38: Sustainability thread of a product lifecycle (BFC, n.d.)



In summary, the main focus of these 18 eco-labels and events is a combination of social and environmental impacts products have on their natural environment. Looking at Figure 39 three ‘word groupings’ become apparent that can be linked to the TBL:

- 1) **People:** social, workers, fair, personnel;
- 2) **Planet:** environmental, substances, natural, organic;
- 3) **Profit:** products, production, labour, trade.

Thus far, it is noteworthy that every word-cloud produced contains the word *sustainable* and *people*.

Moreover, the eco-labels chosen for this PhD research show a long-standing history, with organisations having been established as early as the 1960s. This links back to what has been said in Chapter 2, sustainability and eco-labels are strongly linked and can act as tools to enhance a company’s strategy to make their garments more environmentally friendly (Suvatjis et al., 2012).

Figure 39: Eco-labels – key words from secondary analysis



4.2.2.1.2 Aspects not mentioned in criteria, but specific to fashion industry

The UK Fashion and Textile Association (UKFT) highlights four key areas “that need to be considered when labelling garments: Fibre Content, Country of Origin, Care Instructions, and Flammability” (UKFT, 2012).

*Fibre content*

In the UK clothing industry the labelling of fibre content is mandatory, as described

Figure 40: Eco- Labels And Industry Standards (CEH)



“in the 2012 Textile Products (Labelling and Fibre Composition) Regulations directive published by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills” (BIS) (2012). The directive highlights

that “textile products containing two or more textile components of two or more different textile fibres must bear a label stating the fibre composition of each component” (BIS, 2012: 7). Furthermore, this regulation indicates when a product can be called *100%*, *pure*, or *all* (BIS, 2012) in terms of its fibre content. This is especially critical when looking at iVN and GOTS, as these eco-labels focus on

“organic certified fibres” (iVN, 2011; GOTS, 2013a), whilst also highlighting that products utilise 100% organic cotton. The importance of eco-labels working hand in hand with the previously stated regulations is key, in order to provide the consumer with relevant and reliable information (Figure 40).

### Country of origin

Although displaying the Country of Origin on a garment is not a mandatory requirement in the UK or the EU as a whole (UKFT, 2012), it nevertheless must be displayed, if the consumer could be misled (UKFT, 2012). Figure 41 provides an example of this, the company’s name and tagline indicated that the garment is UK made. However, in this specific case, the country of origin is China, thus needs to be stated in order not to mislead any customer.

Figure 41: Country Of Origin Labelling (CEH; Name Anonymized Using Photoshop)



### Care labelling

A further area of labelling that is strongly encouraged by the UKFT, yet not mandatory within the UK clothing industry, is *care labels*. As

[T]he symbols are trademarked in some European markets companies have to pay for the right to use the symbols. The level of payment varies, but in some cases is based on the number of garments sold (UKFT, n.d. a).

According to GINTEX, an international organisation owning these labels, there are five main care symbols: washing, bleaching, drying, ironing, and professional textile care (GINTEX, n.d.). If a symbol has a St. Andrew’s Cross placed on top of it, this signals to the user that the specific action should not be taken. For example, if this cross is placed on top of the sign for bleaching, the garment should not be bleached (UKFT, n.d. b).

### Flammability

The flammability-labelling requirement is the only mandatory care label in the UK for Children’s Wear and Adult Nightwear (DT&I, 1985). The following signs need to be displayed (BIS, n.d.: direct citations):

1. Nightwear which **does not** meet the flammability performance **must** carry a label with the words:
  - ‘**KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE**’
2. Nightwear which meets the flammability performance requirements **must** carry a label with one of the following forms of words:
  - ‘**LOW FLAMMABILITY TO BS 5722**’ [(BS 5722 refers to the British Standards Institution specification published in 1984, looking at flammability of fabrics in sleep wear) (DT&I, 1985)] (in black letters),  
**or**
  - ‘**Low FLAMMABILITY TO BS 5722**’ and ‘**KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE**’, **or**
  - ‘**KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE**’.

To conclude, out of the four areas highlighted by the UKFT (2012), the fibre content is the only one that directly impacts two of the eco-labels in this research.

#### 4.2.2.1.3 Stakeholders involved in or affected by eco-label criteria development

A closer investigation of the criteria set for the individual eco-labels highlights that the stakeholder involvement (e.g. producer, consumer, supplier) is low. One of the only eco-labels that clearly states the involvement of consumers is the EU Flower, which develops its criteria in “consultation with the European Union Ecolabelling Board (EUEB), the Commission, Members States, Competent Bodies, and other stakeholders” (EC, 2013c). The majority of criteria set for the individual 18 eco-labels, were created focusing on already existing legislation in the industry and exceeding the expectations within their own guidelines (Fair Wear Foundation, 2009). Although various governmental bodies are supporting these eco-labels within a national context, there is no clear link between the concept of sustainable consumption and production and the support of eco-labels (Horne, 2009).

#### 4.2.2.1.4 Time aspects included in criteria

As previously mentioned, each eco-label is based on existing legislation and regulations within the industry. Thus, the criteria developed relate to current technological advancements and substances that may or may not be included in the production process. This implies that the criteria for these eco-labels are continuously updated with new advancements entering the market (SMK, 2011; DEFRA, 2013a).

To conclude the *systems level* it can be said that these eco-labels provide guidance and support in how to create a fashion garment that is less harmful to the environment. Having said that it becomes apparent that these eco-labels cannot be

looked at in isolation, but rather must take the context into account. Overall it can be said that the key terms associated with eco-labels seem to match the interpretation brought forward by the consumers (Figure 35).

#### 4.2.3.2 *Success level*

The Success Level takes the four system conditions of sustainability into account (TNS, 2013b):

- 1) Equal opportunities for generations to fulfil their needs;
- 2) No environmental degradation;
- 3) Decreasing artificially produced chemicals;
- 4) Limiting the amount of resources extracted from the natural environment.

The Success Level explores the key areas that are fulfilled within the Systems Level (Holmberg & Robèrt, 2000), when the organisation “is in compliance with the vision and objectives, informed by generic basic principles for socio-ecological sustainability” (Bratt et al., 2011: 1633). Stated alternatively, this level seeks to identify the objective(s) set within the labelling program(s), whilst also investigating if an attempt has been made to define sustainability.

Secondary analysis has shown that these key objectives focus either on environmental or social aspects; aiming to reduce the impact the apparel industry has on the natural environment and its inhabitants. Moreover, a closer look at the individual websites shows that various labels mention ‘sustainability’ (emphasis added, direct quotes):

- The EU Ecolabel is committed to environmental sustainability (EC, 2013d).
- Made-by is a European not-for-profit organisation with a mission to make sustainable fashion common practice and improve environmental and social conditions in the fashion industry (Made-by, 2013).
- Organisations, which produce Fair Trade products, maximise the use of raw materials from sustainably managed sources in their ranges, buying locally when possible (WFTO, 2013a).
- As businesses look for more ways to grow, sustainability should become a golden opportunity for investment [...] The smart companies will invest now and put sustainability inside their businesses (Delay, 2013).
- The bluesign® system is the solution for a sustainable textile production. It eliminates harmful substances right from the beginning of the manufacturing process and sets and controls standards for an environmentally friendly and safe production (Bluesign, 2013a).

A noteworthy observation is: although the term ‘sustainability’ is mentioned on the individual websites, no attempts are made to clearly define what the term means to the individual organisations and or labelling bodies.

#### *4.2.3.3 Strategic level*

The Strategic Level provides guidelines enabling an organisation to plan for and act on the objectives stated in the Success Level, which links to the organisation’s overall strategy (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjjs et al., 2012). This level focuses on the strategic guidelines set within the organisations to reach its objectives and communicates these to the respective stakeholders involved in the process (Bratt et al., 2011: 1633).

- What strategic guidelines are highlighted within each of the individual labelling processes that enable participants to reach any objective(s) and criteria?
- What (if any) strategies are mapped out and/or communicated to stakeholders involved?

##### *4.2.3.3.1 Strategic guidelines set to fulfil objectives*

Each individual eco-label has strict guidelines that need to be followed in order to be awarded the respective standard for the individual product/service, or to participate in one of the Eco-Fashion Events (e.g. BFC, n.d.; Oeko-Tex, n.d. b). Secondary data and analysis on the websites indicate that organisations wanting to display any of these standardisations on either their website or garment need to provide proof that their products fulfil the criteria (Oeko-Tex, n.d. a; Fairtrade Foundation, 2011a; DEFRA, 2013a). (It has to be highlighted that out of all the interviews conducted only one person had an eco-label (Fairtrade), which is further discussed, in section 4.2.3.) Moreover, each individual organisation sets very specific guidelines that are enforced and checked on on a regular basis, which can include, but are not limited to, company audits (Oeko-Tex, n.d. c), complaint procedures “with regards to the implementation of the GOTS quality assurance and labelling system” (GOTS, 2013b), and through the completion of self-assessment questionnaires (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011b).

A further observation that can be made is that a majority of the 18 eco-labels award their standardisation to more than one product category. This implies that out of the 18 eco-labels 8 are textile and clothing specific (Green Showroom, Estethica, Bluesign, LBL, Made-by, GOTS, iVN and Oeko-Tex), whilst the others are awarded to multiple product/service categories.

#### 4.2.3.3.2 Strategies communicated to stakeholders

Each of the individual programmes review their criteria continuously, thereby ensuring to be up-to-date with new developments and innovations in the industry. Secondary data analysis did not find any objectives set within the programmes, but rather focuses on setting criteria enabling participants to work towards a ‘sustainable future’ (EC, 2013e). As no clear strategies or plans are laid out in the individual processes, these cannot be communicated to stakeholders. However, as mentioned previously, stakeholders can become involved in the criteria development process, by filling in a suggestion form and sending these to the respective organisations (EC, 2013c).

#### 4.2.3.4 Actions level

This level is concerned with any ‘actions’ that need to be considered in order to fulfil guidelines and plans outlined in the Strategy Level, to reach the targets set in the Success Level within the Systems Level (Broman et al., 2000; Robèrt, 2000). In order to gain greater insight into this level, the actions prioritised within the individual programmes need to be investigated (Bratt et al., 2011: 1633).

However as previously stated, the 18 labelling programmes investigated neither favour one product category over another, nor are any strategic guidelines communicated. The most prominent ‘actions’ that are taken, are in terms of the eco-label criteria continuously being updated, thereby ensuring that they coincide with new technologies and innovative processes.

#### 4.2.3.5 Tools level

This level focuses on the methods utilised in order to achieve all of the different aspects discussed in the previously mentioned levels. Thus, it is key to analyse what tools are identified within the individual labelling programmes, which enable participants to reach the objective(s) defined on the individual websites (Bratt et al., 2011).

Various processes guide each labelling programme, for instance the EU Flower and the FSC are managed along the guidelines of the ISO TR14000 standards (GEN, 2004). The iVN, GOTS, Bluesign, and Oeko-Tex take EU and UK regulations and legislations into account when developing improved versions of the current

guidelines (Oeko-Tex, n.d. a; Bluesign, 2013a; GOTS, 2013a). This shows that the tools employed to develop any sort of labelling programme are neither uniform nor compulsory, which can lead to irregularities within the criteria development process (Lvallée & Plouffe, 2004; Harris, 2007).

To conclude the FSSD analysis, it can be said that labelling processes are vastly complex. Each of the previously discussed eco-labels has a very specific set of guidelines, which might overlap with others in certain criteria, and cover specific aspects of environmental or social issues. Each labelling process furthermore involves a multitude of stakeholders, which can range from governmental institutions, to specifically dedicated labelling boards, consumers and various other stakeholders (EC, 2013c). Moreover, the individual websites are, at times, difficult to navigate, which makes it challenging to find all the necessary information and gain a full understanding of objectives and strategies set within the individual programmes. The overall aim of the FSSD analysis is to provide an overview of how the 18 different labelling processes guide stakeholders involved “towards sustainability” (TNS, n.d.). This, as has been demonstrated, may at times be challenging and not always straightforward to follow through and comply with.

Moreover, the analysis of the labelling processes has highlighted that the overall stakeholder involvement in the design process is very low. Although some standards are developed in conjunction with stakeholders, it nevertheless remains unclear who these stakeholders are: whether it is consumers, multinational organisations or SMEs, those who already have an environmental certification or are interested in acquiring one. This leads on to the overall objective for this PhD research: the relationship between labels and micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry.

### **4.2.3 Assessing Existing Eco-Labels**

#### ***4.2.3.1 The Example Of GOTS***

This section analyses the data collected on the GOTS standard in-depth, thereby focusing on benefits and drawback for micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry. GOTS was established with the purpose of developing a “harmonised and world-wide recognised organic textile standard” (GOTS, 2013a) that



Figure 42: GOTS standard and its partner organisations (adapted from GOTS, 2013a)



would make it easier for stakeholders to identify organic textiles. The standard acts as an umbrella label incorporating ten national standardisations, including the UK’s Soil Association label, which allows the certification to move away from a national level towards being a globally recognised player (Diekamp & Koch, 2010; GOTS, 2013a) (Figure 42). Any product awarded the GOTS certification signifies the use of “organic fibres,

including environmentally oriented technical as well as social criteria” (GOTS, 2013a). Any organisation interested in labelling their products with GOTS needs to produce evidence that they comply with the standard’s guidelines (GOTS, 2011) and thus act in accordance with the Systems Level. Applicants matching the GOTS criteria can acquire a license for €120 per annum, for each facility that is inspected by the independent certifying bodies (GOTS, 2013b).

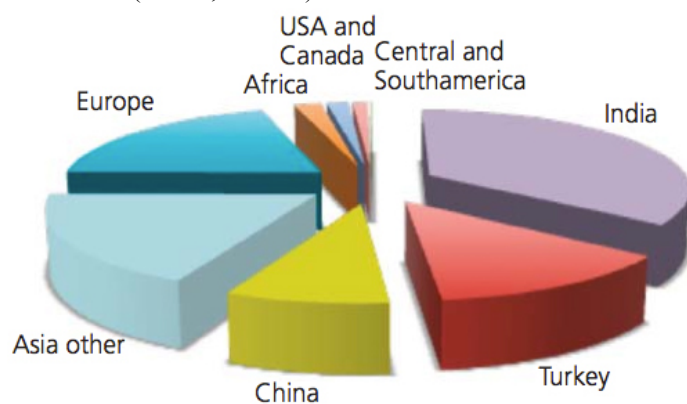
The annual license fee links back to a point made in the previous section: *sustainable fashion* is associated with a price-premium, due to self-imposed limitations, which can also include the use of organic certified raw materials. For micro-organisations, acquiring a standard can imply a high financial cost, which might not always be feasible, depending on the average annual sales turnover. Moreover, data collected on GOTS highlighted that there is no distinction made between a large organisation acquiring this certification or a micro-company. Whilst a large organisation has greater financial resources, micro-organisations may have to increase their prices in order to absorb additional costs.

The initial idea to combine various national eco-labels and create one overarching international certification was based on two needs: firstly, to reduce the number of eco-labels within the textile industry, which would make the selection process for organisations and members of the supply chain easier. Secondly, it was designed to help reduce confusion amongst stakeholders due to too many

standardisations in use (Sin, 2008; Koehler & Park, 2011). In other words, the GOTS standard aims to counteract the three key claims made by eco-label opponents, which were highlighted in Chapter 2 and are investigated in form of secondary research:

Firstly, eco-labels act as a barrier to entry in an international context (UNEP, n.d.; Zarrilli et al., 1997; Gallastegui, 2002). This claim might hold true for nation-wide regulations and certifications, however GOTS is combining national eco-labels from various countries (USA, Germany, UK, Japan, Netherlands, France, Italy, Turkey, and Argentina) into a unified standard. This collaboration implies that rules

Figure 43: Breakdown Of Facilities By Region/Country 2012 (GOTS, 2012: 3)



and regulations concerning organic fibres have been similar across the nine countries involved. Five of these countries are part of the original EU-15 member states (OECD, 2007), which leads to the assumption that the regulations across these 15 member states are the same, due to overall EU regulations (EC, 2011). Thus, it can be assumed that the GOTS standardisation is used across the EU-15 member states. Moreover, this highlights that some of the world's largest economies, (CNN, 2012) namely the USA, the representatives of the EU-15, and Japan act as driving forces in promoting this standardisation. Looking at the overall distribution of facilities that have been certified with the GOTS standard in 2012, it becomes apparent that the standardisation is globally recognised and utilised (GOTS, 2012) (Figure 43).

Therefore, it can be said that GOTS would no longer be a barrier to entry that makes it challenging for certain products to enter a new market. In other words, national eco-labels could act as barriers to entry as they comply with rules and regulations of only one nation, which might have been introduced to protect *national* production from globalisation and low pricing strategies. GOTS as an *international* standard however is overarching and inclusive, representing the needs of more than one country/nation/region, thus, a conclusion that can be drawn is that it is not a barrier to entry. In terms of this research's context, acquiring such an eco-label could

provide these micro-organisations with more credibility and in the future allow for easing into foreign markets quicker, due to adhering to the standard's regulations.

Secondly, opponents highlight that eco-labels are costly and may not be affordable for SMEs (EC, 2001a; Gallastegui, 2002). This aspect is vital in terms of the relationship between eco-labels and micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry. Looking at the pricing structure of various standards this argument can hold true in some cases:

- The GOTS certification costs €120 per annum, for each facility that needs to be inspected along the supply chain (GOTS, 2013b); (whilst at first glance the annual dues seem reasonable, it can add up quickly, depending on how many facilities need to be inspected within the supply chain);
- The iVN license is charged according to the annual natural textile turnover, which implies any company selling between €0 to €249,999 natural textiles would have to pay a fee of €300 (iVN, 2008);
- For the EU Flower the “annual basic license fee for goods is 0.15% of the annual volume of sales (excluding VAT)” (Europa, 2003).

These figures support the argument made by opponents, as they re-emphasise what has been said: the financial burden might make it an impossibility for SMEs and micro-companies to acquire one of these certifications. However, a way to circumvent and thereby limit the financial constraint is the fact that micro-organisations do not need to acquire any of these licenses themselves. Instead these companies could work together with suppliers who either already are certified or are in the process of being certified. Although SMEs and micro-companies would not be allowed to publicise the official eco-label on their own products or website, they could advertise that their suppliers produce according to the standardisation's guidelines, and are officially certified, which indirectly leads to a 'win-win' situation (Jaenicke & Jacob, 2002; Green, 2005; Leitner et al., 2010). Thus, a finding that can be concluded from this that micro-organisations would not have to acquire the certification per se, but still receive the benefits (and/or negative aspects, e.g. price premium) associated with eco-labels, as they manufacture goods with raw materials that have been certified.

Thirdly, eco-labels have been criticised as acting as a barrier in technical terms, as technology may not advance at the same speed within different countries (Tian, 2003). Although the argument that technology does not advance at the same rate is valid, it cannot be generalised that all eco-labels act as a technical barrier. For example, the Fairtrade Sign's goal is to provide workers in developing countries with

the technology and level of education to produce goods that were manufactured in good and safe working conditions and pay workers fair wages. The standard then is not a technical barrier to entry, but rather a tool that contributes to providing advanced methods to regions that thus far may have had no or only limited access to these technologies (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011b). Furthermore it could be argued that providing a safe working environment and paying fair wages (two reoccurring themes across various eco-labels described in the Systems Level and the term sustainable fashion) cannot be put on the same level with technology. Whilst there are certain standards that focus specifically on technological advancements, a majority of standardisations focus on social aspects, especially those that are used in the fashion industry (Ecolabel Index, 2014b). Moreover, it could be argued that standardisations such as GOTS not only enable organisations to produce environmentally friendly garments, but also enhance the key aspects associated with *sustainable fashion* (according to this research's findings), which include, but are not limited to: innovation, people, responsibility, environment, and sourcing.

Secondary analysis has brought forward a further finding: The GOTS certification was introduced to harmonise various standards and provide a more coherent and simplified way to identify products that were manufactured according to industry specific standards (GOTS, 2013c). However, this positive aspect is counteracted by national governments, who license several of the GOTS' *component* eco-labels on an individual basis. For example, the iVN can be acquired for a license fee, payable according to the annual €-turnover of the organisation. Theoretically speaking, a company could acquire both standards (GOTS, iVN) and advertise them on their products. Whilst they are similar in nature, the iVN takes the ideals of the GOTS standardisation even further: emphasising that products are free of harmful substances and produced from 100% organic fibres, which exceeds the standards required for GOTS (iVN, 2011). This in itself could be seen as a contradiction, as it could be argued that the umbrella certification should have tougher regulations than its components. Consequentially, the iVN is still used in the textile industry, making the attempt of the GOTS certification to reduce the number of national eco-labels obsolete. Furthermore, the iVN could be replaced by combining GOTS with the Oeko-Tex standardisation, emphasising the organic fibres used within the product and the testing for harmful substances. Thus, the confusion surrounding eco-labels seems to persist, as multiple standards have similar agendas and/or can be combined with

other certifications, which leads to an ‘overload’ on information displayed on the individual garments.















As previously highlighted, a ‘win-win’ situation (Green, 2005; Leitner et al., 2010) can be achieved by organisations working together, advertising one eco-label, thereby helping to reduce the confusion amongst consumers. However, these benefits can be jeopardised through too many eco-labels circulating within one industry and on individual garments. Put another way, if national marks (e.g. iVN) are acquired instead of or in conjunction with a certification such as GOTS, the question that emerges is: how useful and well-known are the individual standardisations?

In summary, it can be said that the idea of internationally recognised eco-labels, such as the GOTS or the Fair Trade Sign, show great benefits due to being *international* players, thereby harmonising various national standardisations. Whilst being international implies lessening the risk of standardisations acting as entry barriers, the latter (harmonising various national eco-labels) reduces confusion amongst stakeholders by decreasing the number of certifications in the market place. However, the example has shown, some countries are not willing to give up their national eco-label, thus lessening the positive aspect of harmonisation. This further validates what has been discussed in the UNEP (n.d.): “eco-labels lack the potential to harmonise existing labels with new ones, accelerating further distrust and disinterest” (p. vi).

#### *4.2.3.2 Relationship of the individual eco-labels*

Having focused on GOTS in the previous section, this part looks at the various aspects that are covered by the 18 eco-labels discussed in this research. Secondary research analysis enabled the researcher to identify key aspects that the individual eco-labels focus on. Figure 36 provides a visualisation of the key terms, which were mapped in a two-by-two matrix, looking at attributes and the individual certifications. Table 30 re-emphasises that various standards focus on the same overall goals, which include, but are not limited to humane working conditions and raw material assessment. However, the eco-labels differ in terms of their guidelines and specifications necessary in order for an organisation to be awarded the respective standardisation.

Table 30: Map Of Standardisations Used In This Research Project

														
Textile Industry Specific								*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Water usage reduction	✓		✓			✓								
CO <sub>2</sub> emission	✓						✓							✓
Deforestation					✓									
Checks for harmful substances	✓					✓							✓	✓
Human rights/ working conditions		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sustainable (textile) production	✓						✓				✓			
Cultivation of raw material			✓											
Eco-friendly textile	✓			✓				✓						✓
Environmental standards		✓		✓		✓					✓			
Energy usage reduction						✓								
Promoting fair trade		✓					✓							
Assesses product (and production process)	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓						✓	
Assesses product life-cycle					✓	✓							✓	
Assesses supply chain				✓				✓		✓			✓	✓
Assesses social aspects								✓	✓			✓		
End-of-life treatment			✓											
Assesses raw material			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	

To provide an example, although various eco-labels mention human rights and working conditions explicitly, they imply slightly different aspects. The Fairtrade Sign ensures that farmers receive fair wages and support the local community in third world countries by providing education and new technology methods (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011a). This is similar to what the World Fair Trade Organisation highlights: “to work in favour of the poor and promote sustainable development and justice” (WFTO, 2013a). This in turn is closely linked to the social component mentioned in the GOTS regulation, which includes, but is not limited to, being able to choose employment freely, safe and hygienic working conditions and no child labour (GOTS, 2013c). The Fair Wear Foundation and the SA 8000 certification take standards set by the World Fair Trade Organisation even further, ensuring that the production process is sweatshop free, the working environment is safe, and good

working conditions are ensured (Fair Wear Foundation, 2009; SAI, 2012). The Made-by logo highlights the same standards as GOTS, focusing specifically on the fashion industry instead of the textile industry in more general terms (Made-By, n.d.). The Labour Behind the Label certification is yet another certification that focuses on working conditions and “empowerment of workers in the global garment and sport shoe industry” (LBL, n.d.). Moreover, some of these certifications are industry specific, whilst others focus on more than one product category.

Included in the overview of eco-labels (Appendix 2) are also two fashion events: Green Showroom and Estethica. Although they are not technically classified as standardisations, they nevertheless signify that any product, garment, and textile showcased needs to fulfil specific criteria that include, but are not limited to (BFC, 2012c; Green Showroom, 2013):

- Using organic and/or recycled material
- Manufacture products according to Fairtrade standards (fair wages, good and safe working conditions)
- Encourages ethical practices
- Supports social projects and traditional textile skills

These are all attributes that were discussed and covered within the individual eco-labels. Moreover, an advantage of these fashion events is that micro-organisations are able to form groupings and attend these shows either as a team or individually, and thus either share the cost or act as the sole risk-taker. Although neither the Estethica nor the Green Showroom website state the exhibitor fees explicitly, according to experts and O/Ms of this research project they are affordable and worth attending due to international exposure and return on investment gained (ES). Moreover, it can be said that any brand attending one of these fashion events, even if they do not have a standardisation, produce according to similar standards than those fashion designers who have acquired a certification, as the selection criteria for these events is based on two phases, which includes a detailed questionnaire about the production and supply chain processes (BFC, 2014b).

To sum up the secondary analysis of eco-labels revealed the following findings: Firstly, and most importantly, many of the currently existing eco-labels cover similar aspects in their guidelines (Table 30). A majority of these standardisations are furthermore used in a national context. This implies that outside of their country’s context, these standardisations may not be recognised, unless their guidelines correspond with standards set by other countries. *International*

standardisations are setup to cover the main features of national certifications, thus provide a steppingstone towards a more harmonised approach to labelling. Secondly, standardisations can be split into either nationally or internationally recognised eco-labels. Thus, they are either acting as single, standalone certifications, complying with national regulations or they act as umbrellas, providing a basis for global comparison. Thirdly, it can be said that each eco-labels fit in one of three categories:

- 1) The eco-label focuses on environmental aspects of a product (less harmful substances, carbon emission); [e.g. Oeko-Tex 100/1000 Standard; WWF]
- 2) The eco-label emphasises social aspects (working conditions, wages); [e.g. SA 8000; Made-by]
- 3) The eco-label fits in category 1) and 2) [e.g. GOTS; World Fair Trade Organization]

To conclude after having analysed the eco-labels, the next section discusses the link between the focal organisations and eco-labels, and between sustainable fashion and eco-labels.

#### 4.2.4 Findings – primary data analysis

##### 4.2.4.1 Organisations' and experts' insight into eco-labels

Throughout the interview process participants were asked to define the term *eco-label* and describe their associations (positive or negative) with the phrase. A noteworthy observation made during the pilot study, which reoccurred in the main research, was that *eco-labels* can refer to either a standardisation or “a brand that is thinking about the planet, so everything from production, manufacturing to [the] initial design” (EI(M): 63). Participants used both meanings within their individual interviews: firstly when talking about their competitors as other *eco-labels* (EI(S): 66), and secondly whilst highlighting that they “buy fair trade certified” fabrics (EI(M): 63). This implies that the participants are aware of standardisations, but also describe themselves as *eco-labels*.

The second observation concerns eco-labels in the sense of official certifications. Although the majority of participants agreed that there are “quite a lot of [standardisations] out there” (Org1I2: 57), which implies that they are aware of them in their industry, some also highlight “there are [not] any [certifications specific to our product category]. [...] There are no regulations” (Org2I37: 59). Interestingly



this participant made a distinction between the clothing industry and accessories, which include, but are not limited to shoes, jewellery, and gloves. In the same vein, O/M2 highlighted that they have their products tested for harmful substances on a regular basis, as their customers require an official report that analyses the exact amount of chemicals used in the products (Org2I37: 59). Although this is what both the Oeko-Tex 100 and 1000 standards cover, O/M2 does not seem to either know about this standard, nor associate it with her industry. This issue will be picked up in Chapter 6.

Although a manifold of eco-labels are used within the fashion industry, some participants stated that they “can[not] think of any” (Org1I4: 58) spontaneously, whilst others identified: Made-By (Org1I2: 57), Fairtrade Sign (Appendix 12 Lines: 57, 61, 63-65), Organic Certification (EI(M): 63), and the Fair Wear Foundation (EI(E): 61) as the most well-known standardisations. This implies that out of 100 eco-labels in existence in the UK fashion industry (EFF, n.d.), four labels stand out and are known among this specific range of experts. The most commonly referenced eco-label in this research is the Fairtrade Sign, which was mentioned by the majority of interviewees.

Overall, the data indicated that the opinions expressed about these standardisations are quite mixed. Most participants associate positive aspects with eco-labels, however, some contradicting statements were made. O/M1 highlights that an “accredited, certified, organised mark [...] protects the consumer [as the mark tells them the organisation is] doing it properly, they are doing it right” (Org1I2: 57). She further mentions that these standardisations “would be a really positive thing” (Org1I2: 57), as they enable the consumer to make a conscious decision on purchasing an environmentally friendly product, which links to aspects mentioned in Chapter 2 (Case, 2004; Belz & Peattie, 2010). Although O/M1 was approached by a labelling body previously, she highlights that for her as the owner of a micro-company “it [is] too expensive [...] to get involved” (Org1I2: 57). Moreover, she highlights that at the time she was approached “they [did not] have any [certification] in the UK” (Org1I2: 57) and still do not have any now that would be recognisable in the industry. Furthermore, Organisation 1’s Head of Online Sales further emphasises that their garments are sold within various European outlets, and thus she questions:

[H]ow viable [a standard] is internationally [...] as you [would] need flexibility [...] for variation in the countries the clothing is being made,

[which makes it] a little difficult to have something across the board (Org1I4: 58).

Throughout the interview process it became apparent that I4 sees eco-labels as standardisations reinforcing legislation and regulations on a national level, which for her implies that these certifications do not have brand recognition across national borders. She further highlights in the interview that she is unable to name any specific labels (Org1I4: 58), which combined with her interpretation of eco-labels not being viable across national borders (Org1I4: 58) indicates she does not see these standardisations as powerful communication tools. To reiterate this point further, she concludes that even if there was a standard that had strong brand recognition, this eco-label would not be inclusive enough. I4 further states that it would be challenging to create an eco-label that incorporates all aspects of a sustainable business, from the sourcing process of raw materials, to manufacturing the good, and selling the finished product. In other words, there is a need to establish a one-fits-all label that is inclusive and valid across multiple national borders (Org1I4: 58). This has two implications: On the one hand it is a justification for the variety of eco-labels available in the fashion industry, which allows the micro-organisation to select the eco-label(s) that fit best, on the other hand however, this indirectly implies that there is a high cost involved. If there is no-one-fits-all standardisation and the company would have to acquire two or more, this suggests a financial burden. This links back to an earlier section, highlighting that sustainable fashion is associated with a price-premium. Following along the train of thought, if an organisation was to acquire an eco-label they would need to ensure that they could afford the cost. One way of covering these expenses is by re-calculating the garments price, thereby moving the cost of 'sustainability' onto the consumer.

One of the experts agrees with the statement made by I4, that there is no one-fits-all label (EI(S): 66). She further voices her concern that although an eco-label can highlight that a garment "might be fairly traded, but what fabric is it made out of? If it is a poly cotton blend – the[n it] is not very environmentally friendly" (EI(S): 66). This is the same argument made by I(N), stating that just because a company might grow organic cotton, this cotton might still drain all the water resources within a country, which in turn makes it not environmentally friendly (EI(N): 64). I(S) reiterates these points further, as she believes statements made about organic cotton and the fact that this raw material is not a 'sustainable' resource can create distrust

and confusion amongst consumers, as she believes that “the product labelling can be misleading” (EI(S): 66). However, in the same vein, she emphasises the need to develop a standardisation that is easily recognisable and less confusing (EI(S): 66) so people have a point of reference when purchasing a product.

To reiterate the point made about environmentally friendly textiles further, it is noteworthy to highlight that out of the 18 eco-labels investigated in this research only four (iVN, GOTS, Bluesign, Soil Association) explicitly talk about eco-friendly textiles. The key emphasis of these eco-labels is with the organic production and the reduction of chemicals and pesticides used. Interestingly, these standardisations focus predominantly on cotton, which according to the experts is not a sustainable material in itself. Moreover, a question that emerges is whether companies who utilise raw materials that are slightly more controversial (e.g. leather, fur, gene manipulated crops, plastics), but can prove that their garments contain no harmful substances and/or have been produced organically should be able to acquire eco-labels and/or be classified as *sustainable fashion*. Whilst this is a moral consideration that was not explicitly explored in this research, the researcher felt it is an important question to pose, which is picked up in Chapter 6.

EI(M) highlights that even if an eco-label would provide the perfect fit for her company, implying the standardisation would certify all the aspects she is focusing on, her organisation would not “have the ability to actually go out and get these certi[fications]” (EI(M): 63), as they are too expensive and not affordable for micro-organisations. This reconfirms what has been mentioned in Chapter 2 (EC, 2001a; Gallastegui, 2002). The interview conducted with I(M) led to notable observations: She highlights that she is aware of various standardisations and mentioned the Fairtrade Sign as one of the key certifications (EI(M): 63). She also recalls a label certifying organic cotton, but was unable to think of the name (EI(M): 63). She feels that eco-labels are very important, but she personally is not always looking at and for them when she is purchasing raw materials for her fashion production or garments for herself (EI(M): 63). Instead she is researching the specific company or supplier she is purchasing the raw material or fashion item from and looks at feedback provided by others (e.g. fellow brands, customers) (EI(M): 63). Throughout the interview process and on various other occasions she highlights that for her standardisations are not playing a key role in the decision-making process in terms of purchasing raw materials, but rather the suppliers’ credentials and philosophy impacts her decision-

making process. However, in another part of her interview she states that an advantage of these eco-labels is that “obviously people understand the[se] certifications” (EI(M): 63) and are seeking out products that do have these standardisations. This is contradicting her following statement mentioning that for micro-organisations, who cannot afford to acquire such a certification it would be enough to “communicat[e] that [they] are doing all these things the right way” (EI(M): 63). This links back to a previous argument made that there is a need for eco-labels that communicate a clear message to consumers (FAO, 2007), however the ones currently available in the marketplace are unattainable for SMEs (Edwards, 2010b). A question that furthermore arises is: what are organisations looking for when sourcing raw materials for their own production? In case of EI(M) her main point of reference are the suppliers’ credentials and their philosophy, rather than them actually owning an eco-label. EI(M) justifies this by highlighting that she is able to trace all her raw materials back to the original source, thus for her a standardisation would be unnecessary (EI(M): 63). This however has various implications: firstly, there is an issue of control, as it is questionable if any company can indeed trace every single raw material to its original source. To reiterate this point, Figure 44 provides a visual of EI(S) collection, who uses an upcycling technique thereby transforming old jeans into a dress. Whilst expert EI(S) may be able to trace some of the denim pieces back to the original brand, it might not always be possible to establish where the raw materials (cotton fibres) came from.

Figure 44: Trashed Couture (E(S): SNS)



Secondly, in the interview I(M) emphasises that she trusts her suppliers to produce the materials according to her own standards. Challenges that emerge are on the one hand how this *trust* can be built and on the other hand how reliable information available about the supplier is. In this sense, eco-labels could act as useful communication tools, as they could provide reinsurance for the consumer.

Expert I(E)’s opinion on the subject matter provides an insight into a micro-organisation that already has acquired a standardisation: the Fairtrade Sign. Overall her attitude towards eco-labels was very positive. She is the only O/M interviewed whose organisation has a certification and also who has no

background in the fashion industry, but rather in business management. Her interest in standards arose in the late 1990s, which brought forward sweatshop scandals in the sports industry and the book *No Logo* (Klein, 2010). I(E)'s reason for acquiring this specific certification is to “g[i]ve us [as an organisation] a lot more credibility” (EI(E): 61) and because “my particular interest was [...] on the people that were growing the cotton and make the products” (EI(E): 1). This statement re-emphasises what has already been said: eco-labels that are currently in use focus on specific aspects in the supply chain that are meaningful to the organisation (Case, 2004). In case of the Fairtrade Sign this means that the organisation reinvests in developing countries, providing workers with fair wages, good working conditions and advanced technologies (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011b). The use of the phrase to “g[i]ve us a lot more credibility” (EI(E): 61) is noteworthy, as I(E) links this phrase back to the same challenge described and faced by green marketers (EI(E): 61): issues that concern green products and messages (Hanas, 2007), and more specifically greenwashing. In other words, the eco-label provides I(E) with the opportunity to show that they are not simply *claiming* to produce Fairtrade clothes, but have been officially certified (EI(E): 61). Thus, EI(E) believes that the Fairtrade Sign is a recognised brand that is trusted by consumers, which is also an aspect that was highlighted in Chapter 2 (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). I(E) further highlights that “there is a fair bit of confusion” (EI(E): 61) surrounding what consumers actually know about the individual standards, but believes that if they see a certification (e.g. Fairtrade Sign) it provides them with confidence to purchase the product (EI(E): 61). This can be argued as slightly contradictory and raises a key question: if consumers are not familiar with the actual meaning of an eco-label, will this influence their purchasing decision? (This question was brought forward within the consumer interviews.) In comparison to I(E)'s view, I(F) emphasised that just because “companies have been awarded a Fairtrade status [...] behind the scenes [they] are not [always] considered Fairtrade” (EI(F): 62). This was also mentioned by I(N), who highlighted that once the eco-label is acquired and can be displayed the products no one “comes in and actually tests [the] garments. [...] It [is] all to do with money” (EI(N): 64). These two statements contradict the opinion voiced by I(E). The feel one can get from the individual interviews is that the participants have a positive attitude towards labelling and would trust the standardisation if there was a guarantee that organisations who have acquired a standardisation are checked on a regular basis, as is mentioned on their individual

websites (Oeko-Tex, n.d. c; Fairtrade Foundation, 2011b; GOTS, 2013b). This does not imply that organisations are not checked, as firms need to go through an application process in order to be awarded an eco-label, thereby delivering evidence that they are indeed complying with these regulations. However, EI(N) emphasised that personal experience has shown, once a payment for a certification is made, the awarding bodies trust that the licensee acts according to the guidelines, as institutions issuing these standardisations do not always have time to re-check every single one of their members. EI(F) agreed with this point of view, she mentioned that she made similar observations and although her products' raw materials are sourced in Bali and could have been subject to be certified by the Fairtrade Sign, she chose to opt-out. She mentioned that she visits the factories in Bali on a regular basis and ensures that the working conditions are good, employees are paid fair wages and the environment they are operating in is safe. Whilst these conditions, as previously stated, follow the principles of the Fairtrade certification, she stated that she would not acquire this mark, due to having had an encounter with an organisation that was accredited with a label, but did not act according to the guidelines. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 6.

The Manager of the leading UK trend setting agency believes that “official trademarks on garments, a Fairtrade Sign and their role in the fashion industry [...] are important” (EI(P): 65), as they highlight which garments are more environmentally friendly or produced ethically. However, she believes that consumers in the current economy are not interested in buying sustainably produced products (EI(P): 65). From the interview it becomes apparent that she thinks consumers are still having a “fashion appetite” (Sharma & Hall, 2010: 2) for fast-fashion, which needs to be regulated by the industry itself. She highlights that “it is important [to] continue to educate consumers” (EI(P): 65), which is also part of the fashion trends for the Autumn/Winter collections 2014/15, focusing on eco-warriors and heritage products (Agency website). Furthermore, she believes that in the future “you do [not] have the need [for eco-labels]” (EI(P): 65), as everything should be produced sustainably. This statement highlights that in I(P)'s opinion the future of the fashion industry lies with the green slow-fashion industry, which “is starting to implement sustainable designs [and] innovation practices” (EI(P): 65). It is implied that the end goal is to only produce sustainable fashion, and thus make eco-labels redundant.

In conclusion, it can be said that the feeling about eco-labels remains twofold. Whilst some believe that they can have a great potential within the fashion industry, others feel eco-labels lack credibility and are too expensive. In the same vein, participants indicated that the standardisations currently available on the market are not inclusive, in terms of covering production and supply chain aspect of the company. Moreover, research has shown that there are moral indicators that need to be considered, including, but not limited to the actual raw materials used within the production process. The key points of criticism are:

- They are not inclusive enough, in terms of one-fits-all and across national borders (Org114: 58; EI(S): 66);
- Issues of trusting labels (EI(N): 64; EI(S): 66);
- They are too expensive ((EI(M): 63)
- They are irrelevant, if organisations are complying with environmentally friendly production processes (EI(M): 63)
- They are confusing (EI(E): 61);
- They could be made redundant in the future (EI(P): 65).

The following section provides an insight into the consumers' perspective on eco-labels.

#### *4.2.4.2 Consumers' insight into eco-labels*

To better understand which aspects are important to customers when shopping for clothes, participants taking part in the survey were asked to indicate how they feel about four aspects that are associated with eco-labels:

- 1) **Organic:** which links back to the GOTS and iVN, highlighting products that are made from organic fibres;
- 2) **Has a Fairtrade Sign:** which looks at the most mentioned sign in the interviews by O/Ms and experts;
- 3) **Sustainably Produced:** which implies utilising renewable resources, and was another theme that emerged in the data collection; And
- 4) **Locally Made:** which indicates people are treated in a fair manner, paid at least minimum wages, and work in a safe environment, which was mentioned by the O/Ms as a vital aspect of their business.

The results of the questionnaires are presented at the beginning of the next section, before moving onto the follow-up interview analysis.

#### 4.2.4.2.1 Questionnaire analysis

Consumers were asked to rate these four aspects on how important they are to them when shopping for clothes. Table 31 provides the statistical backings for the Standard Deviation (StD) performed. The individual tables and graphs have been colour coded (Organisation 3, Organisation 4<sup>3</sup>).

Table 31: Consumer attitude towards eco-labels

		Locally Made	Sustainably Produced	Has a Fair Trade Sign	Organic	Locally Made	Sustainably Produced	Has a Fair Trade Sign	Organic
N	Valid	202	202	202	202	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.18	3.36	3.07	2.75	3.15	3.41	3.18	2.75
Std. Error of Mean		.074	.062	.060	.061	.110	.095	.095	.086
Median		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
Mode		3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
Std. Deviation		1.051	.888	.846	.863	1.095	.954	.947	.857
Variance		1.106	.788	.716	.744	1.199	.911	.897	.735
Percentiles	25	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.25	3.00	3.00	2.00
	50	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
	75	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00

Table 32 provides details on the rating scales of the four aspects measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important). The results show that consumers in Organisations 3 and 4 responded similarly, with the only deflection shown in the results for ‘sustainably produced’. Participants in Organisation 3 seemed to feel more neutral about this aspect than those in Organisation 4, who believe it is more important.

To further illustrate these results the following Tables provide a visualisation of the descriptive statistics: Locally Made (Table 33), Sustainably Produced (Table 34), Has a Fair Trade Sign (Table 35), Organic (Table 36).

<sup>3</sup> Brief review: questionnaires were only handed out in Organisations 3 and 4, as they are the only customer facing companies.



Table 32: Frequency and descriptive statistics

Locally Made									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	13	6.4	6.4	6.4	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Unimportant	38	18.8	18.8	25.2	17	17.0	17.0	25.0
	Neither	69	34.2	34.2	59.4	39	39.0	39.0	64.0
	Important	63	31.2	31.2	90.6	24	24.0	24.0	88.0
	Very Important	19	9.4	9.4	100.0	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Sustainably Produced									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	4	2.0	2.0	2.0	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Unimportant	27	13.4	13.4	15.3	12	12.0	12.0	16.0
	Neither	81	40.1	40.1	55.4	32	32.0	32.0	48.0
	Important	73	36.1	36.1	91.6	43	43.0	43.0	91.0
	Very Important	17	8.4	8.4	100.0	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Has a Fair Trade Sign									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	5	2.5	2.5	2.5	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Unimportant	42	20.8	20.8	23.3	17	17.0	17.0	21.0
	Neither	96	47.5	47.5	70.8	44	44.0	44.0	65.0
	Important	51	25.2	25.2	96.0	27	27.0	27.0	92.0
	Very Important	8	4.0	4.0	100.0	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Organic									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	11	5.4	5.4	5.4	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Unimportant	67	33.2	33.2	38.6	34	34.0	34.0	39.0
	Neither	91	45.0	45.0	83.7	45	45.0	45.0	84.0
	Important	27	13.4	13.4	97.0	13	13.0	13.0	97.0
	Very Important	6	3.0	3.0	100.0	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 33: Aspect of locally made

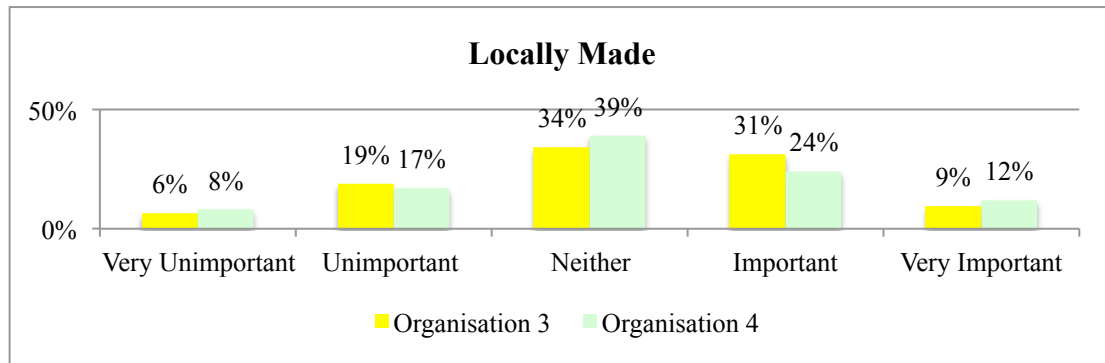


Table 34: Aspect of sustainably produced

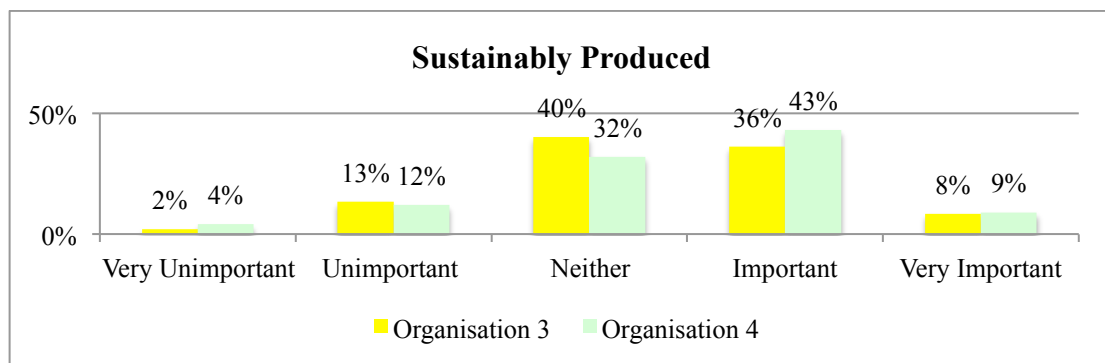


Table 35: Aspect of fair trade sign

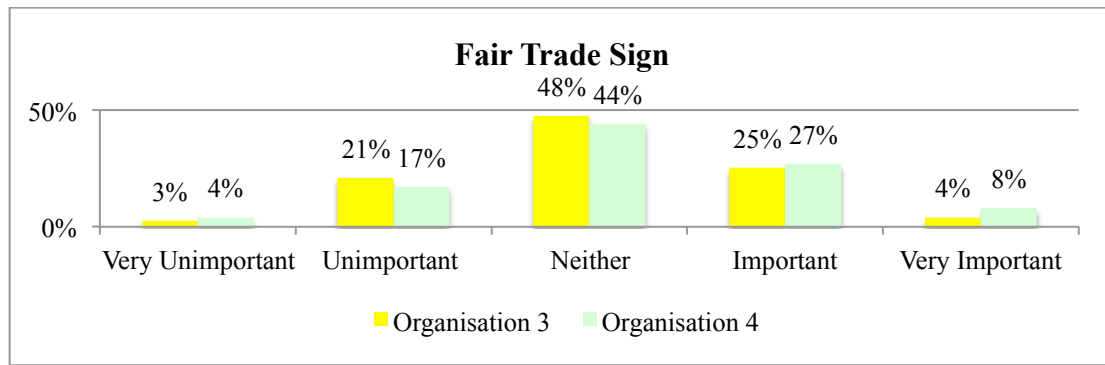
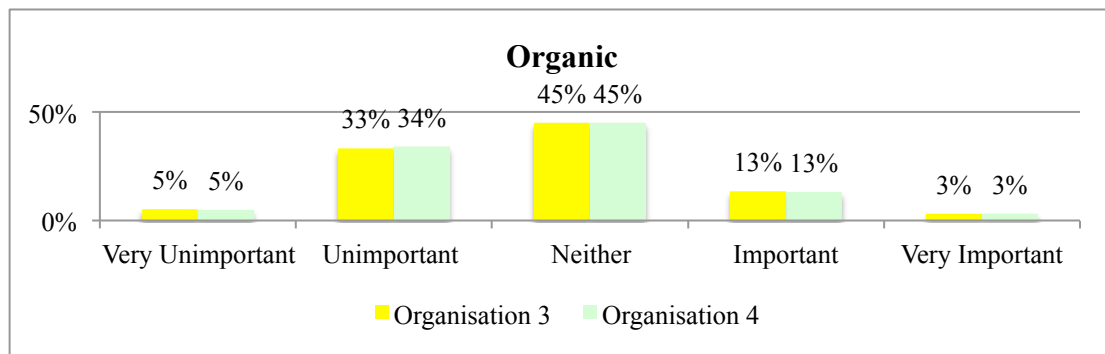


Table 36: Aspect of organic



Overall, it can be said that consumers have a neutral feeling about these four aspects. This raised a couple of questions that were investigated within the consumer interviews. Firstly, why are these aspects neither important nor unimportant?; secondly, are consumers familiar with eco-labels used in the fashion industry?; and thirdly, do eco-labels have an influence on a consumer’s purchasing decision?

#### 4.2.4.2.2 Consumer interviews

Altogether six consumers volunteered to participate in a follow-up interview. Consumers were asked questions directly related to their questionnaires in order to gain a better understanding on their feelings and associations of various aspects surrounding *sustainable fashion*. The first set of questions concerned the four aspects (organic, sustainably produced, fair trade sign, locally made) relating to eco-labels. Each of the participants was asked to elaborate why they rated the individual components as neither important nor unimportant within their questionnaire (or why they ranked them higher/lower than the average participant). The data showed that there are various reasons for rating the four aspects in a neutral manner: knowledge, time, finances, and quality. Consumer 2 states that “there are so many different kinds

of labels and [she] does not know enough about all of them for one particular sign to be more important than another” (CI2: 68). This was reconfirmed by Consumers 4 and 5 highlighting that they “did not know there was a label that is specific to the fashion industry” (CI4: 69) and “find them rather confusing” (CI5: 70). Thus, it can be said that the data collected from these six consumers reconfirms what has been highlighted by the O/Ms and experts, and in Chapter 2: in this case, the number of eco-labels leads to confusions amongst customers. Consumer 1 further states that although she knows what individual standards signify, they “can be overdone” (CI1: 67), which was also highlighted by EI(E) saying that the supply chain can be “overburdened” (EI(E): 61) by eco-labels. CI1 mentions that these certifications help consumers to identify products that are produced more ethically or environmentally friendly, as they cannot be “slap[ped] on a product without complying to certain standards” (CI1: 67), but these certifications matter more for specific products such as “electronics, and safety” (CI1: 67) rather than the fashion industry. She emphasises that “most people [do not] have the time or energy to spend sourcing every product they are [going to] buy” (CI1: 67), which would need to be done when looking for garments with a specific eco-label. Moreover, Consumers 2 and 5 highlighted that they associate products that have a standardisation with higher financial costs than products without (CI2: 68; CI5: 70), which was also validated by statistical evidence (Tables 20 and 22).

The ‘locally made’ aspect seems to be important for the majority of consumers, as they seek “to put the money back into the country [they are] living in” (CI1: 67). This finding is also supported within the quantitative part of the questionnaire, which highlights that participants preferred shopping at independent stores and supporting local designers. Tables 37 and 38 provide that statistical background for this observation, whilst Tables 39 and 40 contain the visualisation of these findings.

Table 37: Consumer attitude towards shopping locally

		Organisation 3: Independent Shops vs High Street	Organisation 3: Local Designer Support	Organisation 4: Independent Shops vs High Street	Organisation 4: Local Designer Support
N	Valid	202	202	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.77	3.74	3.62	3.61
Std. Error of Mean		.059	.058	.101	.079
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		.845	.824	1.013	.790
Variance		.714	.680	1.026	.624
Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Table 38: Frequency and descriptive statistics

Independent Shops vs High Street									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	1	.5	.5	.5	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Unimportant	11	5.4	5.4	5.9	10	10.0	10.0	12.0
	Neither	61	30.2	30.2	36.1	35	35.0	35.0	47.0
	Important	89	44.1	44.1	80.2	30	30.0	30.0	77.0
	Very Important	40	19.8	19.8	100.0	23	23.0	23.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Local Designer Support									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unimportant	13	6.4	6.4	6.4	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Neither	62	30.7	30.7	37.1	37	37.0	37.0	44.0
	Important	91	45.0	45.0	82.2	44	44.0	44.0	88.0
	Very Important	36	17.8	17.8	100.0	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 39: Aspect of preference: shopping locally vs. high street shops

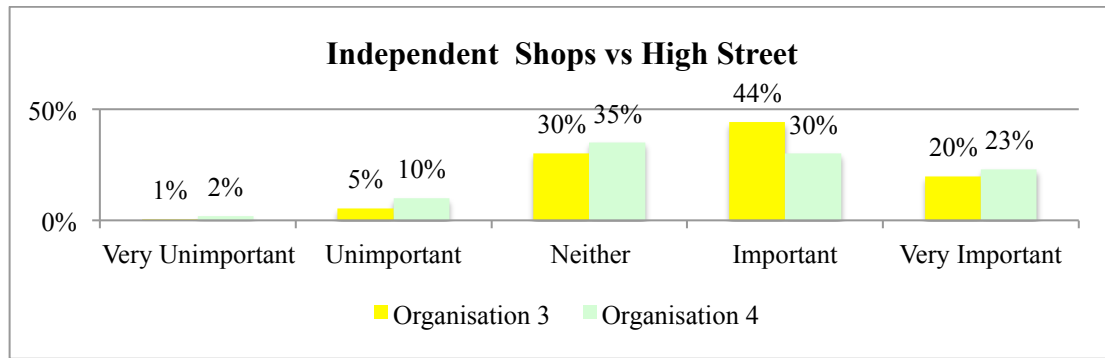
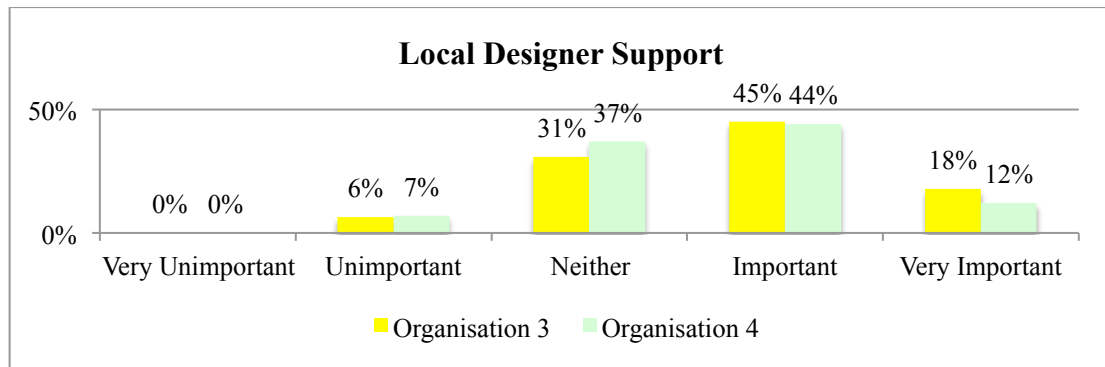


Table 40: Aspect of supporting local designers



A notable observation made was that the consumers interviewed stated they prefer local goods. To the question how they identify these products they agreed that there needs to be “a tag on it that said it was locally made” (CI2: 68) and “it has to be a little bit obvious” on the garment (CI1: 67). This implies two key things: firstly, consumers interviewed do prefer local products that are sustainable and organic (CI1: 67; CI2: 68), however they should have the same or similar price point as other products (CI2: 68; CI5: 70). Secondly, consumers seem to rely on eco-labels, which

indicates that certifications are beneficial, nevertheless they need to be easily understandable and straightforward. These issues raised link back to the company's overall communication strategy and how messages they (organisations) seek to transmit are received by their consumers.

The second question that was explored is: how familiar consumers are with standardisations used in the fashion industry and whether they have an influence on their purchasing decision. During the interviews, the participants were shown 18 eco-labels (Appendix 2) and asked to highlight which of these eco-labels they recognise and what they mean to them. Consumer 1 was able to identify the majority of eco-labels. The participant indicated that some of the eco-labels do have high brand recognition, such as the Fairtrade Sign, WWF, and the Carbon Trust, however “the down side is that [they] do not always stand for the necessarily best standards [...] [and] they may not be the most instructive label” (CI1: 67). She further highlights that “fair trade [...] and [...] good quality [...] [do not always go] hand in hand” (CI1: 67) and that there is no “one label now a days [that] hits all of these marks” (CI1: 67). She mentions, if there would be an eco-label that ticked all the boxes, she would be actively searching for this label, however the main aspects she shops for are a balance between quality and price (CI1: 67). Thus, she reconfirmed, that she is currently not necessarily considering eco-labels when purchasing clothes.

Consumer 2 highlights that she has not seen the majority of the eco-labels, but believes if a piece of clothing had one of these standards on them, it would change her purchasing decision. “Even though I have [not] seen them before, looking at [them] I can see [...] what they stand for” (CI2: 68). This implies that standards, for her, act as strong communication tools, which she associates with environmentally friendly production processes. This however, is slightly contradicting as it raises a philosophical question: How can you know what you do not know? Moreover, within the same part of the interview CI2 mentions that “if a piece of clothing was the same price [...] and had a label in it and looks the same like a high street one which did [not] have one of these, I would definitely buy the one with the label” (CI2: 68). This highlights that for CI2 price has a more prominent role as an influencer than an eco-label. This links back to observations made by various authors (Kardash, 1974; Ottman, 1992) highlighting that in case two products appear to be identical, the consumer will choose the (in this case) fashion item that has a lower environmental impact.

Consumers 4 and 5 mentioned that although they recognise various eco-labels they do not think they have anything to do with the fashion industry. They associated the Fairtrade Sign more with coffee and WWF with the protection of endangered species. When shopping, they are more concerned with the style of the product and the fit rather than having to seek out a product that has an eco-label in it, which would limit their choice (CI4: 69; CI5: 70).

Consumer 6 highlights that she only recognises the Fairtrade Sign and Oeko-Tex Standard in connection with the fashion industry, whilst she is aware of a couple of the other certifications, she would have not associated these with the fashion industry. She further mentions that she feels some of the eco-labels are very specific to the UK marketplace; since she is foreign they are not very familiar to her. When shopping for clothes the only standard she is looking for is the Oeko-Tex 100, as it indicates that the product has less harmful substances than its counter parts. Although this specific standard would influence her decision-making, she still buys fashion items, even if they do not have an eco-label on them (CI6: 71).

To sum up, the questionnaires and follow up interviews highlighted mixed feelings about eco-labels. On the one hand, participants seemed to feel that eco-labels are valuable, as they help them to identify products that are more environmentally friendly and fairly traded, but on the other hand the data presented also showed that consumers are not very familiar with the majority of standardisations that are used in the fashion industry. A commonality between the interviews conducted with the experts, the O/Ms, and the consumers is the fact that all of them recognise the Fairtrade Label.

A further observation made is that products, which have a standardisation, are associated with a premium price. Whilst some consumers are interested in purchasing garments that have an eco-label on them, they are not always aware of them. In this sense the contradictions presented in the section are of particular note, as they re-emphasise what has been stated in Chapter 2: eco-labels are confusing and not yet utilised to their full potential (Lohse & Wulf-Schnabel, 2000; EC, 2001a; Hanas, 2007; Horne, 2009). A further conclusion that can be drawn is that price is one of the main influencers in a consumer's purchasing decision process.

#### 4.2.4.2.3 Summary of findings

To conclude, the data concerning eco-labels has shown various key findings: Firstly, eco-labels in their current state are confusing. Chapter 2 and the findings of this PhD research have indicated that there is a need to harmonise eco-labels, making them *internationally* recognised standardisations. This would help official standardisations to gain more brand recognition and credibility, reduce the risk of becoming a barrier of entry, and help consumers in making a conscious environmental decision on purchasing a product (Org1I2: 57; EI(E): 61; EI(S): 66; CI2: 68). Thus, overcoming challenges that have been pointed out by eco-label opponents. Secondly, although some interviewees have voiced trust issues when it comes to eco-labels, the majority of the participants have seen standardisations in a more positive light. Moreover, various participants highlighted that a one-fits-all standardisation is desirable, thus rather than focusing on only one specific aspect of a company, the all-in-one eco-label would reflect all environmentally friendly and social aspects the company is covering.

Slightly contradictory findings are seen when it comes to actually providing an eco-label on garments: although experts and consumers alike indicating that they would like to see standardisations on fashion garments, under the premise that they can be easily identified and recognised (Org1I2: 57; EI(M): 63; EI(P): 65) they do not seem to be willing to pay a price premium. Moreover, a key issues that still remains is the question of not only which eco-label to choose, but also identifying what impact this standardisation has, in terms of its recognisability and availability for micro-organisations.

### 4.3 Sustainable fashion, eco-labels, and micro-organisations

Having analysed the data the last aspect that is investigated is the relationship between sustainable fashion, eco-labels, and focal organisations. Table 41 provides an overview on how the term ‘sustainable fashion’ links with existing standards.

Table 41: Sustainable Fashion And Eco-Labels

	Literature Review (LR)	Pilot Study (PS)	Organisations (O)	Experts (E)	Consumers (C)	Bluesign	WFTO	WWF	Soil Association	FSC	SA 8000	EU Ecolabel	Fairtrade Sign	Carbon Trust	GOTS	Labour Behind The Label	Made-by	Fair Wear Foundation	Oeko-Tex	IVN Naturtextil	Green Showrom	Esthetica
Forward thinking			✓																			
Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Ethical/sustainable design	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Ethically sourced																						
Meaningful, interesting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Local production	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Production techniques (recycling, upcycling, traditional techniques)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓												✓				✓	
Versatile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Promoting fairly traded, fair wages		✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Transparency (sourcing raw material, packaging, production process)			✓	✓	✓																	
Checks for harmful substances			✓	✓	✓																	
Long-term relationships (with stakeholders)			✓	✓	✓																	
Environmental standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Human rights/ working conditions		✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Community support (employment opportunity)		✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Financial sustainability			✓	✓	✓																	
(Independent, self-sufficient, viable)			✓	✓	✓																	
Renewable material, environmentally friendly material	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Renewable energy/ energy usage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Limited transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Fashion with conscience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																	
Most commonalities						O	E	✓	E/C	✓	All- LR	C	PS	✓	All	All	All- LR	O	O	O	O	PS+ O



The left hand side of the table summaries the terms used to describe sustainable fashion within Chapter 2, the pilot study, the organisations, the experts, and consumers. The last row highlights the commonalities between the individual definitions and the standardisations. A noteworthy observation is that three labels (WWF, FSC, and Carbon Trust) do not cover any aspects associated with sustainable fashion, whilst the GOTS and Made-by level seem to be the most compatible certifications. Moreover, aspects that the O/Ms associated with sustainable fashion are reflected in 10 out of the 18 certifications. There are various conclusions that can be drawn from the findings: Firstly, the standardisations presented in this PhD research cover a wide range of social and environmental aspects. However, in this specific context, the majority of eco-labels do not cover all aspects mentioned by the O/Ms, which poses the question whether there should be a one-fits-all label, or if the certifications available are a better option to cover specific aspects in the business process? In the same vein, the FSSD analysis of standardisations has highlighted that stakeholder involvement in the labelling criteria process is low. Thus, in order to make eco-labels more relevant to organisations, this PhD research suggests that the overall process of developing and designing an eco-label should focus more on stakeholder involvement, more specifically organisations (micro, small, medium, and large) and consumers, which is further investigated in Chapter 6.

Secondly, price and affordability of eco-labels have an influence on micro-organisations. Whilst various participants feel positively about standardisations, they also highlighted that these are not affordable. Continuing this train of thought and linking this back to the first point made: if a micro-organisation, which produces sustainable fashion, was to acquire eco-label(s) that demonstrate all of the benefits and aspects the garment brings to the consumer, they would have to acquire a minimum of three labels (e.g. GOTS, Fair Trade, and iVN) to cover seven out of 15 sustainable fashion criteria. This would than not only lead to the challenge of having to fit multiple symbols on one swing tag and/or sewing label, but also having to come up with the budget to acquire them.

Thirdly, standardisations may be confusing, not only for organisations that need to decide which certification to apply for, but also for consumers, who may not be familiar with every single eco-label in the market, thus not understand what the individual sign signals. This indicates that there is a potential to make eco-labels easier to use and understand, for both organisations and consumers.

Lastly, a further noteworthy observation was made: the O/Ms and experts highlighted that they (personally) had researched various eco-labels, but found it very time consuming, expensive, and not inclusive enough for their specific garment collections. None of the participants have considered contacting an intermediary organisation and/or eco-labelling body to ask for advice, guidance, and feedback. Thus, a suggestion that will be given to the participating micro-organisations is to consider doing exactly this: taking advantage of the expertise of labelling organisations. This is further looked at in Chapter 7, in terms of opportunities available to micro-organisations, which they might neither be aware of, nor realise they could utilise to their advantage.

In conclusion, a link between eco-labels, sustainable fashion, and micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry can be established, in that all three share various aspects in terms of social and environmental concern. However, thus far, this link has not yet reached its full potential. A suggestion made is that stakeholders involved in the green slow-fashion production or consuming sustainable fashion should be involved in the labelling criteria process, in order to establish a standardisation that satisfies all needs.

## Chapter 5: Corporate identity of micro-organisations

This chapter investigates the components of a micro-company's corporate identity operating in the green slow-fashion industry, as well as how sustainability is incorporated into these elements. Thus, this chapter focuses on objectives 2, 3, and 4:

- 2) To identify the key components of corporate identity within the two contexts;
- 3) To analyse how sustainability is incorporated into the elements of corporate identity;
- 4) To compare and contrast different practices utilised across the four focal companies in terms of communicating their corporate identity.

As stated in the Introduction the research findings were surprising in that the data highlighted that these micro-organisations do not have a corporate identity in the sense of frameworks such as the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003), the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test (Balmer, 2012), or the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012). Rather than simply creating a new standalone corporate identity framework, this research mapped and identified that the 'identity' of these micro-organisations is linked to their organisational processes. This chapter provides the foundations for the newly developed Micro-Identity Model that is discussed in Chapter 6.

This chapter provides a brief literature review, before introducing the themes that emerged from the data collection and concludes by addressing the role of sustainability within the findings presented and creates a model that highlights how these micro-companies are currently working and where corporate identity not only fits in, but could also be enhanced.

### 5.1 Brief summary of sustainability and corporate identity

Neither sustainability nor corporate identity are new phenomena, nor do they have a clear-cut definition (Pérez & del Bosque, 2012). Sustainability emphasises that current resources need to be protected in order for future generations to have the same opportunities as the current one (WCED, 1987). In this specific context, sustainability takes the relationship of a person with its environment (natural, social) into account (Seideman, 2008), which links to the aspects of the TBL (Elkington, 1994). On the other hand, corporate identity seeks to provide a solution to a challenge, thereby providing guidance to overcome obstacles (McAuley et al., 2007). Within this thesis corporate identity is defined "as the image the organisation [tries] to project to its target stakeholders and the way it present[s] itself to these groups" (Balmer et al.,

2007: 8). The following sections seek to identify where both corporate identity and sustainability feature within the various processes of micro-organisations.

## 5.2 Reflexivity

Throughout my research, I continuously asked myself the ‘so what?’-question; What will my research tell me? How can I ensure that I gain valid and rich data? The latter probed me to leave my interview questions broad, in order to learn as much as I could from the organisations: about their values, what is important to the O/Ms, how employees feel, and how these companies were established.

I undertook intense research with each of the organisations, which meant that I commuted to various places in the UK, for a period of approximately 3 months. As a phenomenologist it is vital to understand my role in the research project, as well as the effects my personal beliefs, values, and experiences had on the information I gathered. Although three months is a relatively short amount of time, I felt it was the appropriate length to get to know the individual employees and the O/Ms, as well as collect rich data sets. During the first weeks of the in situ research, I observed the working procedures, tried to establish relationships with individual stakeholders, and took part in their ‘rituals’, for example: having lunch together, attending networking events, and taking coffee breaks on a Friday afternoon. Having been able to simply ‘observe’ people and take part in their daily routines, before conducting the actual employee shadowing and interviews, I was better able to judge how much information was ‘enough’ and when the data collection reached its ‘natural saturation’. I was also able to establish good relationships, which enabled me to show my shadowing notes to the participants and ask them whether I portrayed their working day correctly, thus ensuring insofar as was possible, that my observations and impressions were not entirely subjective. This links back to what has been discussed in Chapter 3, in terms of gaining validity and portraying events in a way that is, whilst subjective, less biased.

I believe the fact that I am female and in my late twenties greatly helped in terms of gathering data. The majority of people I was working with were in my age group or older, which meant that I was treated as an equal, as someone who has similar interests and experiences, who can work independently, and enjoys similar activities as the participants. After having explained my research, participants felt

comfortable, as they were able to ask questions and understand the aim of my project. Furthermore, seeing them regularly over a three months period made many of the participants feel more 'at ease', which was highlighted in informal conversations. Moreover, the fact that I mentioned I am a university student helped to relate to the older participants in the research project, as they associated me with their children and/or grandchildren, who are/were in education. Thus, people were very sympathetic and, I would even go so far as to say that they were enthusiastic to be involved in my project, emphasising that they would hope someone would do the same for a member of their family. These commonalities acted as conversation starters, allowing me to bond over a variety of similar interests with the individual participants.

Having previously studied art, I was able to contribute to the more 'professional' and 'business' related conversations in the office. My art background enabled me to quickly pick up the industry jargon. I felt I was treated as an 'outsider' (someone who is not working in the fashion industry) with 'insider' knowledge (someone who is still able to join in subject specific discussions). I believe that this outsider/insider constellation helped to convince the individual O/Ms to participate in my research project: as they were assured I would not investigate or expose any company 'secrets', and was able to understand what was happening in the organisation and the industry, thereby contributing to conversations.

Throughout the data collection process, the aspect of sustainability in broader terms and in connection with people's organisations emerged from the data, through the way people were talking about their sourcing of raw materials, the way they 'do things around the organisation', the O/Ms' personal values and background. Thus, for me, it was important to incorporate this aspect into the final thesis and investigate what role sustainability plays within these micro-companies. It should be highlighted that throughout the data collection process I have not asked the individual stakeholders directly about their 'sustainability practices', 'sustainable fashion collections' or what they, as an organisation, do to reach 'sustainable futures'. This was purposefully done, in order to ensure rich research results, whilst also enabling the data to emerge in a more natural process. The only time the term 'sustainable fashion' was mentioned was at the end of the interview process and as a question in the consumer survey.

Before writing up my findings, I coded every piece of information I had gathered (Appendices 9.4 and 9.5). In the initial stage I looked through the

information, picked out key words and created descriptive headings. This procedure left me with a total of 600 ‘codes’. In order to narrow down these headings, I continuously looked through the data sets, searching for emerging clusters. This second round coding enabled me to establish 200 slightly more overarching themes. Although, at first, I tried to make my codes fit with components of existing corporate identity models, I realised that these ‘component themes’ are neither inclusive enough, but rather very restricting, nor does this approach compliment my philosophical stance taken in this research project. As a result I revisited the data and realised that my findings covered more than what an organisation stands for in the sense previous corporate identity model capture an organisation. Rather, I found a link between the micro-organisations’ identity and their organisational processes, which is discussed in the following sections.

## **5.3 Exploring the data**

### **5.3.1 Stage 1: from sourcing of raw materials to producing the garment**

#### ***5.3.1.1 The sourcing process***

A key theme that emerged from the data is that of sourcing materials. The data highlighted that the majority of participants source their raw materials in the UK, with only a few exceptions, including, but not limited to: Organisation 2, EI(E), EI(M), and EI(F). Organisation 2 differs slightly from the experts’ companies as O/M2 seeks to gain the majority of their fabrics from the UK. However, she states that she has not yet found a supplier for leather, which she currently imports from the EU (Italy), nor has she been able to find a UK supplier for her packaging material (plastic bags), that she currently imports from China. O/M2 states that while she would prefer to gain all the materials necessary to run her business smoothly within the UK, this is not a possibility at the moment, nevertheless she ensures that the imported raw materials do not contain any harmful substances, and – in the case of the plastic bags - are made from recycled materials that can also be recycled after use (Org2I35: 12).

As opposed to Organisation 2, EI(E), and EI(F) source all their raw materials from outside the UK. EI(E) highlights that she might not know the cotton farmers that produce their raw material, but all of their material is Fair Trade certified and sourced outside the UK. Throughout the interview she points out that her brand is pioneering

“in the world of fashion. [They were] one of the first companies to get a Fair Trade Mark for clothing [...] [which is] essential to the decisions that [they] make” (EI(E): 1). For her sourcing her raw materials from certified suppliers is more important than sourcing within the UK, as it is vital for EI(E) that “the cotton farmers get a better deal” (EI(E): 1).

For similar reasons, EI(F) sources her materials from both Nepal and Bali: to provide people in these countries with work opportunities and to ensure that they receive fair treatment in terms of working conditions and wages. She highlights that she has personal connections to Nepal and has done business there for the past 15 years. She mentions that she “work[s] with [bigger] companies, but [...] know[s] the individuals that are making the products. [...] [She] learn[ed] [...] Nepalese [...] [to] communicate with the people [...] and talk about [...] their concerns” (EI(F): 73). She feels very strongly about giving disadvantaged people work opportunities, which would have been how she got into the Balinese market: she sources her raw material from a factory that is managed by a close friend of hers, thus she can guarantee that the working conditions are good and in accordance with her company’s core values (EI(F): 73). From the interview it becomes apparent that for her helping people in developing economies, such as Nepal, is highly satisfying on a personal level. However, whilst both EI(E) and EI(F) source their materials overseas, they produce their garments within the UK.

EI(M) sources her fabrics both, from within the UK and abroad. She highlights that she gets her cotton textiles from suppliers that are Fair Trade certified, whilst the wool used in her creations is from Yorkshire. She emphasises that:

[T]he fabrics are coming [...] mostly from the UK, but there is a couple that [have] come from different places around India [...] which [...] [were] made in conjunction with different communities so it is benefiting communities and the lives of those people” (EI(M): 63).

Stated alternatively, EI(M) feels very strongly about sourcing her materials locally, however if they cannot be acquired from the UK, she ensures that her raw materials are ethically produced and workers receive fair treatment.

The majority of participants source their raw materials locally, from various sources, which include, but are not limited to cotton mills, second hand and charity shops, and vintage markets. An issues that arises with this sourcing method, especially when it comes to recycled and pre-loved material, has been highlighted in

Chapter 4, as the origin of these ‘raw materials’ cannot always be established. Thus, whilst the material might be ‘locally sourced’ from a shop or market within the UK, this claim might also be slightly misleading, as the fabric could have been produced overseas. To reiterate this point further, Figure 26 showed a visualisation of Organisation 1’s Spring/Summer collection, the grey and black skirt is made out of reclaimed material. The black jersey fabric was sourced from a local cotton mill, whilst the grey material was a pre-loved item that was upcycled. Due to the lack of labelling (sewing tags, certifications) on the grey second hand garment the origin of this ‘raw material’ cannot be established (ES). However, Organisation 1’s website claims that “all of the materials and workmanship involved in the production of [...] clothing is sourced local to our studio boutique” (Org1 website). The question that needs to be asked is: What classifies as being ‘sourced locally’ and what is associated with the term? To draw a parallel with what has previously been discussed in regards to using ‘ethically problematic’ raw materials (leather, polyester mixes), sourcing locally within this context could also imply that raw materials were produced in the UK. Thus, they have a lower carbon footprint compared to fabrics sourced from outside the UK, potentially contain less harmful substances, due to strict EU regulations, and were produced in a sweatshop free environment, in which workers receive fair wages and fair treatment. Whilst utilising pre-loved garments lessens the carbon footprint as the useful life of these items is extended, there is no guarantee that the product was not produced in a sweatshop. Similarly, designers of Organisations 3 and 4 face the same ethical issues, creating fashion collections through upcycling and recycling techniques.

Table 42: Codes relating to sourcing process

Codes	Findings
<b>Sourcing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Predominantly <b>locally</b></li> <li>- Material that cannot be sourced locally is <b>certified</b> or <b>tested</b> for harmful substances</li> <li>- Reasons for sourcing abroad: not being able to find products locally OR due to personal affiliations (helping communities)</li> <li>- <b>Locally sourced material: reclaimed, pre-loved, pre-owned materials</b></li> </ul>
<b>Differentiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thus far, differentiation can be seen in the sourcing process in terms of what materials are used</li> <li>- Participants highlight Fair Trade, and less harmful raw materials as important to them</li> </ul>



The issue of sourcing is further discussed in Chapter 6, linking it back to finding a common interpretation of the term *sustainable fashion* and providing suggestions on how to overcome these challenges. Table 42 provides a brief summary of findings so far.

### *5.3.1.2 Suppliers, micro-organisations, and the sourcing process*

The previous section on sourcing is strongly linked to the actual suppliers, as they are the ones providing the raw materials necessary for production. Within the production and sourcing processes the local aspect was mentioned as important. The experts indicated that they carefully select their supply partners: EI(M) emphasised “you can[not] cut corners, you can[not] get stuff manufactured cheaply” (EI(M): 74). This statement was made in the context of sourcing raw materials from suppliers and in more general terms the whole production process. Moreover, EI(E) stated that what they really “[want to] do is make clothing, which [...] treats everyone in the supply chain decently” (EI(E): 72). Thus, the experts highlighted that they seek to co-operate with like-minded suppliers and form a symbiotic relationship (EI(M): 74; Org1I2: 76).

In a similar manner, these aspects emerged dominantly in the four focal micro-organisations: they actively seek to build relationships with their suppliers, which are based on trust. The participants have indicated that they seek to strengthen and maintain their external relationships, which in this case focuses on the connection the micro-organisations have with the members of their supply chain. Whilst this theme features in all interviews, EI(M) and Organisation 1 were the only participants who elaborated on their relationship with their suppliers. Due to the nature of this research, the researcher did not further probe her participants to provide more information, other than what they were willing to volunteer.

Organisation 1 is slightly unique in that they impose limitations on themselves, whilst looking to create strong links with the local community. The promotional leaflet highlights that:

[Organisation 1] builds up close, **long-term relationships** with its suppliers, and values every member of its design and production team. [...] [E]veryone we work with is based within **a 20-mile radius** (Org1PA1: 82, emphasis added).

This implies that Organisation 1 is working with its external stakeholders on a long-term basis, thereby encouraging good relationships. The fact that suppliers are located “within a 20-mile radius” (Org1PA1: 82) provides the opportunity to talk to them in-person (Org1PA1: 82). To reiterate this point further, O/M1 emphasises that she is purchasing her raw materials and any other products necessary to run her business smoothly (e.g. ink cartridges, swing tags) from local companies. O/M1 mentions that she builds close relationships with other local businesses:

We get our ink from [...] the local cartridge world. [...] We [...] [ always] choose where we spend our money and it [will not] necessarily be the cheapest [...] ink. [The local cartridge world is] down the road. [...] I can go [and] have a chat to them. [...] We have got a really [...] good network of local businesses [that] we work with and we [are] always try[ing] [...] [to] buy from the [...] best source for what we want to do with the brand (Org1I2: 76).

Within this interview it becomes apparent that O/M1 feels it is important to support local businesses that are like-minded and independent. Throughout the conversation she highlights that it is key to support the community, keep local companies in business, build relationships, and at the same time reduce the carbon footprint, as she is able to walk to a lot of her local ‘necessities’ suppliers. Nevertheless, as was pointed out earlier O/M1 also orders parts of her raw materials (socks) online and

Figure 45: Tweed purse (Org1 Website)



drives an old car that is not environmentally friendly (ES; Org1I2: 4). Thus, whilst there are shops in the area that sell socks, she still orders them online, which contradicts her earlier statement about wanting to support local businesses. Moreover, she also highlighted that she continuously seeks new suppliers, and ensures that she gets the best value for money

(ES). For example, for the Autumn/Winter collection 12/13 Organisation 1 featured various tweed purses with a metal closing mechanism (Figure 45). She highlights that she had to search a long time for a supplier, who not only accepted her small batch size orders, but also lies within their price point. She emphasised that the fact that both of them were local businesses helped to get the deal, however, she also states that she will look for another supplier in the future, as the turnaround time to get the metal closing mechanisms fitted is approximately 4 weeks (ES).

Table 43 summaries the key findings of this section. The implications these relationships between suppliers and the organisations have, are further discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 43: Codes relating to organisation

Codes	Findings
Supplier Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Personal relationship</b> with suppliers seems to be favourable</li> <li>- Seek to support <b>local</b> businesses</li> <li>- Relationships build on <b>trust</b>?</li> <li>- Value for money seems to be an influencer</li> <li>- Organisation 1 shows evidence of keeping a close relationship with their suppliers</li> </ul>
Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Local</b> aspect features dominantly in selection of suppliers</li> </ul>

### 5.3.1.3 Production process

#### 5.3.1.3.1 Production site

Similarly to what has been previously mentioned in the sourcing process, the

Figure 46: Website (Screenshot Org2 Website), Swing-Tags, And Product Descriptions (CEH)



individual participants feel very strongly about having their production processes in the UK. The aspects of locally made, handcrafted, and ‘Made in the UK/England’ are featured dominantly in all micro-companies and communicated through: advertising material, product labelling, branding processes,

social media platforms, and company websites. It can be said that due to the media used, these aspects have a great exposure – anyone purchasing a product is immediately signified that the garments and accessories have been crafted in the UK. Figure 46 provides a visualisation of the themes featured

Figure 47: Advertising Organisation 2 highlighting Made In The UK Aspect (Org2 SNS, Photoshoped For Anonymity)



on the websites, product labelling, and product descriptions, which are highlighted through the blue circles.

This emerging theme of ‘locally made’ or ‘heritage’ as it is referred to in various interviews was mentioned by the majority of O/Ms as one of their “top priorit[ies] really” (Org2I37: 90). For them it is vital to know where and how garments are designed, manufactured, and produced, which becomes apparent as the O/Ms emphasise: “it is important that it is [made] in our own country” (Org2I37: 90) and “everything has to be made in [the company’s region]” (Org4I20: 17). Figure 47 shows that the ‘Made in the UK’ factor is communicated and emphasised in all their advertising material, by not only explicitly writing the text on the bottom, but also including a Union Jack flag in the top right corner. Moreover, digital communication in form of tweets not only mentioned the city’s name, but also emphasise that they are Made in the UK or locally:

#WhoMadeYourClothes from [Organisation1]? They [are] **all made here** in our studio in **CITY, England**, by Person A, Person B, Person C (Org1TF: 83)

**Made in the UK** – [Organisation2] **CITY**. KTL are delighted to be delivering our Fashion and Textile training here at (Org 2 website link) (Org2TF: 92)

Hi #sbswinnershour am so delighted to be able to join in the #SBSFamily keeping it **British and proud!** (Org2TF: 92)

A huge #ff for [@Organisation3]new #**CITY** collaborative shop in town, full of **local** talent, partly funded by @COMPANY scheme (Org3TF: 99)

The data show that one of the reasons the O/Ms feel very strongly about their place of production is that the UK is part of the EU and thus are subject to strict regulatory standards, which include, but are not limited to social aspects, in terms labour laws and health and safety regulations, and environmental aspects, such as prohibiting substances that are hazardous to humans and the natural surroundings (Org2I31: 87). These attributes were also mentioned within the O/Ms definition of ‘sustainable fashion’: making their production processes less harmful to the environment, by sourcing and producing locally. Contrary to what is being claimed on some of the company websites, various participants source their raw materials abroad, and/or from unknown resources, for example when utilising pre-loved garments. Thus, theoretically speaking, these micro-organisations are not always sourcing locally and “keeping a green balance” (Org2 website).

A further noteworthy observation is that the individual participants feel that quality and local production are strongly interlinked. Quality plays a key role at various different stages in the production process: Firstly, when sourcing the raw materials. Participants have highlighted that they trust their suppliers. Moreover, from the shadowing experiences it became apparent that when raw material arrives in “bin bags [...] [it] gets split [the next day] and all the machinists that are in [...] will see [these bags]” (Org1I2: 76) and start checking the material for faults and stains (ES). Secondly, when the garment is finished, each product undergoes various checks before the item leaves the premises. During these quality checks employees are looking for ‘shortcomings’ on the creations, such as missing decorations, faulty seams, or marks (Org1ES; Org2ES; Org3I7: 95; Org4I20: 100), thereby ensuring that each product leaves the premises in a perfect condition. However, on one occasion an upcycled dress although it showed a stain on the front, which could not be removed with liquid soap, was still distributed to a stockist. The employee made the O/M aware of the fault on the garment, who mentioned, due to timing and the need to send the order off, it would be acceptable to send the ‘faulty’ dress to the stockist (ES).

A further noteworthy observation is that although the O/Ms highlighted on multiple occasions that they trust their employees and have complete faith in them, the O/Ms still conduct spot-checks, especially when a large order is produced or the customer is particularly ‘difficult’ (Org1ES). To iterate this point further, within the first month of the researcher’s *in situ* research, a large order (2000 items) had to be produced within a short period of time. O/M2 realised during quality control that one of the garments, with an embroidered pony on it, was missing pieces of string for the horse’s hair. She asked the employees, who had been working on this specific order, and pointed out that the item was not yet complete. This was done in a ‘bantering manner’, with O/M2 pointing out that the horse would look ‘rather old’ and needed to be sent for a ‘wellness weekend’ (ES). O/M2 highlighted that mistakes can happen, which would be why quality checks are so important. It should be highlighted that no voice was raised nor was the employee blamed for an incomplete job rather the seamstress and O/M2 were laughing about the incident together (Org2ES). The friendship-like relationship is key in each of the organisations and is further discussed in later sections.

Furthermore, O/M2 highlights that “quality is very important and that [is] why we stay as we are, because you are in control. [...] Once you get too big [...] you

have [not] got your finger on stuff“ (Org2I35: 89). This quote was in relation to asking O/M2 whether she would ever consider outsourcing her production to Asia. From the interview it becomes apparent that O/M2 sees her company growing and expanding in the future, however she will not move her headquarters and production processes from the UK. Interestingly, whilst she would not relocate her production plant, she not only sources some of her raw materials from Asia, but also exports a lot of her finished products to China, Singapore, and Hong Kong, which is further discussed in section 5.3.3.

A further dominant pattern that emerges throughout the analysis and write-up phase is that of power and control. These cannot only be observed in Organisation 2, but across all focal companies. The role of power and control in conjunction with a micro-company’s corporate identity is discussed in Chapter 6.

#### 5.3.1.3.2 Design stage in production process

Before elaborating on the design process, a further key theme needs to be discussed first: finances. Participants highlighted that costs of materials and resources influence not only the price of a garment, but the actual product design. O/M1 highlights that due to the “price points we decided to go [with] [...] a lot of the work I [would] really like to do we can[not] do” (Org1I2: 76), as it is not financially viable to spend time on tailoring services and designing and cutting new patterns, as these do not contribute enough financially to keep the business sustainable (Org1I2: 76). O/M1 explains that pricing an item is challenging, as it does not only need to account for the material costs, the working hours invested, and the utilities used within the production process, but also needs to make a profit in order to pay wages and reinvest in the business (ES). O/M1 highlights on various occasions that although she enjoys creating new patterns and adding new designs to her collections this would take up a lot of time, which is not always feasible. Thus, Organisation 1’s collections feature the same styles in each collection with one or sometimes two new editions. This might also be one of the reasons, why Organisation 1 not only uses upcycling, but also recycling techniques. The latter allows for an already existing garment to simply be redecorated and then to be resold.

Moreover, as previously stated, Organisation 1 sources her raw materials within a 20-mile radius. This has various implications: Firstly, O/M1 needs to research



suppliers in the area that can deliver the amount of raw materials they need for their various collections; and secondly, the suppliers need to be within O/M1's price-range. An interesting observation that can be made is that O/M1 never gets the same raw material twice, for example, she might get five pre-loved jumpers in one delivery, whilst the next time she might not get any. This implies that aside from finances and local production, for Organisation 1 it is vital to work with a "team of [...] [creative people that has] [...] experience in sustainable fashion design, textiles upcycling and local fashion systems" (Org1 website). Stated alternatively, Organisation 1 is depending on workers and designers that are creative in nature and thus are able to transform any raw material into a new collection. A question that remains unanswered is in how far O/M1 allows other designers to be part of her brand's designs, which is discussed in section 5.3.2.

Similarly to Organisation 1, Organisation 2's products are also influenced by

Figure 48: Fast Sewing Technique (Org2 Website)



finances. The shoes were designed so that they can easily be created in a fast sewing technique (Figure 48). This implies rather than having to finish off one shoe at a time, seamstresses can complete individual parts of the shoe first, before putting them all together. The biggest advantage to this technique is that larger batch sizes of the same

design can be completed in shorter periods of time. Stated alternatively, the product is designed in a way that seamstresses can finish up to an average of 20 individual pairs per day, depending on the complexity of the pattern (ES).

The drawback of this working method is that at times it can feel like working on an assembly line (ES), as parts of the production process are rather monotonous and do not allow for creativity (ES).

Aside from finances, the local aspect also influences the individual garment collections. O/M1 describes her designs as being influenced by

Figure 49: Organisation 1's Collection (CEH)



“heritage” (Org1I2: 76), highlighting the need to “be proud of [the garment’s] provenance” (Org1PA2). Heritage is widely emphasised within their communication channels stating that each piece is unique and has a history of which the customer should be part. This element is further carved out through the use of *Made in England* on all of the brand’s labels stitched into the garments, the swing-tags, promotional material, and SNS (Figure 46).

O/M1 designs her own fashion lines, taking into account an upcycling technique, which allows for a USP. Individual garments are mostly one-offs (ES), whilst the “youthful, contemporary, vintage infused” style (Org1I6: 78) makes them “versatile [and] wearable” (Org1I4: 77). Figure 49 shows the Christmas 2012 collection, which was displayed and showcased at the brand’s studio. The jumpers on the right hand side were produced using previously owned garments and ‘revived’ with silk scarves, whilst the dress on the left hand side was designed by O/M1 herself utilising previously loved blouses and jersey material that was classified as ‘waste’ by a local manufacturer. Thus it can be said that Organisation 1 is setting itself apart through a unique design process: incorporating pre-loved garments and reclaimed materials into new items (Org1I2: 4, 76; Org1I4: 77; Org1I8: 79).

Organisation 2’s products are described as “bursting at the seams with fun, creativity and imagination” (Org2PA1) and ‘Made in the UK’ (Org2PA1). O/M2 mentions that although it might seem that the individual shoes are made on an assembly line (Figures 48 and 50 bottom), a closer look at the individual shoes shows that each product has a unique character, which results from the individual seamstress’ sewing style (Org2I21+23: 84). This is slightly contradicting to what has been previously stated, as some of the seamstresses feel that parts of the process do resemble an assembly line (ES). This is especially the case when larger orders come in, and workers have to sew the same pattern over and over again, which can be challenging at times. This is due to the fact that working on the same patterns is monotonous and not very stimulating (ES).

Figure 50: Organisation 2’s Products (Org2 SNS)

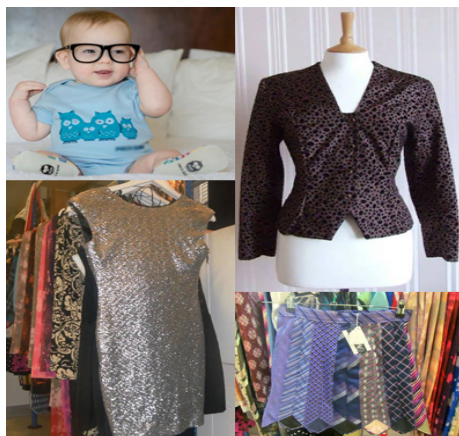




However, in the same vein, the seamstresses also state that each shoe is a new challenge, due to the detail on each product, which only becomes apparent when looking at the shoes more closely (Figure 50).

In a similar manner, the promotional material states that their products are made “sweatshop free” (Org2PA1) and “every piece is hand-made using only the finest quality materials and the closest attention to detail” (Org2PA1). Thus, it can be said that Organisation 2’s USP is focused on the ‘Made in the UK’ factor, whilst also highlighting that their products are of high quality and hand-made, in a place that historically has been famous for textile manufacturing (UoL, 2013; Org2I25+27: 9). Interestingly, the promotional material, similarly to the website, does not provide any information on the actual material utilised for the production process. Moreover, the products are seen to provide a great fit for children’s feet, as the design encourages a feeling of walking barefoot (Org2I39: 91). According to O/M2 one of their customers had conducted a piece of research that would highlight that their products can be recommended by orthopaedic specialists as shoes that promote healthy feet (Org2 SNS). A noteworthy observation is that this feedback was posted on their social media accounts, where they have approximately 4,800 followers (Org2 SNS), and post updates on a daily basis, but not publicised on their official website. Two potential reasons can be provided for this, firstly their SNS only link each other (Twitter and Facebook), but not necessarily back to the company’s website. Secondly, whilst this feedback provided is interesting and could potentially influence someone’s purchasing decision, O/M2 only has the sender’s word that this has indeed been researched. Thus,

Figure 51: Organisation 3’s Products (Org3 SNS)



sharing it on a SNS as ‘customer feedback’ might be seen as doing no harm, rather than posting it on the website, where it could be a misleading claim.

Organisations 3 and 4 differ slightly from the non-customer facing companies, as they are co-operatives, thus a conglomerate of various creative designers. Within both co-operatives however, each designer also prides themselves with the heritage theme.

Similarly to Organisation 1, Organisation 3’s designers also produce one-off fashion pieces, which are seen to be unique and different from the high street (Figure 51) (Q64Org3: 114). This has further been

confirmed through the survey, with consumers stating that Organisation 3 is “a different kind of shop from the high street” (Q16Org3: 109) and it is “better than in the usual high street shops” (Q23Org3: 110). “I like the choice at this store, because it differs from most high street varieties” (Q48Org3: 111) and it “made me feel like there should be more shops like this, too many people shop in H&M and TopShop [...]. Variety is the spice of life” (Q68Org3: 115).

A noteworthy observation that can be made is that the majority of designers in Organisation 3 have their production workshop at home: “I work on my own at home, in my basement” (Org3I3: 94), and although she mentions that she “do[es not] have a window [and] all [her] lights keep blowing” (Org3I3: 94), she believes in what she is doing and is continuously developing her designs and patterns. Similarly designer I1 emphasises that she “did [not] even mean to start a business in the first place” (Org3I1: 93) and simply started to make her creations from her own home. These examples highlight that there is more to the initial production and design process: a pattern that emerges is that the majority of designers in Organisation 3 started their business as a hobby, and getting more serious about it. They see Organisation 3 as an outlet for their creativity that allows them to showcase their products in a city centre location, as they are unable to afford a retail space by themselves (Org3I3: 94). Stated alternatively, one can observe that the individual designers not only have a passion for their creations, but also believe in their products and can see themselves growing in the future.

Similar to Organisation 3, Organisation 4 emphasises the unique opportunity created by having various designers located in one store (Org4I22: 101). The creations range from children’s and young adolescence clothes to simple aprons and T-shirts (Figure 52). The consumers’ reaction to products sold in-store show great resemblance to what has been previously mentioned: it was emphasised that “[consumers are] looking at things that [they] can[not] get elsewhere” (Q208Org4: 123), “[they] loved to see the unique products available”

Figure 52: Organisation 4’s Products (Org4 SNS Account)



(Q231Org4: 124), and “[they were] looking for a particular item [for themselves] and found the ideal piece: unique selection of goods: interesting, and quirky” (Q234Org4: 125).

To conclude this section, thus far the micro-organisations emphasise the local aspect. The theme of power and control emerged as a dominant pattern, indicating that the O/Ms feel outsourcing is not an option, as their values and beliefs might not be implemented in the same manner as they are when they (O/Ms) are on site. The local aspect is also highlighted on the individual in- and on-garment labels. Moreover, a pattern that emerged and was briefly touched upon is that fact that each designer started his or her business idea as a hobby. The initial idea, as will be highlighted, was strongly influenced by their educational background and surroundings. Their passion for their product inspired them to create garments and accessories on a larger scale and sell them to the public. Organisations 1 and 2 have managed to establish businesses that employ various people, whilst the designers in Organisations 3 and 4 are currently taken these companies as a stepping-stone to develop their business further and potentially be able to open their own shop in the future.

#### 5.3.1.3.3 Values relating to production process

The overall data emphasise that the founding history and the founders’ values have a strong influence on the organisation as a whole. In this manner, participants seek to implement *sustainable processes* into their business, which help to reduce their impact on the natural environment. It became apparent that the O/Ms were “always thinking about [...] the impact” (Org114: 5) their garments and brand have on the environment, in terms of their end products and their daily organisational processes. Moreover, participants indicated that aspects of being ‘ethical’ and or ‘sustainable are vital to them on both a personal and on a business level (EI(E): 1; EI(M): 2; EI(S): 3).

A noteworthy observation made is that not only the majority of experts, but also three out of four O/Ms developed their brand as part of a university degree, with O/M4 being the only participant who did not establish her brand this way. O/M4 highlights that she never had the chance to go into higher education, but was now considering a degree course at a fashion college. She explains that she established her brand out of a need to produce garments for ‘curvy people’ like herself, which are fashionable, affordable, and durable (Org4I28: 103).

O/M1 mentions that she “started upcycling and recycling all through [her] BA” (Org1I2: 76) and developed her brand throughout her Masters at the London College of Fashion (Org1I2: 76). She highlights that she got her first ‘exposure’ to sustainable fashion production when she was 16 working for a company in London:

[T]hey did a lot of [...] work with social enterprises [...] in Africa. [...] They were really [...] pioneering and I worked for them and I just thought that [is] how fashion should be done. [...] I was at such a young and impressionable age and I guess [...] I [have] always been quite independent (Org1I2: 6).

This experience and her university education influence her creations and motivates her to constantly develop her collections (Org1I2: 76). I4 highlights that all employees come from “different style backgrounds [...] [hers is] gothy and [O/M1’s] has been more [...] punk and rave” (Org1I4: 77). She emphasises that O/M1 “want[s] people who have different styles” (Org1I4: 77) to be part of the brand, as this allows to create more unique pieces, providing consumers with the opportunity “to say something about [...] themselves” (Org1I4: 77). This links back to Chapter 2, emphasising that garments can be signifiers for people to express their personalities and feeling of belong to a specific social group (Jegethesan et al., 2012). In the same vein, Organisation 1’s garments can be described as “versatile” (Org1I4: 71) and infused by sustainable production techniques, such as upcycling and recycling. O/M1 mentioned that she sees her brand as a “go to brand” (Org1I2: 76) that is ‘affordable’ and caters for the needs of various customers. Thus, it can be said that “versatility” (Org1I4: 77) and constant product development (Org1I2: 76), as well as being able to express her personality in the garments, have been part of the brand’s history and identity.

O/M2 unlike O/M1 does not have a fashion background, but rather studied graphics and web design. O/M2 thought of her business concept after having:

[H]ad to make a shoe out of [...] eatable products [which was part of a university assignment]. [...] [She] thought [...] [she] made a shoe that somebody could wear that was eatable [...] why not make [...] this as a bit of a business (Org2I37: 90).

O/M2 emphasises that she enjoyed working on this ‘eatable’ project, as it provided her with the opportunity to experiment with materials that are unusual for this specific production process. She mentioned that she would have been unable to stop thinking about how to transform this idea into a business plan (Org2I37: 90). Although the idea was set aside after her degree course finished, O/M2 started working on it again after

she had her first child. Her first creations were inspired by bedtime stories she read to her daughter (Org2I25+27: 85), thus one of her first products was a shoe shaped like a lion's face. The 'prototypes' were worn by her children only, but became popular amongst her family and friends, which initiated developing a business concept to produce larger batch sizes.

Within Organisations 3 and 4 several designers have a degree in the field of 'Fashion and Innovation' and 'Fashion and Environment', which focus strongly on "the concepts of sustainability and sustainable fashion design" (LCF, 2013). Similar to O/M1 and O/M2 these makers used their research projects as an outlet for their creativity, which led to developing their brands. The designers highlight that they choose their fabrics (e.g. denim, bamboo, organic cotton) carefully and use predominantly upcycling techniques to create their fashion lines (Org3I3: 94; Org3I7: 95; Org3I11: 97). To reiterate this point further, O/M3 specialises in altering and upcycling vintage garments. She highlights that she sources her fashion items in local vintage shops and at fairs. She states that the upcycling projects in her BA would have been the most enjoyable ones for her, which would be the reason why she is utilising vintage material to create new garments.

Overall, there are four key findings across the focal organisations: Firstly, a variety of people have highlighted that they did not mean to create an actual business, but rather had an initial idea, which was predominantly influenced by their educational background, and experimented with this idea as a hobby (Org2I37: 90; Org4I28: 103). Moreover, each O/M states that their company is a part of themselves: they put a lot of themselves into the organisation (Org1I2: 76; Org3I7: 95; Org4I20: 100) and with the moral support of friends and family and an entrepreneurial spirit established the individual case organisations themselves (Org3I1: 93; Org3I3: 94).

Secondly, participants highlight that they ensure that all tags, brochures, and flyers are either made of recycled material and/or timeless in nature (Org1PA1; Org2PA2). From the data it becomes apparent that the companies seek to limit their print material, switching to online methods where possible. Informal conversations have also highlighted that the O/Ms aim to reflect their companies' values in all aspects of their business: being a 'local, British Made' brand, 'sustainable', 'ethical', and 'unique'.

Thirdly, each company has recycling facilities, strictly dividing their 'waste materials' into recyclables, waste, and those that can still be used for other purposes

(Org1I2: 4; Org1I6: 78; ES). Whilst this is not a new revelation, as there are rules and regulations guiding the recycling process, these micro-companies seek to collaborate with other creative people, in order to reduce the 'waste' that actually ends up in landfill. For example, O/M1 highlights that they collect even the smallest pieces of fabrics and give these to a local card maker, who uses the material for her creations (ES). This, although happening on a smaller scale, shows similarities to the collaboration with Tesco and *From Somewhere* (Pasquinelli, 2012b). Moreover, this finding shows a strong link with a further pattern that evolved in this PhD research: community involvement, which is discussed in section 5.3.1.5.2.

Similarly, Organisation 2 is also very keen to use all their materials in the most efficient way possible. O/M2 states that they bought metal shapes, which were specifically designed for the company. These shapes allow punching the basic shapes out of the leather, thereby leaving hardly any 'waste material' (Org2I31: 87). Although some of the waste material is re-used, the shadowing has also shown that the majority of the cut-off material created from punching the soles and the waste products created when sewing the hemlines end up in landfill.

As opposed to Organisation 2, Organisations 1, 3, and 4 utilise upcycling and recycling techniques in their garment production (Appendix 12, lines 5, 76, 78, 95, 102), which implies that materials that may have ended up in landfill are reused, thus their actual 'usefulness' has been extended. Whilst theoretically speaking this complements what has been highlighted in the interpretation of 'sustainable fashion', practically speaking the designers still cannot reuse all materials. O/M1, for example, when receiving her deliveries throws out about one fifth of the material, as she highlights the textiles are already too thin and would break shortly (ES). Moreover, as mentioned previously Organisation1 takes on interns on a regular basis. O/M1 seeks to provide the interns with a hands-on approach. During the in situ research a new employee's tasks was to cut patterns, due to her inexperience she did not place the patterns in the most efficient way on the textiles, which resulted in a lot more 'waste materials' than would usually be the case (ES). Although O/M1 highlighted that they collect all textile waste products for a local card maker, in this specific case, the material was binned (ES). No further explanations of why they were not kept were given.

Lastly, all O/Ms have indicated that - where possible - they use green energy, energy saving light bulbs, and resources that are produced in the UK (Org1I2: 76; Org3I7: 95). Their reasons for using these ‘green’ resources are to:

- Lower the carbon footprint by sourcing locally (Org1I2: 4, 76);
- Encourage local production and thus, support the local economy (Org2I25+27: 85; Org3I7: 95);
- Establish a financially viable business (one that is independent and self-sufficient) that is linked to the country’s history (ES)

Interestingly, Organisation 2 is the only company who ‘owns’ their premises, in terms of being able to freely choose their electricity suppliers. Organisations 2, 3, and 4 are paying utilities included in their monthly rent, which implies that they cannot switch providers. Thus, whilst they might seek to use ‘green’ energy, this might not always be feasible and/or available to them. It can be said that whilst the participants would like to utilise *sustainable resources*, they also admit that “I mean I do [not] do everything perfectly eco-friendly at the moment, [nevertheless] I would [not] do any less than I do already” (Org3I3: 94). The key findings of this section are summarised in Table 44.

Table 44: Codes relating to production process

Codes	Findings
<b>Visual Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Local</b> aspect promoted on labels</li> <li>- Tags and/or descriptions on all products</li> <li>- <b>Made in UK</b> or <b>region</b> promoted strongly</li> <li>- <b>Heritage</b></li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular quality and control checks, making sure products are up to standard</li> </ul>
<b>Quality &amp; Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on treating everyone in the supply chain well</li> <li>- Important to O/Ms to highlight that products are manufactured <b>locally</b> – do not want to outsource</li> <li>- Promote Made in the UK</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raw materials are either sourced locally (where possible) or internationally</li> <li>- Participants feel strongly about ‘knowing’ where their materials come from – emphasis the ethical aspect</li> <li>- Seek to be environmentally friendly within all organisational processes</li> <li>- Self-imposed limitations on sourcing process</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Local</b> aspect</li> <li>- Sweatshop free</li> <li>- Unique</li> <li>- Versatile</li> <li>- Different from high street</li> </ul>
<b>Influencers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and production influenced by O/Ms educational background</li> <li>- O/Ms see their business as an extension of themselves</li> <li>- Tone of voice in interviews highlight that each O/M is passionate about their brand</li> <li>- <b>Creativity</b> emerges as strong theme</li> <li>- University, work experience</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost and pricing influencers of design</li> <li>- Fast sewing techniques</li> </ul>

### *5.3.1.4 Stakeholder integration into production process*

#### 5.3.1.4.1 Employee engagement

A theme that emerged dominantly throughout the main data collection stage is that of value co-creation, which links with stakeholder involvement in the production process. The O/Ms highlighted on multiple occasions that they work together with their employees, with the goal of improving their collections by adding value. This can be observed more so in Organisations 1 and 2, rather than Organisations 3 and 4. A reason for this is that the latter two are co-operatives, thus the individual designers create their collections by themselves rather than one ‘joint collection’, as is the case in Organisations 1 and 2.

Across the focal cases, the managers are interacting similarly with their internal stakeholders. Employees highlight that communication can best be described as “constant” (Org1I4: 77). O/M1 emphasises the importance of working with employees by “really encourag[ing] people to bring ideas forward for the business. [...] I guess the more people that work for you [...] feel like they [are] [...] shared ownership of the business” (Org1I2: 76) the more commitment can be seen. This implies that employees are more motivated and work harder for the common good of the company if they feel part of the organisation and the brand. This is also highlighted in their company leaflet stating that Organisation 1 is ‘valuing each member of the team’ (Org1PA), which shows that O/M1 “look[s] to the people that work here for advi[ce]” (Org1I2: 76), making them “part of the process [...], [however, O/M1 is] in charge of the finance of the business” (Org1I2: 76) and thus, makes the final decision. This aspect is reconfirmed by one of the employees:

Yeah I do [feel part of the brand] [...] already and I have not been here for that long. [...]. It [is] really nice, it is very relaxed and it [is] more about collaborating. [...] I feel like from being here I [have] learned that [...] if you want to succeed in an industry you [have] got to speak out to different areas of the creative industry and [...] work together (Org1I6: 78).

Moreover, O/M1 believes that she utilises a collaborative style of leadership, “it [is] not really top-down, it is not really like I say how it goes” (Org1I2: 76). She emphasises that her staff are involved in the business processes and trusted to fulfil tasks in an independent manner without any supervision (ES). On the other hand, one employee emphasises:



[I]t [is] frustrating, [...] whenever I [am] doing my hand sewing of the hand warmers or the elbow patches [...] and O/M1 will say ‘oh no... that needs done again’ [...] and I just have to un-pick everything and [...] you know you are confident in your own skills. [...] And what [is] wrong with it? They [are] perfectly fine, [...] it looks fine (Org1I10: 80).

Thus, it could be said that although ideally O/M1 wants to have a collaborative approach, due to Organisation 1 being her brand, she wants to ensure that it is up to her standards.

The data shows that O/M1 occasionally involves staff members in decision-making processes, even if only for the sole purpose of gaining new ideas for the organisation. In other words, O/M1 collaborates with employees when it comes to design and product related queries (ES), but makes the decisions relating to the business and branding process herself (ES). This highlights that O/M1 trusts the employees with various responsibilities (e.g. choosing fabrics, prioritising orders, suggesting improvements on garments, altering patterns when necessary), which is positively perceived by the workforce (Org1I2: 76; Org1I8: 79). O/M1 uses the metaphor of “worker bees” (Org1I2: 76) to describe her employees, emphasising that from the outside operations might seem chaotic, but on the inside everyone is aware of their tasks and everyone is constantly communicating (Org1I2: 76). Moreover, Organisation 1 was described as a support network: a “friendship circle of creative people, [...] a network where everyone supports each other” (Org1I8: 79). O/M1 sees her employees as a focus group that represents her target audience, and thus they are able to provide valuable feedback on her products (Org1I2: 76). Stated alternatively, employees are encouraged to bring their ideas forward, which are then taken into consideration, if they are feasible and financial viability. However, the final decisions stay with O/M1 (Org1I2: 76).

To reiterate this point further, the engagement and commitment described by O/M1 can be observed in terms of workers coming to the studio earlier (before 11am when the company officially opens), in order to finish off orders. However, one employee mentioned that, at times, she feels there is no ‘shared ownership’, but rather O/M1 utilises a ‘top-down’ approach. I10 mentions a product photo-shoot that happened only one-week prior to the interview in the premises. The employee suggested going outside, as the autumn colours would match the mittens, and provide the consumer with ideas on how to wear the items. O/M1 stated this idea would not be followed through, as all photo-shoots are inside the studio, taken at the same spot with

the same background. O/M1 mentioned she wanted all pictures used for the website and catalogues to be coherent. Whilst the reason for O/M1's rejection of the idea links to the importance of a coherent brand image and visual identity, the employee highlights that she feels O/M1 only takes the opinion of some employees into account, but not all. She emphasises that at times she feels as if she "was just coming [into work to] do the cleaning, wash the dishes, brush the floor, and sew a few things" (Org1I10: 80), which made her feel as if she was not trusted and untalented. The employee states: "I [am] talented, I [am] skilled, I know what I [am] doing" (Org1I10: 80). For her this feeling changed only about 3 months prior to this research project, when O/M1 asked for her help and expertise on screen-printing. I10 highlighted that this was a turning point in their relationship, and she felt she could not only contribute to the garment collections, but also was appreciated (Org1I10: 80). Interestingly, although the employee was dissatisfied with the situation, in the same vein she emphasised that she "would work here every single day if O/M1 could pay me a [full-time employment] salary, no question about it. I would love it [...] I would be [...] whistling on the way to work" (Org1I10: 80).

A further example of employee involvement is the fact that each day the employees in Organisation 1 and O/M1 eat together, which is referred to as 'family lunch' (Org1ES). This time is utilised to talk about various personal matters and issues arising in the business (Org1I2: 76). The fact that business processes and updates, which include, but are not limited to, orders that need to be created, changes on the website that have or will be taking place, and photo-shoots that are being posted on the company's blog (Org1I2: 76; ES), are discussed over lunch, provides the employees with the feeling of being part of the business and the daily processes (Org1I6: 78; Org1I10: 80). These 'informal' discussions are characterised as "open communication with people, [which is] beneficial, [...] because you need to be in a position where you can be honest with each other about stuff" (Org1I4: 77).

Although O/M1 highlights that communication is open and running smoothly, I10 feels that this is not always the case, especially when it comes to allocating work. The employee mentions that "it [is] a bit frustrating whenever you kind of sit around and do nothing" (Org1I10: 80), because O/M1 did not allocate jobs to people when they arrive at the studio. She says that O/M1 also forgets to mention new orders that are coming in, or projects that need to be finished. Although the 'family lunch' should

be utilised to discuss current projects, O/M1 does not always remind people what jobs are unfinished and rarely lets someone start a new task without her being there (Org1I10: 80). This links back to the theme of power and control, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Organisations 1 and 2 take on a similar approach: O/M2 has monthly one-on-one meetings with her employees, which provides them with the opportunity to (Org2I29: 86):

- a) Highlight if they need any support, which would help them succeed and improve their work;
- b) Provide feedback on products and designs; And
- c) Contribute suggestions on how to improve the workplace and the business.

From the interviews with the workers, it becomes apparent that they appreciate the openness of O/M2 and believe that they can share any ideas, suggestions, and feedback they may have. The workforce believes it is a good fit between them and O/M2 (Org2I29: 86).

In an informal conversation O/M2 highlights that her seamstresses provide valuable feedback when it comes to the actual shoe's design and the feasibility of new patterns, especially in terms of being able to manufacture the product quickly and efficiently. O/M2 mentioned that they reduced the amount of new patterns that they are bringing out per annum, which also includes brand extensions. Thus, it can be said, whilst seamstresses are encouraged to voice their feedback on patterns and designs, the actual 'say' is limited, as there are hardly any new patterns introduced (ES). Furthermore, one of the seamstresses mentions that she retired a few years back and only started working at Organisation 2 to live out one of her hobbies: sewing. For this employee is not important what she creates, as long as she can sew, which implies that for her getting actively involved in the brand is not vital (ES). On the other hand I29 emphasises that O/M2 is always open for suggestions and takes any ideas for new patterns and designs into account (Org2I29: 86).

In summary, it can be said that employees are engaged and incorporated into the organisations to varying degrees. The O/Ms seek their workforce's opinion and expertise in various matters, however, it is the O/Ms who make the final decision. Nevertheless, the data shows that the production and design process leave room for feedback loops, in which employees can voice their opinion and suggest changes to improve not only the products, but also the production process as a whole. Figure 53

provides a visualisation of this emerging theme, which is discussed in Chapter 6. Table 45 provides a brief summary of the findings thus far.

Figure 53: Integration of employees into production process - value co-creation

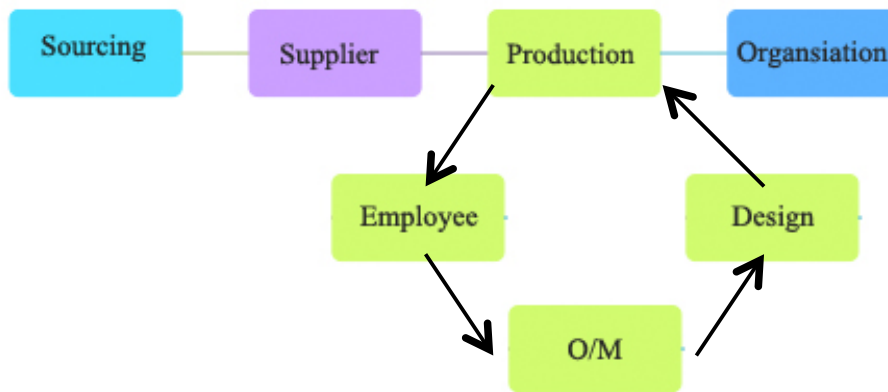


Table 45: Codes Relating To Employee Integration Into Production Process

Codes	Findings
<b>Management style</b>	- Collaborative management style in terms of asking for advice and feedback visible - Staff encouraged to engage in organisation - At times employees feel style is more top-down rather than bottom-up
<b>Employee Integration</b>	- Can bring forward ideas and suggestions - O/M involves employees when expertise is needed - By incorporating field of expertise into business organisation serves as outlet for creativity
<b>Communication</b>	- Feedback loops emerge: Employees co-create design - Can bring forward suggestions on how to improve product/techniques

#### 5.3.1.4.2 Community engagement

A further group that is involved within the production process, in a slightly more indirect manner, is the ‘community’ at large. Community involvement in this case includes providing workshops in the community for members of the public and help fellow and/or upcoming artists to showcase their work. Whilst every company, no matter what size, usually gets involved with the local community due to CSR regulations, the motivations behind the involvement and the activities provided in these specific micro-organisations seem to differ. Each of these micro-companies seeks to create new opportunities for people, products, and the natural environment.

Organisation 1 organised a “Spring Fashion Festival” in April 2012, where the brand took the opportunity to promote their garments at their studio, whilst also encouraging other ‘sustainable brands’ to join in the event and provide the consumers

with a fashion show, showcasing their collections (Org1PA2). Thus, Organisation 1 seeks to help upcoming designers to showcase and present their work. This provides ‘newcomers’ with the opportunity to work alongside a fashion brand that has operated in the industry for nearly 10 years, whilst the organisation gains a positive reputation within the creative industry scene in the city. Although newcomers were provided with this great opportunity, O/M1 took commission for any garment that was sold during the fashion show (ES).

Moreover, Organisation 1 acts as an outlet for people’s creativity, highlighting that a lady she met at a workshop is now making crochet collars “for us, and she loves

Figure 54: Summer Dress In Crochet (Org1 Website)\_ (Picture has been cropped to remove parts of the background and anonymise model)



it, because it is a really good outlet for her creativity” (Org1I2: 76). These individual creative pieces are incorporated into the brand’s fashion

collection. Moreover, O/M1 is very active with the community, working together with community centres (Org1I2: 76) and local makers (Org1I8: 79). During the in situ research O/M1 was contacted by a local knitting and crocheting society discarding of various sample pieces due to relocating into smaller premises. The lady who contacted Organisation 1 emphasised that she does not want the design pieces to go to waste. O/M1 not only incorporated these crochet pieces into her newest collection (Figure 54), but also established a relationship with this society, which provides Organisation 1 with more pieces, and the society members with the opportunity to create and practice

crochet patterns (ES). O/M1 highlights that the community involvement provides a unique opportunity for her brand (Org1I2: 76):

- Getting new ideas for creations, in terms of style and techniques;
- Creating a unique story to the individual garments;
- Providing designers and makers with an outlet for their creativity.

Organisation 1 is involved in various activities ranging from pop-up stands at University Fresher’s Fairs to attending UK festivals, to showcasing at fashion events and providing fashion related workshops (Org1I2: 76; Org1TF: 83). O/M1 classifies her company as a “go to brand” (Org1I2: 76) for sustainability, which means that it provides information on the topic of ‘sustainability’ and how to revitalise one’s

wardrobe. Stated alternatively, the events aim to encourage participants to reduce their fashion consumption, reuse pre-loved materials, and recycle pre-owned garments to create new revitalised items. O/M1 emphasises repeatedly that through these activities she seeks to educate people about sustainability without ‘preaching’ to them. Thus, O/M1 seeks to ‘educate’ her customers about this topic, by increasing their knowledge and awareness of sustainable fashion. The term educate was put in quotation marks, as O/M1 only informs her consumers about issues and concerns she perceives to be related to sustainable fashion. Organisation 1 offers various workshops, which were designed and created by O/M1 herself, and range from (Org1I2: 76; Org1PA2):

- Upcycling workshops, which enable consumers to learn how to create new products out of old ones;
- Tailoring classes, which allow participants to learn how to alter their clothes;
- Swop-shops, which provide people with the opportunity to exchange their unwanted clothes for ‘new’ previously owned fashion items.

These workshops take place at Organisation 1, in local schools, community centres, or the local arts college (Org1 website). The only free events offered by Organisation 1 are those taking place in schools, all other workshops are subject to participation fees, which range from £2.50 to join the swop-shop event to £30 for one-on-one upcycling workshops (Org1 website). Although the swop-shop events used to be free, O/M1 highlighted in an informal conversation that they had to charge people to ensure that they would not simply bring old clothes with them that cannot be worn, but rather take ‘unwanted’ items, which, as a system, seems to be working. O/M1 states that she is keen to get feedback from the workshop participants, as she believes it helps her to provide them with a greater experience the next time (ES). O/M1 highlights that they also utilises digital communication to gain an insight into their consumers’ opinions about the brand generally, what offers they would like to see, what products they like best, and if there are any aspects of the brand that might need improvement (Org1ES; SNS). For this reason, Organisation 1 posts regular polls on their SNS enabling their consumers to vote for patterns and designs used in previous years, which they would like to see again in the next collection (Org1ES; SNS).

Similarly, Organisations 3 and 4 emphasise that they meet a lot of their designers at arts fairs, providing them with the opportunity to showcase their work in a city centre location (Org4I22: 101). I24 mentions that without O/M4 she would be

unable to sell her creations in public spaces. She highlights that she already struggled to afford fairs, as these are expensive and, due to their locations, not always attractive. Moreover, various designers are coming into the company's physical store providing demonstrations of their fashion creations – encouraging people to join in the workshops and buy locally made products (ES).

O/M3 goes even further and uses the store as a surface for creativity. She encouraged a local graffiti artist to spray-paint the stairwell leading to the men's section, whilst another artist designed the store's front door sign free of charge. From conversations it becomes apparent that this is a mutual beneficial relationship: the artists have the opportunity to showcase their products and creations for free (ES). Leaving their business cards and contact details in-store allows for any person interested in their work to contact them, and thus they feel it is a great way to advertise their services. On the other hand, O/M3 gets the artists' work free of charge.

Moreover, Organisations 3 and 4 provide similar activities to Organisation 1, they continuously organise events in-store, which are designed to cater for all age ranges: special workshops and activities for children are planned, food-tasting session from local producers are organised, and young musicians employed to entertain the consumers. The O/Ms encourage their designers and full-time staff to take charge of the events and/or bring forward ideas for future workshops. The O/Ms furthermore highlight that they are always participating in these events, as it provides them with the opportunity to communicate with their consumers. O/M3 highlights that these happenings also allow them to gather information and gain an understanding of what consumers would like to see in the future, how they feel about the company and their products offered, and are able to seek feedback and recommendations.

Overall, the O/Ms state that their initial idea behind setting up the individual businesses was to provide young designers with a platform that allows them to showcase their creations to a wide audience. Furthermore, each O/M is involved in various community projects: for example, Organisation 3 organised a charity event in November 2013 to raise funds for the local cathedral. O/M3 encouraged all designers to donate some of their creations for a good cause, which could be sold on the day. Moreover, she contacted local bands, dance groups, and cafes to provide entertainment on the day. O/M3 highlights that similar events run on a continuous basis (ES).

Organisation 2 seeks to involve their external stakeholders by asking them to post pictures of the products they purchased on their SNS and write reviews. This way, O/M2 not only hopes to gain feedback on the products, but also encourages a conversation and an interest in the brand itself. This was encouraged and accompanied by give-away competitions, which were discontinued, as they were not financially feasible to keep up (Org2I39: 91). O/M2 feels that as of late the communication between the brand and the consumers is mostly one-sided: conversations are initiated by O/M2 with limited responses from their approximately 4000 followers on their SNS (Org2I39: 91). She emphasises that she really enjoys receiving feedback, positive and negative, as it would help to improve the brand (Org2I39: 91). Feedback received is taken seriously and responded to and acknowledged accordingly (Org2I39: 91).

Organisation 2 is not only involved with the local community, but also with an international community. In 2013 the brand went into a partnership with the Hope Agency, a charity supporting Cambodian children in need. O/M2 uses her brand to promote and raise awareness for their cause by asking her brand's 'fans' to donate clothes, soft toys, and any items that are child-friendly. In other words, Organisation 2 uses its popularity to help disadvantaged children, by not only asking for their stakeholders' help and support, but also by donating parts of her company's profits to the charitable cause (Org2I37: 90). O/M2 mentioned that she wants to set up a permanent fund, donating a certain percentage of her profit margins to this cause, as it would be close to her heart.

As opposed to the other focal cases, Organisation 2 does not provide any workshops. This can be explained with the fact that O/M2 neither uses an upcycling, nor a recycling technique for their creations. Nevertheless Organisation 2 does get involved with the community in that they offers internships in collaboration with a company that raises awareness for the UK fashion industry and traditional manufacturing techniques. O/M2 mentions that one of her seamstresses "could [not] sew anything when she came here. She [has] been with us for 1 year, but we [have] offered her a job, so she is staying. [...] She is brilliant" (Org2I35: 89). She highlights that for her it is important to support local people, provide them with an opportunity to gain experience in order to progress in their future careers.



In summary, each organisation seeks to engage their various external communities to be part of the brand. These activities can be seen as a symbiotic relationship, in which both parties receive benefits: the organisations on the one hand provide work opportunities, help upcoming designers to gain exposure, and offer various skills-based workshops, and on the other hand they gain new workers, become recognised in the local and/or international community, and in some instances provide the cases with free products (e.g. Organisation 3’s front door sign). Thus, similarly to the previous section a feedback loop between the ‘community’ and the individual organisations can be seen. Table 46 reviews the key findings of this section.

Table 46: Codes Relating To Community Integration Into Production Process

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Engagement Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide workshops in schools, community centres, organisation’s premises</li> <li>- Organise activities that involves and promotes up and coming artists</li> <li>- Case companies act as outlets for creativity</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing community with opportunity to learn about how to upcycle/recycle</li> <li>- Educate them about what sustainable fashion means to them</li> </ul>
<b>International Engagement Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hope agency, raise awareness for international causes</li> <li>- Stimulate two-way communication process</li> <li>- Offer rewards for participation</li> <li>- Seek feedback an suggestions</li> </ul>

#### 5.3.1.4.3 Other Stakeholder Engagement

In this context other stakeholders refers to agents or intermediaries that distribute the organisations’ products to the end-consumer. This theme played a key role, especially in Organisation 2, who is predominantly exporting their products to Asian.

O/M2 highlights that they have a close relationship with their buyers (agents). She states that in the past they even delivered their products to the agent’s hotel room, so that the agent, who saw Organisation 2’s products at a tradeshow, was able to take the shoes back with her before returning to her home country (Org2I39: 91). One of these buyers also provided her with the information that her customers in Asia disliked Organisation 2’s packaging material: a green cardboard box, which was sourced in the UK (Org2I35: 89) (Figure 54). The agent pointed out that her consumers do not like the packaging, as it is bulky in nature and needs to be opened in order to view the product. In collaboration with this buyer O/M2 designed plastic

Figure 55: Organisation 2 packaging material (Org2 Website, CEH)



bags that met the needs of their end-consumers (Figure 55). The changed packaging resulted in larger batch size orders (minimum of 2000 pairs), which justified their investment in the re-designed product packaging. Although their plastic bags cannot be sourced in the UK,

they still reinforce what has been described in Chapter 2 as corporate identity: on the one hand the plastic bags display Organisation 2's visual identity (logo), and on the other hand their core values, by ensuring that the bags are "100% recyclable and [...] non toxic" (Org2I35: 12).

In summary, similarly to what has been described in the employee engagement part, Organisation 2 is working closely with her buyers, thereby co-creating packaging materials that lead to higher batch size orders. Thus, it can be said that the stakeholder involvement encourages feedback loops, from which both parties benefit.

### 5.3.2 Stage 2: organisation

This stage focuses on the individual micro-organisations. Specifically, it looks at their positioning, pricing, and communication strategies, their visual identity, and the organisational culture as a whole.

#### 5.3.2.1 Organisation – positioning and pricing

Two noteworthy statements were made by experts in the field, which were followed up within the case organisations: Firstly, EI(M) and EI(S) both highlighted that their "main competitors are also allies [...] people, who are in the same work of line, who [...] I would ask for advice or [...] help out [...] if they had a deadline that they needed to meet" (EI(S): 75). Secondly, Organisation 1 and EI(E) identified their "main competitors [as] the high street, because of the price points we [have] gone for" (Org1I2: 76). Moreover, participants were asked to describe their brand in three words, and elaborate further on them, which helped the researcher to gain an insight

into what the O/Ms believe their organisations stand for and how it differs from their competition. This was followed up with the aim to identify whether employees, O/Ms, and in case of Organisations 3 and 4, the customers, perceive the individual micro-companies in the same manner.

The positioning theme was very interesting to investigate for the researcher, as although the four micro-organisations were selected to fit this thesis research criteria (UK based, local production, operating in the green slow-fashion industry, micro-company), they all offered a different range and style of fashion items, from adult to baby clothing and accessories.

O/M1 describes her brand as a “go to brand [...], a quite good entry-level sustainable brand” (Org1I2: 76). She highlights that she sees the ‘local’ high street as her main competitors, due to their price points. O/M1 emphasises that:

[E]verything [has] to do with [price], [...] because everything has to follow through once you have your price point. [The] design has [...] to fit in with your costing, you have to be able to [...] actually source all your materials and obviously you put into place a [...] structure of [...] making money for the business. It also defines [...] your customer base and [...] your stockists (Org1I2: 76).

O/M1 describes her brand’s fashion collection as affordable, inclusive (catering for various different income levels), and broad (in terms of the overall audience’s age) (Org1I2: 76; Org1II2: 81).

She states that she wants consumers to not “buy two crap dresses from [high street brand, but to] buy one from us [...]. It [is] not [going to] break the bank, [as] our most expensive piece this season is £120 it [is] not unaffordable” (Org1I2: 76). She further mentions that:

I think we share customers with other cool ethical brands. [...] I wear lots of other ethical brands’ clothes and I see myself as much as a consumer as a designer, but [...] I do think that the high street is competition really and truly [...]. I do [not want to] take money from the other ethical brands. I [want to] take money from [high street brand] and other [...] mass high street consumption (Org1I2: 76)

This however, is slightly contradictory: on the one hand O/M1 believes that they are in direct competition with high street brands, which implies that she targets younger consumers with a distinctive fashion sense, who are seeking to make a statement with their clothes by “throw[ing] away the rulebook and aim[ing] for a unique look”

(Topman, n.d.) and on the other hand she states that the high street cannot “really and truly” (Org1I2: 76) be competition. Similarly, I4 emphasises that:

[Organisation 1] has always had the goal of being affordable. [...] If we [are] offering ourselves as uppers and alternative to the high street we [cannot] be three times as expensive. [...] You [cannot] offer yourself as upper if you are [...] a great alternative. If people [have] to spend [more money] it would [not] make sense (Org1I4: 77).

In the same manner as O/M1 seems to be slightly contradicting herself, I4 follows in the same footsteps: On the one hand I4 highlights that they are an alternative to the high street, whilst on the other hand, within the same sentence, she emphasises that Organisation 1 is ‘upper’, meaning they are slightly more high-end than the high street. Investigating this issue further, although O/M1 mentions that everyone is a target consumer (Org1I2: 76), she also highlights that “the kind of 18-25 year olds [...] do make a fair bit of our customers, maybe more 18 to 30. [...] [As] our stuff looks great, it fits well, it [is] fun” (Org1I2: 76). I4 on the other hand describes the target audience as:

[S]omeone who is interested in reducing the impact of [...] their clothing purchases. [...] It would be someone who [...] is open to new things, who wants to have fun with their style. [...] We love to show people that that sustainable fashion is fashionable, [...] makes you think about what you are wearing and how you wear it and I guess the ideal customer is just someone who likes to learn about stuff (Org1I4: 77).

Secondary research on the company’s website showed that the brand’s price-points range from £8 for accessories (socks) to approximately £120 for jackets (Org1 website). O/M1 highlights that their most expensive garment was and still is £120, thus one of the employees feels that the brand cannot necessarily be described as “an entry-level [...] sustainable brand” (Org1I2: 76), but rather believes that “people with a bit of cash” (Org1I10: 80) are the target audience. This goes hand in hand with the statement mentioned earlier by I4 that Organisation 1’s collections are ‘upper’. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that members of Organisation 1 do not seem to agree upon the target audience or market.

Organisation 2 operates in the children’s wear industry, producing unique products: they are the only company producing soft, real leather shoes with colourful designs, which are UK made and have been tested for harmful substances (Org2I25+27: 9; Org2I37: 90). Similarly to O/M1, O/M2 sees the high street children’s wear designers, ‘home-grown’ businesses, and those emphasising on the

‘fun’ aspect of their products as their direct competitors. Due to this broad array of contenders it is vital for the company to stay competitive and continuously innovate and improve their products (ES). Thus, O/M2 highlights that their fashion items are ‘affordable’ and appeal to a ‘broad audience’ (Org2I35: 89). For Organisation 2 being ‘affordable’ means that their price points range from £2.50 for small accessories (baby cards) to a maximum of £25 for the bigger sizes of children’s fashion. O/M2 emphasises that the price needs to be at this level, in order to be able to compete with high street products as well as brands that have similar values.

When attending tradeshows, such as ‘Bubble London’, O/M2 enjoys talking to other ‘like-minded’ retailers. She highlights that, it is interesting to see how individual brands develop and flourish, whilst also discussing issues within the industry. O/M2 realises that the brands exhibiting at these events are also those companies they are competing with to gain new customers for their products (Org2I39: 91). She is not only aware that “there are lots of products out there” (Org2I35: 89), but also that these very same organisations are a vital resource to exchange knowledge about external stakeholders, including but not limited to consumers and stockists. In terms of customers, she mentions that:

[W]e quite like it when people are passionate and as excited about [the products] as we are. [...] [But] when you get customers that all they are worried about is the price and how much profit they are going to be making than really, they may be not the sort of customer that we want, because [...] that does [not] sell products (Org1I35: 89).

This implies that O/M2 is looking for retail customers that share the passion for her product. In terms of actual end-consumers, she believes that her brand targets a wide audience of people: families with children, and young and old people, who might not necessarily have children themselves, but know someone who does (Org2I35: 89). For her this is furthermore reflected in consumers’ reactions, when looking at their products, as “it puts a smile on everybody’s face” (Org2I35: 89).

Contrary to Organisations 1 and 2, Organisations 3 and 4 both offer a range of different fashion products and accessories. Each individual designer prices their products independently, which leaves the overall target audience broad. Stated alternatively, the overall pricing strategy in the co-operatives varies dramatically. For example, in Organisation 3 prices range from only £1 for accessories to approximately £390 for a vintage-upcycled garment. Organisation 4’s overall price-points are slightly lower than in Organisation 3, with product prices starting from £1

(accessories), but not exceeding £100 (dress). I1 re-emphasised that getting the price right is vital (Org3I1: 93): although the product should be affordable, it cannot be over- or under-priced comparatively to products provided by competitors (Org3I1: 93).

An interesting observation made during the in situ research in both companies, but more so in Organisation 3 was that designers, who produced high-end fashion, gradually left the store. One of these designers mentioned in an informal conversation that she does not feel the ‘right’ people are walking into to the shop, as her garments are very expensive and the majority of consumers in Organisation 3 do not seem to be able to afford them. I3 highlights that a problem might be that the company flyer “does [not] really say there [is] anything for [the various brands] in here” (Org3I3: 94), meaning that Organisation 3 is targeting everyone. This links back to what has been mentioned by I1, it is vital to not over- or under-price garments and thus sell in the right spaces that targets a similar audience (Org3I1: 94). This is further discussed in section 5.3.2.4.2. Unlike the other two designers, I1 believes that the audience in Organisation 3 fits in well with her consumers that she describes as female “aged sort of 21 through to 40s and beyond” (Org3I1: 94).

Similarly to Organisation 3, the target market in Organisation 4 is also not defined. O/M4 highlights that she thought her target audience would be:

[Y]our grandmas, you know the M&S customers, [...] [because] I thought they [have] got the money in the pocket, but [...] we get everybody. I [cannot] actually say that we have a particular target [customer]. We get from [...] your 15 year olds up to your 80 year olds. [...] We get quite a lot of men. [...] We do cover the whole range. It [is] quite surprising (Org4I20: 100).

A commonality that emerges throughout all focal cases is the fact that each of them is described as an ‘affordable’ brand that offers high quality at a relatively low price. To get a visualisation of how the companies differ in terms of value for money, the researcher as attempted to place the focal cases on a grid with the x-axis ranging from low to high price and the y-axis ranging from high to low quality (Figure 56). (This map emerged from the data collection and is based on the researcher’s own impressions.)

Organisations 1 and 3 are placed in the top right quadrant, as their price points are higher compared to Organisations 2 and 4. Organisations 1 and 2 are seen as being higher quality as the co-operatives’ products. The products produced by Organisations 1 and 2 are all made by a single designer, with constant quality checks being carried

out. This does not necessarily imply that all items sold in Organisations 3 and 4 are lower quality. However throughout the interviews some participants have described individual pieces sold in the co-operatives as ‘cheap’ products, which is reflected through the quality of the garments (Org3I7: 95; Org4I20: 100). Nevertheless, overall the focal companies are seen as producing high quality fashion items at a medium price range.

Figure 56: Positioning Of The Focal Case Studies (According To Researcher)



In summary, it seems that none of the four micro-organisations seem to be aware of who their target audience is, nor whom they want to target. The participants seem to like the idea of appealing to a broad audience that is versatile in nature. This links to an issue that is raised in Chapter 6: do micro-organisations understand what marketing means? The key findings thus far are summarised in Table 47.

Table 47: Codes relating to positioning strategies

Codes	Findings
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pricing influences target audience</li> <li>- Pricing calculated according to material, utilities and working hour costs</li> </ul>
Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No defined consumer base</li> <li>- Audience kept broad and wide                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Too broad?</li> <li>o Focus?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Niche market seems to imply being different from high street</li> </ul>

### 5.3.2.2 Organisation – finances

A theme closely linked to positioning and pricing is that of finances, which was briefly mentioned in section 5.3.1.4.2. Chapters 1 and 2 indicated two key aspects for further consideration: Firstly, the fashion industry is one of the only truly competitive industries and secondly, micro-organisations have a limited financial budget (EC, 2013a; Europa, 2013).

Three out of the four micro-organisations were established using private funds, whilst one company received financial support through the Mary Portas Fund and the City's Council. The data showed that this has various implications for the individual businesses.

Organisation 1, at the time of research, was located at the outskirts of a major fashion hub. Whilst the studio itself is easily accessible by public transport, it is not

Figure 57: Organisation 1 location (CEH, Street Name And Company Name Photoshoped)



only located in a side street, but also in a residential area (Figure 57). Organisation 1, in the past, had a studio shop included in the workspace, which served as their local distribution outlet. To reiterate the reasons for O/M1 wanting to move further, Figure 54 highlights that

Organisation 1's premises are neither particularly welcoming nor inviting. The only visual clue indicating that Organisation 1 is located in the side street is the ice-blue coloured sign above the second door. However, this can only be seen once a person turned into the street. I10 highlights: "when I interviewed O/M1 for my dissertation I did [not] know where the back of [street] was. [...] I lived here on [street] just that street along there, but like this never ever stood out to me" (Org1I10: 80). Thus, O/M1 decided not only to close the studio shop, but also to move locations.

Whilst conducting the in situ research, O/M1 mentioned that she is currently looking at a new space for her studio that, although slightly smaller in size, would be



more conveniently located – in the city centre’s creative and cultural quarters - shared by a group of creative people and half the rent she currently pays (ES). The key considerations for O/M1 to move the studio are to cut costs, which would lead to having a bigger budget to spend on additional tailoring services that currently are not viable, and on features for her company’s website (ES), such as a shopping basket option, which they presently cannot afford (ES).

Moreover, O/M1 emphasises that due to their size and financial situation a “freelance model works really well” (Org1I2: 76). This form of employment offers the company more flexibility in terms of workload allocations and is also seen as a smaller financial burden, as workers are requested when needed rather than being paid as full-time contractors. However, as previously highlighted employees feel O/M1 is a “bit frustrating, because whenever she [has] got 50 jobs she [will not] remember to tell [us] to do anything and then she [will] come back and be like ‘oh, why have you [not] sorted them?’” (Org1I10: 80). Due to this employment model, I10 feels that Organisation 1 is more like a “one man band” (Org1I10: 81), which contradicts the ‘collaborative management approach’. Moreover, O/M1’s freelancer and part-time staff are spread across various locations in the UK. This implies that individual workers are rarely at the same place at the same time, which makes staff training more challenging. Moreover, interestingly the employee responsible for regular SNS updates is working from a remote location and is herself updated about any events in the studio through phone calls, emails, and Dropbox entries (ES). This links back to an issue that has previously been raised in regards to marketing and marketing communications, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

In comparison to Organisation 1, Organisation 2 is located in a dedicated

Figure 58: Example Of Business Unit (CEH)



business park that although inaccessible via public transport, meets the needs of the company. O/M2 developed her business ideas as part of university project and financed the company start-up herself. O/M2 states that they used to have more employees and were located at a bigger site.

However, during the credit crisis various payments kept outstanding, which forced O/M2 to downsize their workforce (Org2I35: 89). Although nearly bankrupt the company managed to survive and occupies a smaller site in a newly developed business park (Figure 58). O/M2 managed to win new clients, which enabled her to double her workforce to a total 10 employees between 2011-2012 (Org2I33: 88). O/M2 highlights that the economic crisis has led to various changes in the business, concerning both the actual company and their attitude towards knowledge exchange. She mentioned that for a micro-organisation punctual payments for their orders are vital: if a customer does not pay their invoice on the agreed day, this means that they are unable to pay their staff and/or suppliers for their raw material (ES). She states that she is now part of a 'micro-business network', which shares information about individual suppliers' and customers' reliability of payments and, if known, credit rating (Org2I39: 91). O/M2 stresses that money is an issue and that every outstanding payment hurts the business (Org2I35: 89; Org2I39: 91). A further outcome from the credit crisis is being more selective about attending tradeshow. Now they only exhibit at 'Bubble London', as it is the only trading-event that provides enough return on investment to cover the stall costs, by gaining new clients (Org2I35: 89). It is noteworthy that out of the four participating organisations only O/M2 explicitly talks about the economic bottom line, in terms of keeping the company afloat, receiving payments and attending only shows that guarantee exposure to the 'right' consumers, those that are placing an order after the event.

Organisations 3 and 4 differ dramatically from Organisations 1 and 2. Organisation 3 is located in a small side street, just off a main pedestrianized area, whilst Organisation 4 is situated in a local shopping mall. For the reason of keeping this research anonymous, no pictures of these premises are incorporated. A further difference is that these two companies are both co-operatives and customer facing. O/M3 and O/M4 highlight that their companies are designed to provide creative people with the opportunity to showcase their collections. Each of the physical stores acquired were chosen for two reasons:

- 1) Their internal design has the potential to be enlarged once business picks up;
- 2) They both are located just off the main high street within a pedestrianized area.

Within the first 6 months of opening Organisation 3 expanded its showroom from one storey to two: the ground floor showcases accessories and female fashion

garments, whilst the lower-ground floor is utilised as a workshop space for special events, men's wear and new fashion designers. Similarly Organisation 4 gradually extended their retail space. The difference between the extensions is that Organisation 4 did not have the option to open up a second floor, but rather was able to extend the current space by pushing the moveable-walls gradually back, towards what was previously used as a storage room. This extension allowed O/M4 to add a workspace to the actual shop, which enables designers to deliver demonstrations and consumers, who are not part of the event, to continue shopping without any interruption. The O/Ms emphasised that the store extensions were gradually implemented, as they needed to raise the funds to decorate and furnish the new additions.

A noteworthy observation is that Organisation 3's creative outlet has changed dramatically not only within the three months of in situ research, but also afterwards. As highlighted previously, high-end designers felt that the clientele shopping at Organisation 3 was not compatible with her ideal customer, thus they gradually left the co-operative. Moreover, Organisation 3 has now a third floor, which is utilised for home ware, accessories, and locally made food. Employees have highlighted that it is not always easy to keep up with the changing environment and knowing where products are (ES). From the researcher's own perspective, Organisation 3 feels at times very empty and at other times very crowded, in terms of product availability and amount of different designers present. Furthermore, due to the range of products available, it is challenging to pinpoint whom the store targets.

In summary, there are various issues arising in this section: Firstly, due to not being able to pay full-time staff, O/Ms seem to be less likely to fully integrate their workers. Secondly, the external environment plays a key role, specifically in terms of being able to make payments, employ staff, and in the future, expand the business. Thirdly, whilst finances allow for business extensions, in some instances the company may grow too fast and lose focus. The researcher will communicate these findings to the individual organisations and provide suggestions based on the discussion in Chapter 6. Table 48 provides a brief summary of the key findings relating to finances.

Table 48: Codes relating to pricing strategies

Codes	Findings
Management style	- <b>Collaborative</b> style, exception: O/M1 implements a <b>freelance model</b> , this however makes O/M1 feel that she cannot force responsibilities on workers - <b>Full-time</b> employment where possible
Location	- Off city centre locations, <b>not</b> main high street - At times hard to find, in slightly less popular areas or dedicated business parks
Finances	- Restricted budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Need to be selective with tradeshow</li> <li>o Extensions after having saved up money</li> <li>o Website accessories not always possible</li> <li>o Limit to which extras can be offered (e.g. tailoring services)</li> </ul>

### 5.3.2.3 Organisation – visual identity

#### 5.3.2.3.1 Organisation - logo

The analysis shows that the company names are meaningful to the individual O/Ms and are created in co-operation with a graphic designer. In the following each of the companies' logo is examined more closely.

O/M1 mentions that her company's name is a "fine-art term, which means to make art with an unusual material" (Org1I2: 76). She highlights that she came up with the name under:

[P]ressure, because I needed [...] a name [...] for an event. [...] I was like [...] 'I do [not] know what to choose' and we [have] been backwards and forwards. [...] [I] felt that [it] [...] sums up what we were doing at the time, [...] it was [not] a conscious decision not to [incorporate the] sustainable [aspect] [...]. [A] lot of sustainable brands [...] make it very clear in the name what you are buying [...] whereas [Organisation 1] does [not] say much (Org1I2: 77).

Looking at Organisation 1's logo, one can see that the lettering is tilted slightly towards the right. The black typeface is easy to read and although only the first letter is capitalised, most of the letters are the same height, and the script is simplistic. The finished logo gives the impression of being hand-stamped onto the surface. This effect is enhanced when focusing on three letters in the company's name: these letters seemingly have a 'frizzy' finish that occurs when using a paintbrush or stencil with not enough paint on them. O/M1 highlights that Organisation 1 has gone through a lot of re-branding activities, from a more punk influenced design to a slight more neutral company logo. I4 states that she joined the organisation slightly before the re-branding process, and highlights that the:

[R]e-construction [...] and the re-design of the website and [...] all that kind of stuff [...] has brought a lot of changes on how we go about stuff. [...] [Previously Organisation 1] was a little bit more [...] locally orientated and [...] it has become a little bit more international” (Org1I4: 78).

This implies that the re-branding process was also utilised to shift the focus of the company to have a greater exposure.

Moreover, O/M1 emphasises that the new logo was developed so that it could be used in a lo-fi technique “so we [can] stamp all our bags ourselves [...] [and do not] have to get lots [...] of branded bags [...] [which may than be] left over” (Org1I2: 76).

Various members of Organisation 1 were asked to describe their brand in three words, I4 uses ‘heritage’, ‘irregular’, and ‘sustainable’, whilst O/M1 uses: ‘heritage’, ‘provenance’, and ‘collective’ (Org1I2: 77). I4 highlights that “we use a lot of heritage fabrics [...] and that gives us a real heritage edge, [...] especially in autumn/winter when [...] when we use most of those really iconic fabrics” (Org1I4: 78). O/M1 uses similar examples to justify both terms heritage and provenance. The theme also features in a lot of the company’s labelling and promotional material/statements, for example:

- Sewing tags read ‘Made in England’
- Company flyer emphasises they are “proud of [their] provenance” (Org1PA1)
- Swing tags read ‘Made in (city’s name)

The aspect of ‘collectivity’ is represented through the emphasis of a ‘collective’ approach of doing business, which means that all members of the company are involved in the creation and manufacturing of the fashion-lines (Org1I2: 76). This aspect links to the notion of value co-creation, in that stakeholders can provide feedback and suggestions to create a product that has more value to them as consumers.

It is noteworthy that the terms I4 used ‘heritage’, ‘irregular’ and ‘sustainable’ feature in the company’s tag line: The brand has an “irregular twist, aiming to push the boundaries of ethical, sustainable design by using reclaimed materials and mixing fashion forward shapes with heritage craft” (Org1 website, emphasis added). This is also, how she explains her choice:

[I]rregular is just kind of a word [...] [we] have used to [...] describe the fact that we [want to] be fashion forward and [...] having its own, like quite unique style. That makes us stand out from other brands. [...] [It is a] mix of modern and heritage. [...] And sustainable is quite self-explanatory (Org1I4: 78).

There are various conclusions that can be drawn: firstly, ‘heritage’ seems to feature in the company’s communication, as the term was identified by the majority of interviewees. Secondly, I4, who is also responsible for the SNS communication, is aware of the key terms chosen within the re-branding process, and actively promotes these to stakeholders.

Organisation 2’s name means to be “modern and stylish in an unconventional or striking way” (Oxford Dictionary, 2013b). Accordingly, the term has a positive connotation, highlighting that a product is different/unique and very trendy (Oxford Dictionary, 2013b). Moreover, Organisation 2’s name incorporates an alliteration, which implies the repetition of a sound in adjoining words. Alliterations give a rhythmic, upbeat feel to the name and make it easy to remember. When asking O/M2 how she came up with the company’s name she says: “I sort of straight away had [Organisation 2] in my head” (Org2I35: 89). She mentions that there is another company with a similar name, thus they had to incorporate a third word at the end of their organisation’s name, which turned out to be valuable, due to their brand extensions (Org2I35: 89). The company’s logo utilises two complimentary colours, which, according to colour theory, are ‘pleasing to the eye’ (Beneke, 2013). The organisation’s symbol is used on their packaging materials and is approximately the size and shape of a 10p piece. The symbol in the middle of the circle represents the company’s main business in a slightly abstract way: shoes. Overall, Organisation 2’s logo is kept simplistic and easily transferable.

When asking O/M2 to describe her company in three words, she uses its name. She highlights that it covers all aspects of their uniqueness and the actual product. O/M2 emphasises that the ‘trendy and different’ aspects of the brand can be seen in their consumers’ reactions, when looking at their products: “it puts a smile on everybody’s face” (Org2I35: 89). She emphasises that ‘Made in the UK’ is on each of their packaging, signalling that all their products are ‘home-grown’. This aspect is further emphasised when attending tradeshow such as Bubble London, where Organisation 2 is categorised as a UK Made brand (Bubble London website).

O/M4 highlights that the company’s name represents what the firm stands for: all fashion products are created locally, all designers are from the surrounding area, and the brand is truly ‘home-grown’. Looking more closely at the individual letters, one can see that these were created to look like cut outs from wood and paper,

representing the “down-to-earth home-grown” (Org4I20: 100) features of the brand. O/M4 furthermore emphasises that the brand’s name shows pride in the region and of its heritage (Org4I20: 100). Overall Organisation 4 is described in a similar manner to Organisation 3: unique, locally made, and happy. In regards to the term ‘unique’ O/M4 highlights that she “know[s] it [is] unique because there is [not] another [...] shop, [that does] anything like us. So I think that [is] the uniqueness” (Org4I20: 100). She says that in her opinion these are the best terms to describe the business as the brand is showcasing individual designers, who are all ‘locally’ based. This is also one of her requirements to be able to showcase in her shop. She states that her aim is to make any customer coming into the store ‘happy’ by providing them with a unique shopping experience (Org4I20: 100).

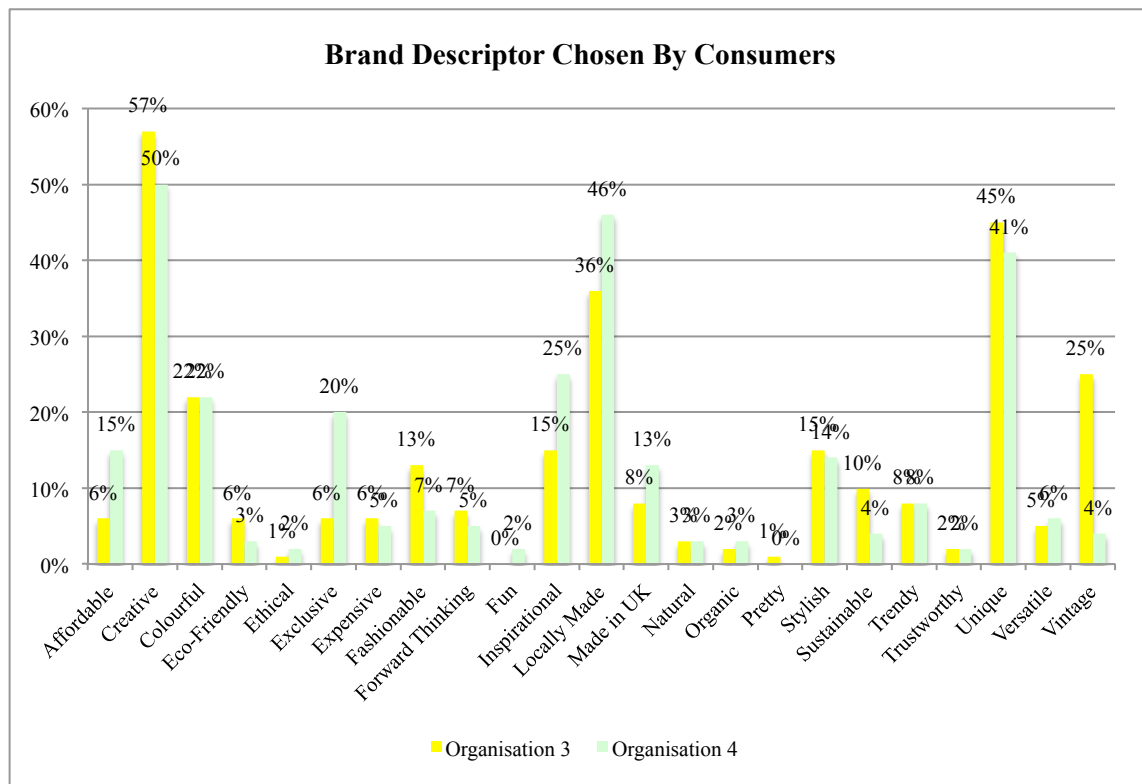
Organisation 3’s name already exists on a shop in a neighbouring city, managed by O/M3. Due to popularity and, according to O/M3, brand loyalty and recognition, she chose to use the exact same name for Organisation 3 - the only difference being the spelling: an added apostrophe (Org3I7: 95). The name itself has two parts, the first one is O/M3’s nickname, whilst the second part describes what it is: a shop with micro-boutiques (Org3TF: 99). O/M3 describes her brand as eclectic, independent, and locally made (Org3I7: 95). She mentions that it is ‘eclectic’, as there are “lots of very different things in here. It [is] just full of lovely gifty things” (Org3I7: 95), which mirrors what being a co-operative is for her: a network of independent designers that produce unique items. For her, ‘independent’ is another key term, as all products that are displayed in-store are created by individual people and not available on the high street. Moreover, O/M3 highlights that it is a ‘Local Shop For Local People’ (Org3 SNS), showcasing products that are either ‘made locally’ in the city or in the UK.

Organisation 3, unlike the other cases, uses a variety of different type fonts and ‘logos’ on their promotional material and website. The only similarity between the symbols is the fact that they are always the written name of the company, but no logo per se. One style utilised on flyers was designed in co-operation with the city’s council, whilst different local designers created the other styles. Thus, there is no coherent single company logo.

An interesting finding from the questionnaire analysis highlights that although Organisation 3 does not have a coherent logo, and Organisation 4 does not have a

company flyer, they still manage to communicate their ‘brand descriptors’ to their target audience. In the questionnaire consumers were asked to choose three words that best describe the co-operatives (Table 49), which were the same in each company: unique, creative, and locally made. These findings correspond with the terms O/M3 and O/M 4 used to describe their brand, and thus show that the consumers understand that the products are all ‘locally made’.

Table 49: Brand descriptor chosen by consumers – Organisations 3 and 4



Thus, the data confirms that Organisations 3 and 4 manage to communicate their key values to their consumers.

In summary, it can be said that a commonality between the four focal micro-organisations is that they describe themselves as: home-grown, proud of the country’s and/or region’s heritage, locally made, and unique. Moreover, the logos were designed in conjunction with graphic designers, in a way that they are easily transferable to lo-fi stamping techniques. Thus, it can be said they are purposefully kept simplistic.



#### 5.3.2.3.2 Organisation – promotional material

Promotional material in this case means anything that is handed out or sent to stakeholders, which may include but is not limited to flyers, brochures, shopping bags, newsletters, and postal packaging. The participants predominantly use SNS such as Twitter and Facebook for promotional purposes, which include, but are not limited to events they are attending, pop-up shops that are opening, or introducing sneak peaks of the new collection (EI(E): 72; EI(S): 75; Org1I2: 76). EI(E) emphasised that:

[W]e used to do [print advertising]. [...] There is quite a few industry magazines we [...] used to write in, but [...] they were mostly [going to people in a specific market] [...] and we were [not] selling that much in those markets. So we sort of were pulling back from that kind of stuff and I think we will start to do a bit more in the print media in the next six months (EI(E): 72).

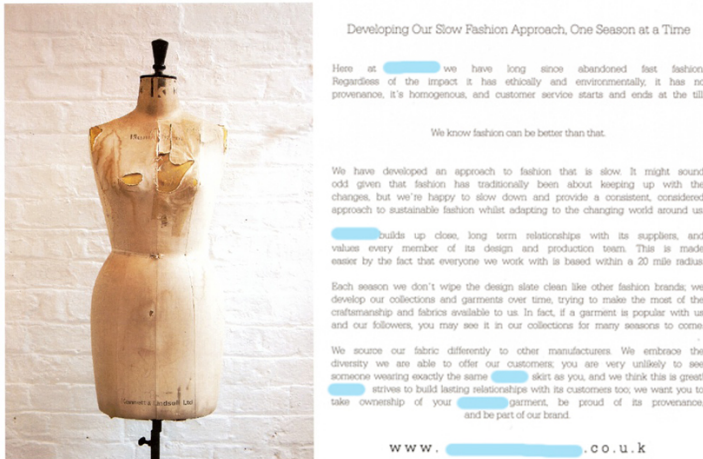
The O/Ms highlight that they try to keep paper-based advertising at a minimum. The only times when the O/Ms seem to utilise print material is to promote specific events (e.g. tradeshow, festivals). However, even than the flyers are – where possible - ‘timeless’, which implies that they are: not dated, not specific to any season, and used at multiple events.

Organisation 1 had two printed flyers: the first one provides basic information about the company itself and the second one advertised an event that happened at the studio’s premises. She mentioned that she “used to work for a company giving out leaflets [...] and there is just so much waste” (Org1I2: 76), which is her reason to try and keep print advertising at a minimum. Interestingly, Organisation 1 was the only company that had a ‘dated’ flyer advertising the brand’s ‘Spring Fashion Festival’. Although O/M1 mentioned in an informal conversation that she did not feel very good about creating this leaflet, they nevertheless went ahead and printed a large batch size to have enough flyers to hand out on the street, send via mail orders, and to display in the then still existing studio shop. O/M1 mentioned that they still had a lot of these flyers spare, and would not be able to reuse them, as they are dated. This contradicts what was previously stated: that she does not like to produce unnecessary waste. Her reason for going ahead with the flyer idea was that she wanted to attract a bigger audience than they usually get for their events, to make sure the participating designers and Organisation 1 get a lot of exposure (ES).

Organisation 1’s second company leaflet is un-dated and seeks to inform their stakeholders about the company’s values, its philosophy, and story. Figure 56 provides a visualisation of the company’s ‘timeless’ flyer, which reads:

We have developed an approach to fashion that is slow. It might sound odd given that fashion has traditionally been about keeping up with the changes, but we [are] happy to slow down and provide a consistent, considered approach to sustainable fashion whilst adapting to the changing world around us (Org1PA1: 82)

Figure 59: Organisation 1 double-sided flyer (Org1, Company Name Photoshoped)



This flyer (Figure 59) is distributed with every online order, which can be placed either via their company's own website or a third party online retailer. Thus, it provides Organisation 1 with the opportunity to communicate their values to all their customers, and

emphasise their company's values to those who might have already bought into their concept, and those that are new to the brand. Contrary to the dated promotional material, creating this seemingly timeless company flyer - keeping it 'neutral' by using a dress form mannequin - has great financial benefits for Organisation 1 and micro-companies in more general terms, as they can be used at multiple occasions for a long time. However, this flyer does not showcase any of Organisation 1's creations and is only distributed to people who either walked into the studio or bought garments online. Stated alternatively, the flyer is distributed to an audience that has already bought into their fashion concept.

As opposed to Organisation 1, Organisation 2's promotional materials show one of their best selling products on the front side and images of the countryside, in which the company is based, on the back. This flyer not only provides its audience with a brief background of the company, its address, and O/M2's contact details, but also with information about the production process, the products themselves, and their SNS. Looking more closely at the text, it becomes apparent that the information provided on the post card is the same message that is communicated on their website:

Every piece is handmade using only the finest quality materials and the closest attention in detail. [...] Our range is bursting at the seams with fun, creativity and imagination and is loved all over the world by children and adults alike (Org2PA).

Unlike O/M1, O/M2 creates a new version of this flyer biannually, showing different seasonal favourites each time. Organisation 2 distributes its advertising material mainly when attending tradeshows.

Organisation 3's flyer shows an a-sexual figurine and the company's name. The flyer is also used for a magazine advert. The flyers are not only displayed in the company's premises, but also in local shops and cafes, for wide audience reach. The leaflet itself does not provide a lot of detail on the company, nor its main products, rather it provides the viewer with an address and a tag-line: "Hand selected items from independent designers" (Org3PA). This re-emphasises what has been previously mentioned by I3 in that the company flyer does neither indicate what is available to consumers nor who is targeted by the company (Org3I3: 94).

At the time of in situ research Organisation 4's leaflet was still in print. However, the prototype the researcher was able to see simply showed the brand's logo on the front and the company's address as well as a generic company email on the back.

A common theme throughout the semiotic analysis of these flyers is that all of them incorporate four things: a) the companies' logo (or at least name in case of Organisation 3), b) the companies' address, c) a tag-line, and d) a contact email address. Organisation 2's flyer is the only one that features the company's product and images of the surrounding areas, as well as a Union Jack flag, which reiterates the Made in the UK aspect. Moreover, all four micro-organisations seek to not only keep their material 'neutral' in order to reduce the firm's fixed-costs (ES), but also keep these leaflets at a minimum. The latter implies that they are utilised for special occasions only or are assumed to display information that will not change in the near future (ES).

Organisation 1 distributes their flyers mainly through mail orders, whilst Organisations 2 and 3 have a slightly further reach, in that they hand out their promotional material at tradeshows and in local business, which allows for more exposure. No comments can be made about Organisation 4's distribution methods, as at the time of research the flyers were not printed.

### 5.3.2.3.3 Organisation - labelling

The interest into this subject matter emerged further into the PhD research and was explored within the four micro-organisations. All focal companies utilise swing tags (paper-based in-clothes tags), stickers, and/or sewing tags (sewn in labels) to label their garments. Figure 60 provides a visualisation of some of the labels used within Organisations 1, 2, and 4.

Figure 60: Visualisation of labels Organisations 1, 4, and 2 (CEH; Company Names Photoshoped)



Looking at the various labels there are three aspects that stand out: Firstly, all products were labelled in a visible and clear manner. Secondly, ‘Made in the UK’, ‘Made in England’, and ‘hand-crafted’ can be read on the majority of labels used. Although some organisations mention the region the company is based in on their promotional material

‘UK’ or ‘Great Britain’ is always featured, “because even people from the UK would [not] even know where [region] was” (Org2I37: 90). Thirdly, the paper-tags are made from recycled material. Organisation 1 highlights that their swing-tags are not only made from recycled material, but also are a ‘by-product’, which means they are pieces of paper that were ‘waste material’ from another production process (Org1I2: 76).

Two noteworthy observations that can be made are: various O/Ms highlighted that they feel their labelling needs to correspond with the organisation’s values, thus the aspect of the swing-tags being recycled (Org1I2: 76; Org1I6: 78) and ‘environmentally friendly’ (Org3I3: 94) seemed to be important to the companies. Whilst Organisation 1 mentions on their website that they are ‘sustainable’, Organisation 3’s values are not explicitly listed. Their website and promotional material simply state that the co-operative is an association of independent designers. The second aspect concerns mainly Organisations 3 and 4, as their products sold in store are created by various individuals. It was interesting to see that none of the

garments sold in-store had either Organisation 3's or Organisation 4's logo on any tag. Thus, similar to the pricing strategy, the labelling is influenced by the individual designer and does not show a connection to either of the cooperatives. In the same vein, individual designers who have printed their own flyers and have their own SNS do not necessarily link themselves to Organisations 3 and 4, whilst the micro-organisations' SNS promotes the individual co-operative members (Org3TF; Org4TF).

As previously stated, a majority of the O/Ms highlighted that a key aspect of their logo is that it can be transferred into lo-fi techniques (Org1I2: 76; Org4I20: 100), which are utilised on various swing-tags, by simply stamping the logo onto the label. In terms of the actual packaging and packaging material of the products, when being posted to the end-consumers, Organisations 1 and 2 differ from Organisations 3 and 4. The majority of purchases in Organisations 1 and 2 are made online, through various sales portals. Each

Figure 61: Organisation 2 Biodegradable Packaging (CEH)



online order posted to the end-consumer uses a biodegradable bag for packaging purposes (Figure 58) (Org1I2: 76). This implies that these two organisations do not only “strive to achieve a green balance between economics and being environmentally conscious” (Org2PA1) when manufacturing a product, but also use packaging material that is less harmful to the environment than other alternatives. Moreover, the plastic bags used to display and package finished products (Figure 61) are made from 100%-recycled plastic and have been tested for harmful substances (Org2I35: 12). This signifies that the organisations are seemingly conscious about the packaging they are using and ensure it is coherent with the company's message of being ‘sustainable’ (Org1 website) and ‘environmental conscious’ (Org2PA1).

When attending events, Organisation 1 states that they use “tissue paper [and than put the garment] into a [...] recycled paper carrier” (Org1I2: 76). Organisations 3 and 4 package their products in a similar manner. O/M4 states that she asks her employees to wrap each item in tissue paper and make it look like a present. She

highlights that she got the idea from a holiday she went on. Moreover, larger items are placed in paper carrier bags, which are, at times, branded with a lo-fi stamp (Org4I20: 100). Two challenges were observed in Organisation 4’s packaging: Firstly, the bags are branded in store and made-up as customers make purchases. Thus, depending on how many shoppers are wanting to pay at the same time, it can happen that some consumers do not get a branded bag. This in turns leads to incoherence of branding (ES). Secondly, all purchases made in Organisation 4, whether they are actual gifts or simply for the person’s own use, are not only gift wrapped, but also stuffed into a paper carrier bag. Stated alternatively, there seems to be a packing surplus, which although recycled paper is used, cannot be seen as being very environmentally friendly.

In summary, each micro-organisation provides the consumer with visual swing-tags that highlight, in one way or another, the companies’ heritage. Bags (carrier and display) are predominantly branded with a lo-fi stamping technique and provide more information about the product and often even washing instructions on the back. The swing tags inform the consumer about the sizing (dress size or age appropriate sizing), the garment’s style, and the price. Table 50 provides a brief summary of the findings thus far in this section.

Table 50: Codes relating to visual identity

Codes	Findings
<b>Visual Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each product is visibly labelled</li> <li>- In Organisations 3 and 4 the individual garment labels do not feature the ‘umbrella’ company’s name</li> <li>- Logos are kept simplistic and easily transferable</li> <li>- Packaging material predominantly features the companies’ logo</li> </ul>
<b>Logo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The company name itself seems to be meaningful to the individual O/M</li> <li>- Creativity features in terms of the actual branded logo, designed to be suitable for a lo-fi technique</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use both <b>print</b> and <b>digital</b> advertising</li> <li>- Seek to keep print at minimum</li> <li>- Only Organisation 2 has integrated marketing communication: address, SNS, email, website</li> <li>- Thus far investigated: Print-material, which in some cases is not informative</li> <li>- Kept ‘timeless’ and at a minimum</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall the employees and O/Ms seem to use similar key words to describe the companies</li> </ul>

### 5.3.2.4 Organisation - communication

Communication emerged as a pattern that is vitally important to all four micro-organisations. The in situ research showed that the focal organisations talk to –

broadly speaking – three groups: 1) employees, 2) consumers, and 3) external stakeholders (suppliers, buyers, and other members of the supply chain), either in-person or through digital or print media.

#### 5.3.2.4.1 Organisation – in-person communication

Across all organisations, the individual O/Ms emphasise that face-to-face communication is a vital part of their business practices, which seems to be informal, yet professional.

Internal communication in Organisation 1 between O/M1 and her workers is described as “constant” (Org1I4: 77). Employees highlight that the atmosphere in the studio “is really friendly and quite relaxed” (Org1I6: 78) and “a weird combination of [a] professional [relationship] and [more] friendship [like]” (Org1I4: 77). The employee shadowing periods have indicated that this type of communication can, at times, be challenging, as there is no distinction between O/M1 as the sole risk-taker and her employees (ES). I10 describes the relationship as a “sisterhood” (Org1I10: 80) and emphasises that there are no guidelines on what to do and how to do it (ES). The in situ research has indicated that communication is sometimes lacking and no professional boundaries are implemented.

O/M1 states that she utilises a face-to-face approach when she is looking for employees. She feels it is important that anyone working at Organisation 1 understands the brand’s values, can associate with its principles, and communicate them to potential consumers (Org1I2: 76). From the interview it becomes apparent that O/M1 is looking for employees who are able and willing to promote what Organisation 1 stands for: a sustainable brand with an irregular twist (Org1 website; Org1I2: 76). O/M1 emphasises that she continuously tells all her employees how they do things in the business, why she chose upcycling and recycling techniques, and what, in her opinion, makes sustainable fashion. Thus, Organisation 1 communicates values as an integral part of the in-person approach. Moreover, employees are encouraged to research the company’s values before starting work (Org1I2: 76) and must understand that their approach to fashion means “adapting to the changing world” (Org1PA1: 82). Organisation 1 highlights that rather than focusing on trends in the industry they focus on trends in the environment (Org1PA1: 82). For O/M1 this implies that they are producing clothes in a more environmentally friendly manner

than counter parts in the same product category, which links back to Chapter 4 and the interpretation of sustainable fashion. However, O/M1 mentions that not all workers understand what it means to be a ‘sustainable fashion brand’: “they are here and willing to learn [...]. I can present them with facts [...] and hope they come to the right conclusions” (Org1I2: 76). She continues that:

[T]here is only so much I can do, but [...] they still come in and say they [have] bought [...] something new from [high street brand], and you know, it [is a] really difficult [...] position to be in, I do [not want to] be [...] too preachy. [...] As long as they come to the clothes swap as well and do [not] just buy [high street brands], I will be happier (Org1I2: 76).

This statement is interesting: as previously highlighted O/M1 believes that their clothes are affordable and compete directly with high street brands. She highlights that she seeks to educate her employees about their ‘slow fashion approach’ (Org1PA), without pushing too much. Moreover, she states that she is not happy when her employees are still shopping at cheaper high street alternatives. Although the workers indicate that they enjoy Organisation 1’s collections, it was highlighted that: “I was making jumpers the other week and there were 5 that I wanted. [...] If I had more money I would probably buy little bits and pieces as we went along” (Org1I6: 78). This implies that Organisation 1’s fashion garments are not affordable for the employees, thus may not be an alternative to high street fashion. This links back to what has been previously raised: there seems to be a disconnection between micro-organisations and marketing/communication.

Organisation 1 not only uses in-person communication when talking to her internal stakeholders, but also seeks to have personal contact with consumers. O/M1 regularly attends a variety of national and international events and tradeshows, such as the Beacons Festival, an annual and well-known event in the UK (Beacons, 2013), and the Digital Fashion Show (DFW), to showcase their products to clients (Org1TF: 83). The DFW enables O/M1 to gain exposure for her brand within the city, where the company is now known as the “sustainable [fashion] specialist” (Hicken, 2013). Currently, O/M1 is also researching ‘high profile’ tradeshows, such as Berlin’s Ethical Fashion Show, which had a variety of British brands exhibiting in previous years (EFSB, 2013). O/M1 believes this show would not only provide a great opportunity to present her fashion to a new consumer base, but also to represent the ‘quirky British collective’ and provide her with international exposure (ES).



Similarly to Organisation 1, the atmosphere in Organisation 2 can be described as friendly: Before the seamstresses and O/M2 start working, they all catch up briefly on what everyone did the previous evening (Org2I29: 86; ES). I29 mentioned that the ‘gossip exchange’ would be one of the highlights of the day (Org2I29: 86), which implies that the employees and O/M2 have a rather informal relationship that allows sharing personal stories (ES). The atmosphere throughout the working day can best be described as relaxed. Even at busy times, when large orders have to be produced within a short period of time, people are constantly chatting, talking about orders that need to be made, communicating who is working on which part of the order, and discussing news and updates received about the business from O/M2 (ES). Interestingly however, not every single employee joins into the more relaxed conversations. O/M2 highlights that some seamstresses are very quiet throughout the working day and do not engage a lot, which was one of the reasons they introduced ‘work gatherings’, thereby actively encouraging people to participate. These social activities include, but are not limited to, bringing cake to the office on special occasions (e.g. birthdays, moving house), having a BBQ on company premises in the summer, and go out for meals (e.g. Christmas, Easter) (Org1I2: 76; Org2ES). A noteworthy observation made is that the seamstresses still distinguish between ‘during office hour’ and ‘after office hour events’: when having cake in the office, two employees eat their piece at their workstation, whilst continuing with their task (ES). On the other hand, after hours, every participant laughs and talks, and even the quieter seamstresses get involved (Org2I25+27: 85). In an informal conversation I33 highlights that although she enjoys working at Organisation 2, sometimes she does not join in the social activities, because she feels it is too much talking about the company (ES).

As previously stated, Organisation 2 attends national and international tradeshows. O/M2 has, for the past five years, attended various fashion events, in order to establish which of these shows offer the best opportunity in terms of attracting new clients (Org2I31: 87). With the economic crisis hitting the UK economy in 2008 (Raynor, 2008), Organisation 2 was forced to be more selective with their tradeshow attendance. Previously, the company was represented at 8 events per annum (Org2I35: 89), now they only exhibit at *Bubble London*. O/M2 states that there are three main reasons for choosing this event: Firstly, they meet a lot of interesting people at the show (Org1I39: 91). Secondly, it is the only show they attend

which provides a return on investment. This implies that they win enough clients to cover the cost of the exhibition space (Org2I35: 89). Thirdly, O/M2 highlights that “people are passionate and as excited as we are [...] [and] it [is] nice when you [meet] people that [...] love your product” (Org2I37: 90).

To sum up, within Organisations 1 and 2 in-person communication seems to be utilised on the one hand to allocate work and make employees aware of the company’s values, whilst also encouraging a friendly and positive atmosphere, and on the other hand to gain exposure on a regional, national, and international level.

Organisations 3 and 4 use an in-person communication approach when talking to their consumers for in-store promotions. Being customer facing implies that it is vital for them to provide good customer service, in order to encourage people to return to the shop (ES). For O/Ms 3 and 4 it is essential that communication is balanced between:

- a) Being inviting and friendly that customers feel welcome and at ease when shopping at the store (ES); and
- b) Implementing a ‘soft’ sales approach (ES).

An interesting observation is that O/Ms 3 and 4 are usually not on the shop floor, leaving their employees in charge of customer service. Various employees have highlighted that they had no experience in the service industry before, and learned on the job (ES). I1 reconfirms this observation and states:

[T]hey [(employees)] do [not] [...] know how to engage with customers. [...] I [have] done [...] quite a lot of fairs, I [have] done bar work, I [have] done shop work for half of my life. I [am] not saying I [am] an expert, but you get to know how to read people, you get to see when [...] they want to be engaged [...] I think sometimes the dynamics between customers and sellers can be a bit awkward, depending on the type of personality of your customer and also the type of personality of the seller and because they [have] possibly got no retail training [...] or possibly it [is] confidence, I don’t know” (Org3I1: 93).

Thus, there seems to be a disconnection between what is expected of employees in terms of customer service and what they can actually offer. This also raises the question, whether employees, who have not been provided with on the job training are able to communicate the brand’s message to customers. This is further explored in Chapter 7.

Overall it can be said that Organisations 3 and 4 predominantly use in-person communication to talk to consumers. The research has indicated that there might be a necessity to provide on the job training, which is a suggestion that will be brought forward to the participating organisations.

#### 5.3.2.4.2 Organisation – digital communication

Digital communication is a further channel utilised across the focal cases to converse with both internal and external stakeholders. For example, I4 works from a remote location and is unable to commute to Organisation 1 on a daily basis. I4 mentions that she is constantly talking to O/M1, normally “twice a day” (Org1I4: 77), keeping up-to-date with what is going on in the studio, either “through email, phone [...] [or] online resources like Dropbox, Google calendar, and stuff like that” (Org1I4: 77). She emphasises that she tries to get to Organisation 1 at least “once about every three months or so, sometimes more, sometimes less, it depends how much we [have] going on really” (Org1I4: 77) to talk to O/M1 in-person and engage with fellow employees. I4 is one of the only employees, who is not on a freelance contract, located in a remote location, and cannot commute to the studio on a daily basis. From the observations it became apparent that although I4 and O/M1 talk several times a day, most of these conversations are either of a private matter, or trying to catch I4 up on the newest events in the company. It seemed that the distance between the two parties was rather challenging, with I4 not being on-site, but updating SNS accounts.

O/M1 not only uses digital communication to converse with I4, but sees it as an inevitable tool to promote her brand to other stakeholders, thereby re-emphasising their brand’s values. In the same vein, I4 highlights that they changed the way they communicate with customers digitally:

[O]ne of the things we do more of [...] is getting people online more involved in us and what we do and how [we do it] [...] and all the interesting [...] [things] different people that work in the studio are part [of]. [...] [Inform people of] what [is] going on there, [...] because people are interested in that sort of thing, people like to know [...] what they [are] buying [...] has that personality to it (Org1I4: 78).

I4 uses ‘studio snoop’ updates to inform their followers about progress made in the studio or new projects that are started. Although the Twitterfeed analysis shows that Organisation 1 is very active, tweeting at last 3 times a day so called ‘visible tweets’, which implies that they continuously incorporate their website and/or pictures, contrary to what I4 mentioned in her interview the majority of tweets are either responses to direct tweets or event updates. There are only a few so called “studio snoop” (Org1TF: 83) that appear very infrequently and various weeks apart. Over the

5 months period that the researcher monitored Organisation 1's Twitterfeed, only three of these posts were found (Org1TF: 83):

STUDIO SNOOP: AW12 and rather large piles of bras and pockets... [Org1 website]

STUDIO SNOOP: Sustainable shoppers, super stockists and ... wallpaper?! With a guest appearance by Vivienne Westwood [Org1 website]

STUDIO SNOOP: Making & shooting! AKA what we spend half our lives doing ;) [Org1 website] @Account-A, @Account-B, @Account-C

The website links attached to these tweets redirect stakeholders to Organisation 1's blog, which expands on the tweets and provides visual aids. It is noteworthy that a majority of tweets posted by Organisation 1 are either responded to by other account holders, or re-tweeted by third party participants. However, the "studio snoops" do not seem to get a lot of attention as they are neither favoured by others nor retweeted nor were they responded to by a third party.

Digital communication not only allows various stakeholder groups to communicate with one another, but also links the organisation and their products to specific lists through the use of #-tags and @-signs. The Twitterfeed analysis shows that Organisation 1 rarely uses #-tags, but when used associates itself with sustainable fashion (Org1TF1: 83, emphasis added):

Think we might be your only **sustainable fashion** brand on @ASOSMarketplace [at the moment]! (Tweeted by Org1)

Time for [Organisation1]'s back to school [and] end of summer sale! [...] **#sustfash** (Tweeted by Org1)

Learning from the past with our new Make, Do & Mend feature [...] **#sustfash** **#fashion** **#sustainability** (Tweeted by Org1)

Have a look [at] this inspiring brand [Organisation1], love the clothes [website] **#Ethical #Fashion** (Tweeted by Fellow brand)

Thus, it can be said that Organisation 1 links itself to lists that relate to sustainable fashion. It is noteworthy that other brands and followers do not necessarily use the same #-tags, but rather promote Organisation 1 as producing "Ethical #Fashion" (Org1TF1: 83). Although the researcher cannot make any comments about why different users associate Organisation 1 with other #-tags a question that can be posed is whether utilising #sustfash is fitting.

The majority of tweets posted by Organisation 1 are promoting their brand's products, this is contrary to what is predominantly linked to the #sustfash list, which

focuses on blog posts, news, and articles surrounding the topic of sustainable fashion. Moreover, the majority of ‘Tweeters’ who are using this #-tag are either fellow fashion designers or organisations involved in fashion. Thus, it is questionable if this provides Organisation 1 with the results they may expect when using this #-tag. In the same vein, Chapter 4 demonstrated that consumers may not be as familiar with the term ‘sustainable fashion’, therefore use #ethical as an interchangeable term, which becomes apparent from the lists and the questionnaire data, thus O/M1 may be missing out on valuable opportunities to communicate to target consumers.

Similarly to O/M1, O/M2 is also very vocal on SNS. Rather than only posting promotional tweets, O/M2 seeks to facilitate discussions by posting tweets about their upcoming events, general noteworthy business news, trends in the industry, and responding to any queries made (Org2I39: 91; Org2TF).

O/M2 highlights that they utilise social media mainly to stay in touch with their customers, especially stockists overseas. She feels that due to time differences it is easier to use SNS to build up relationships. Moreover, O/M2 uses social media as one of her key communication tools to gain feedback from their stakeholders (Org2I39: 91; ES). O/M2 highlights that they tried and encourage consumers to provide feedback by having a giveaway competition every months. Consumers who uploaded a picture of the product being worn were entered. However, she emphasised that once they had to stop this competition due to their financial situation, consumers did not upload any more pictures.

An observation that can be made from the analysis is that although O/M2 indicates that she is very active on social media and posts current events the majority of tweets seem to be updates of a more personal matter and not related to the brand, but rather events that are happening at the time (Org2TF: 92):

Wow another exciting Olympic day yesterday ;- ) Athletics start today... Go team GB!

Yeah – the weekend is here and it’s raining!!!! – have a good one everyone : ) [Link to a rain related picture on Facebook]

WOW – what an amazing, exciting & emotional experience!!!! Well done Team GB and all the volunteers you’ve made *all of us at* [Organisation 2] *even prouder to be British* : ) [Link to a Union Jack Flag on Facebook]

Tweets that are not of a personal nature emphasise on the ‘local’, ‘British Made’, and ‘home-grown’ aspect of the business (Org2TF: 92, emphasis added):

**Made in the UK** – (Organisation 2) [...] KTL are delighted to be delivering our Fashion and Textile training here

Bubble London **Homegrown** showcases labels that are **designed and manufactured in the UK**. Come and see us ([Organisation 2]) on stand A40. We [are] completely **Homegrown!**

Home-grown & proud of it @Bubble London stand A40 [Link Picture on Twitter]

In summary, although O/M2 mentions they are using their SNS to communicate and build relationships with their stakeholders, this is not becoming apparent from their Twitterfeed. It is also noteworthy that none of the tweets link back to Organisation 2's website, rather the tweets link to their Facebook account, which can be viewed without having to like the page. Moreover, throughout the interviews and employee shadowing O/M2 repeatedly emphasised that it is important for them to promote themselves as a 'home-grown' brand, Made in the UK, hand-made, and 'proud to be British' (Org2PA1). Whilst this can be seen in the promotional material, it is not communicated extensively throughout the SNS.

O/M3 set up a Facebook and Twitter page for the purpose of allowing internal and external stakeholders to interact. She furthermore created a 'secret' Facebook group that links the designers, O/M3, and the full-time employees together and enables them to privately discuss business issues and rotas, which is the same in Organisation 4. This differs from Organisations 1 and 2, as neither of them have created a secret group on either SNS.

The main bloggers in Organisation 3 highlight that they predominantly post updates on the individual social media accounts:

We have [...] the official [...] page to allow us to communicate with [...] customers. [...] I [am] in charge of the morning posts that says 'Right here [is] a little about what [is] going on today'. [...] We also have [...] a hidden group [...] that we can [...] send messages [to people] if they are out of stock or if a customer came in and said 'oh I really want this but I need it in this size' (Org3I1: 93).

Similarly, I11 has also access to the social media accounts and mentions that:

I [am updating Organisation 3's social media account] [...] every couple of hours, [...] but [...] when there [is] like an event coming up or [...] a new range ready to launch then I [will] be really blogging away (Org3I11: 97).

From the interviews it becomes apparent that although there is a secret group online that only the designers have access to, the main method of communication between the individual designers seems to be through their own personal accounts (ES). In other

words, data has indicated that the secret group in Organisation 3 is predominantly used if a customer has a very brand specific query that can only be answered by the maker. If this is the case, the employee handling the situation needs to take the customer's details and note down their enquiry and pass it along to the product's creator to follow-up on (Org3I1: 93; Org3I7: 95). In order to keep the consumer satisfied the communication process needs to be constant, fast, and efficient, which indirectly highlights that - ideally - the members of staff talk to each other on a regular basis and share all the information they were provided with by the customer (Org3I7: 95). However, whilst the secret group is utilised by the designers, they highlighted that they are not visiting the group on a regular basis (ES).

On the other hand, employees in Organisation 4 stated that they have frequent discussions on their secret group: "everyone is really friendly [...] we talk to each other [...] and I have [not] met most of them, but on Facebook we [have] [...] spoken [a lot], which is really friendly" (Org4I22: 101). Moreover, they utilise the social media platform to change shifts, discuss new products, and learn about events (Org4I24: 102).

A noteworthy observation thus far is that, especially in Organisation 3, where multiple people have access to the company's public profile, they do not have a social media policy. This implies that O/M3 trusts her employees to not only update the page on a regular basis, but also to not post any incriminating tweets. Moreover, it is interesting that although O/Ms 3 and 4 indicated that they are seeking a 'soft' sales approach when it comes to in-person communication, online this approach is more geared towards 'hard' sales, specifically in the case of Organisation 3. To reiterate this point further, the Twitterfeed analysis has indicated that Organisation 3's posts are all promoting products and encouraging buying them. Tweets are posted on average ten times a day, which are then retweeted by the various designers. Furthermore, the actual posts on the various accounts do not provide the consumer with detailed information on the actual products (Org3TF1: 99, emphasis added):

There [is] still time to buy those last minute gifts! Get down to @[Organisation3] lots of lovely, quirky, one-off pieces!! #buylocal #[city's name]

@[Organisation3] is open today. Come in from the rain for some lovely **handmade** gifts #localshopping

We sell art & craft from up and coming **UK designer-makers!** Our **micro-boutique** can be found @[Organisation3] #[city's name] #Buy**BritishBrands**

Although I1 highlights that they are “very vocal on Facebook” (Org3I1: 93) communicating to their followers that they are a “Local Brand For Local People” (Facebook profile), their Twitter profile is not ‘visible’. To reiterate this point further, unlike in Organisations 1 and 2, Organisation 3’s tweets are not visible, as they do neither contain a website nor a photo and thus are pushed to the bottom of the priority list in a followers newsfeed. Nevertheless, they are using various #-tags that associate them with the city. In the same vein, Organisation 3 pushes this aspect further with a Facebook and window typology that reads ‘a local brand for local people’. This however has various implications, as it can exclude consumers that classify themselves as ‘outsiders’ (non-local people).

Organisation 4’s digital communication geared towards consumers differs from the other three companies. Although the company’s website and storefront both show that Organisation 4 is “a cooperative, where local craft people can sell their wares” (Org4 website), unlike the other focal cases, Organisation 4 has a very low digital presence. Whilst the brand has a Twitter and Facebook account, these platforms are mainly used to inform stakeholders about events, but do not necessarily engage social media users in a two-way communication process. Looking at the Tweets, it becomes apparent that the accounts seem to be used more as ‘reminder tools’, rather than as part of their promotional two-way communication strategy (Org4TF1: 104):

Tomorrow is a very exciting day for us, as we have the BBC filming a short interview on our co-operative [website]

Looking forward to seeing you all tomorrow at our Knit and Natter group

Moreover, the organisation does not make use of #-tags or @-signs within their Tweets, which further emphasises that the involvement with SNS is low. O/M4 highlights that she does not “understand Twitter [...] but [she] keep[s] hearing about this #-tag [...] but [...] [it is] beyond [her]. Facebook is hard enough, [...] but Twitter is beyond [her]” (Org4I20: 100).

In conclusion it can be said that although the O/Ms seek to start a two-way conversation process with their stakeholders, the majority of posts do not animate their customers to respond. The only two companies actively using #-tags are Organisations 1 and 3, whilst Organisation 2 emphasises that they are made in the UK. Although Organisations 1 and 2 produce higher visibility tweets, they only seem to get feedback from consumers if they are incentivised. Interestingly, the data has



shown that none of the companies have a social media policy, which is a further suggestion that will be brought forward to the individual organisations. Furthermore, the analysis has revealed that the organisations believe that social media forms a vital part of their communication strategy, as “it [is] massive! [...] It [is] a great way to get in touch with people [...] who are interested in your brand and to get people who have [not] hear[d] of you to hear about you” (Org1I4: 77). It is seen as a convenient way to update people on current events and information that might be relevant to the individual followers (Org1I4: 77; Org4I20: 100). Furthermore, it has been indicated that social media accounts are free to use, thus they are an inexpensive way to communicate with customers, which, for micro-organisations, is a key aspect (Org3I11: 97). Nevertheless, it can be said that the micro-organisations are currently not using their SNS to their full potential, which becomes apparent when looking at their starring and re-tweeting history.

#### 5.3.2.4.3 Organisation – print communication

The last form of communication found across the individual companies is print communication, which was discussed in section 5.3.2.3.2. Print communication in this research includes, but is not limited to company leaflets, event flyers, and promotional material. To briefly summarise what has been previously stated: The researcher was able to collect printed material from Organisations 1, 2, and 3 only, as Organisation 4 was at the time still developing their company leaflet. The print materials available all contain the companies logo and at least one short tag-line describing the brand. Organisation 1’s leaflet is kept timeless and explains the company’s philosophy, whilst Organisation 2’s leaflet is the only one that showed their products, provided a link to their SNS, and talked about the production process. Organisation 3’s company flyer shows an a-sexual figurine, provides the company’s address and highlights that it is an association of independent designers.

Although no conclusions can be drawn about the impact of the individual flyers, a question that needs be raised is whether print media is utilised to its full potential, which is looked at in Chapter 7. Table 51 provides a summary of findings within the communication theme.

Table 51: Codes relating to communication

Codes	Findings
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication is described as informal and friendly</li> <li>- Relaxed atmosphere, welcoming</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face communication at events and tradeshows</li> <li>- Online communication through SNS – in Organisation 3 at times hard sales</li> <li>- Print material enhances face-to-face promotion at tradeshows and events</li> <li>- In terms of print media, flyers are kept at a minimum, which fits in with the overall thought of sustainability</li> <li>- Not utilised to full potential</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication is described as informal and friendly</li> <li>- At times communication process seems to be interfering with management style</li> <li>- Digital communication and print material <b>Not utilised to full potential</b></li> <li>- Only Organisation 2 is utilising a fully integrated marketing communication strategy</li> </ul>

### 5.3.2.5 Organisation - culture

Various employees have confirmed that the atmosphere in the individual organisations is friendly and positive. In Organisation 1, each employee emphasises that they feel appreciated and enjoy the hands-on experience and the trust with responsibilities, which makes them feel part of the brand (Appendix 12: lines 78-80). However, as previously pointed out there are some employees that did and do not feel fully appreciated in Organisation 1 and describe O/M1 as being similar to a “frustrating” (Org1I10: 80) sister. Nevertheless, this employee contradicts herself at a later point in the interview emphasising that she would work for O/M1 full-time if the opportunity arose (Org1I10: 80). The employees highlight that:

[E]veryone is working together [and] do the best as [they] can. [There are no deadlines inflicted] on the rest of us [...] whereas in previous placements [...] you [were] very aware of the timelines to finish things (Org1I6: 78).

Whilst this can be linked back to the ‘friendly’ and ‘positive’ atmosphere, it can also be connected to some employees’ frustrations, in terms of not knowing what jobs need to be done (Org1I10: 80).

Organisation 2 goes even further and actively encourages a positive atmosphere, by engaging in various social activities, such as bringing cake to the office on special occasions, having summer BBQs on company premises, and going out for meals (Org1I2: 76; Org2ES). These occasions provide an opportunity to talk and engage with each other (ES). However, as has been pointed out previously, not all employees participate in the ‘social chatter’ and/or feel that they might not want to engage with ‘work people’ after hours, especially during stressful times, when large

orders have come in and need to be produced within a short period of time (ES). A further example of these ‘social activities’ is the buying of lottery tickets as a ‘team’. O/M2 mentions that she orders a lucky-dip ticket each week, which is displayed in the workspace, for everyone to see. In a conversation O/M2 highlights that playing the lottery is a great team-building exercise: everyone gets excited and commits to something together (ES). Although O/M2, at times, asks her seamstresses to focus more on their work and less on talking, it is done in a playful manner (ES). Each worker highlights that they enjoy working for O/M2, especially because working times are flexible, as O/M2 understand when someone has to leave early due to family issues (Org2I29: 86). However, if it is a very busy period and a lot of orders need to be completed within a very short timeframe, each worker is committed to stay longer and help finish the orders (Org2I29: 86). Moreover, the seamstresses make sure, if they are late, to make up the time by staying later. Each employee needs to clock in and out of the office every single day, thus O/M2 has a record of how many hours the individual seamstress’ work, how often they show up late, and how early they are leaving (ES).

Organisations 3 and 4’s group dynamics are different: being a cooperative, in their cases, implies changing rotas and working with different people each time. The full-time employees in Organisation 3 were asked how they feel in this changing environment. On a piece of paper the four workers expressed themselves in a way they felt comfortable with (drawing, writing, or informal conversations). The employees did not feel comfortable to participate in an interview, however they were happy to write down their emotions. It is noteworthy that three out of the four participants used whole sentences to describe their feelings, whilst only one of them used a drawing (emphasis added):

I feel **I am part of** a great, creative community. [It is] **fun** to be here. I like the people I am working with. (Employee 1)

Working in (Organisation 3) makes me feel **enthusiastic**, because I enjoy **being part of the team** and gaining retail experience. (Employee 2)

It is a **fun, lovely**, different place. You get to **meet a lot of people**, which is great. I [do not] mind coming here every day. (Employee 3)

**Happy**, creative. [The writing also contained a drawing of a smiley face and a doodle pattern, above the word creative – the words written underneath the image were added by the employee, after the researcher asked, what these mean to the employee.] (Employee 4)

Although the written statements were all positive, the employee shadowing highlighted that they also felt frustrated at times. To reiterate this point further, O/M3 used to share her time between Organisation 3 and her shop in a neighbouring city, thus only come into the shop three times a week to check on the store. The employees highlighted that at times it would be challenging to work with O/M3 as she would be very bossy and not take any of their suggestions into account (ES). Similar observations are made in Organisation 4.

Looking at the consumer survey, it becomes apparent that they, too, perceive a positive atmosphere in Organisations 3 and 4. They highlight that they feel ‘welcome and at ease’, due to the ‘nice and friendly staff’, and a ‘lovely, friendly atmosphere’ (Appendix 12: lines 112-129). Nevertheless, the employee shadowing periods have also indicated that customers get frustrated when looking for help. None of the shop assistants in Organisations 3 and 4 wear a uniform, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from other shoppers. Moreover, the majority of employees are continuously talking to one another without watching the shop floor and the cash register, which means that at times consumers have to wait up to 5 minutes until someone serves them (ES). This links back to the lack of customer service training provided by Organisations 3 and 4.

In summary, the atmosphere in the individual micro-organisations was described as being positive. The employees, although at times frustrated with the individual O/Ms, do enjoy working there.

### **5.3.3 Stage 3: from the distribution channels to the consumers**

The last stage focuses on the various distribution channels utilised in the micro-organisations to sell their products. The main selling method for designers at Organisations 3 and 4 is through the physical store and occasionally local crafts fairs.

Organisations 1 and 2 differ from the co-operatives in that they do not have a physical store. Organisation 1 sells their products at various pop-up events, online, and through intermediaries. An interesting observation made is that although the employees are aware that the business is “mainly online sales” (Org1I10: 80) contrary to what has been highlighted by O/M1 that her workers are “shared ownership” (Org1I2: 76), I10 emphasises that “I do [not] know how O/M1 sells her bits through her stockists” (Org1I10: 80). O/M1 states that they are not only using their own

website for direct sales, but also distribute their stock through online platforms, including, but not limited to, ASOS Marketplace and Etsy (Org1TF: 83). She feels that utilising these forums enables Organisation 1 to gain greater exposure and more sales. However, I10 mentions that having too many online sales portals is problematic:

[P]roblems that they [have] had before [...] [are because] everything is pretty much one off. There [are] only [a] few things [produced in larger quantities, such as] the T-shirts and dresses. [...] Some of the stuff gets put on the website [...] for sale. So when someone is coming in and buys it in the shop<sup>4</sup> [...] it [will not] be taken off the website on time and the customer will buy it on the website and then O/M1 will have to write an apologetic email: 'So like we are [going to] do you a deal on these ones, they are pretty much the same'. But I know the frustration as a customer you do [not] want any of that, you want to have [what you ordered] (OrgI10: 80).

In a similar manner, employees highlight that they do not always know which stock is being shipped to the various different retailers, as O/M1 keeps the contacts to herself (ES). In an informal conversation O/M1 mentions that she build up close relationships with her stockists, some of them she has known for a long time, as she went to university together with them. These contacts are very precious to her thus she does not share them with her employees (ES). O/M1 furthermore mentions that she is visiting all of her stockists on a regular basis, as she believes, keeping a good relationship is vital to her business.

In the same way Organisation 1 is building long-term relationships, Organisation 2 takes care of their consumers (buyers). For example, O/M2 has, in the past, delivered their products to a buyer's hotel room, so that the buyer, who saw their products at a tradeshow, was able to take the products back with her before returning to her home country (Org2I39: 91). This buyer is now one of their main stockists, ordering large batch sizes on a bi-monthly basis. O/M2 highlights that this specific buyer, sometimes, is challenging to deal with, as the stockist continuously adds on products, after the order form has been submitted and processed by Organisation 2. However, O/M2 mentions that this stockist has increased her orders continuously and always pays ahead of time, thus they allow her to add on as many products as she wants, even after the order form has been processed (Org3I39: 91). O/M2 states that building these kind of relationships are vital for micro-organisations. She highlights that they used to supply to various stores in the UK and Europe before the credit crisis

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<sup>4</sup> This statement was made when Organisation 1 still had its studio shop.

and now they are predominantly delivering to the Asian market. In an informal conversation O/M2 states that her Asian based agents are always paying on time, even in advance of the purchase order (ES). She mentions that the economic crisis hit Organisation 2 hard, which resulted in having to downsize the company. However, if it was not for loyal customers that pay on time, such as this specific stockist, O/M2 believes they would have had to close the business. O/M2 further mentioned that she had to learn the hard way, which relationships to 'trust'. She highlights that they are part of a small community that is made up of various micro-organisations, who share information and experiences about their customers, in terms of them being able to pay (ES). To reiterate this point further, when pointing at a box of stock ready to be shipped, she emphasises that the supplier still has not paid for their last order, thus she will not send the new one out until the money is in her account (ES).

As opposed to O/M1, O/M2 manages all her purchase orders centrally. She does not use any third party intermediaries. Agents 'distributing' her stock are acting as consumers, which implies that they are placing the purchase order and pay for the products in full. In other words, O/M2 does not know where her products are being sold to after her agent has purchased the goods.

In summary, although there are similarities across the companies in terms of their distribution channels, they also show various differences. Whilst the designers in the cooperative predominantly use the shop and local fairs as their distribution outlet, Organisations 1 and 2 both focus are dominantly on online sales orders. Moreover, Organisation 1 is furthermore supplying her garments to stockists nationally and internationally. The topic of distribution is further discussed in Chapter 6.

#### **5.3.4 Stage 4: consumers' perspective**

This section provides an insight into the consumers' perspective on various issues previously discussed in this chapter. The researcher felt incorporating an external view is vital, as it provides the opportunity to see how their 'target audience' perceives actions taken by the individual micro-organisations.

Before discussing findings in-depth a brief background on the consumers, who participated in the survey is provided. The shadowing periods highlighted that on average more females than males shopped at both Organisations 3 and 4. Moreover, it seemed that the consumers in Organisation 3 are younger than those in Organisation

4. These findings were confirmed in the survey. Tables 52 and 54 provide the statistical background for the female to male ration, whilst Tables 53 and 55 provide the statistical background for the consumers' age brackets. Table 56 provides the visualisation for the aspects of gender, whilst Table 57 visualises the consumers' age brackets.

Table 52: Gender statistics

N	Valid	202	100
	Missing	0	0
Mean		.21	.15
Std. Error of Mean		.029	.036
Median		.00	.00
Mode		0	0
Std. Deviation		.407	.359
Variance		.166	.129

Table 53: Consumer age statistics

Age			
N	Valid	202	100
	Missing	0	0
Mean		1.25	2.30
Std. Error of Mean		.070	.142
Median		1.00	2.50
Mode		1	3
Std. Deviation		1.002	1.425
Minimum		0	0
Maximum		4	5

Table 54: Frequency and descriptive statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	160	79.2	79.2	79.2	85	85.0	85.0	85.0
	Male	42	20.8	20.8	100.0	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 55: Frequency and descriptive statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-21	48	23.8	23.8	23.8	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	22-29	86	42.6	42.6	66.3	22	22.0	22.0	34.0
	30-40	42	20.8	20.8	87.1	16	16.0	16.0	50.0
	41-55	22	10.9	10.9	98.0	30	30.0	30.0	80.0
	56-65	4	2.0	2.0	100.0	14	14.0	14.0	94.0
	66+					6	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 56: Aspects of gender

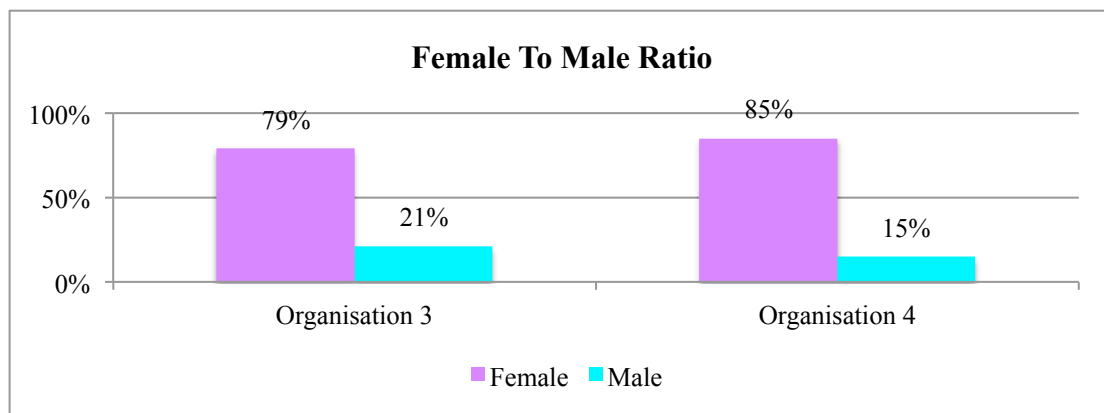


Table 57: Aspects of age brackets

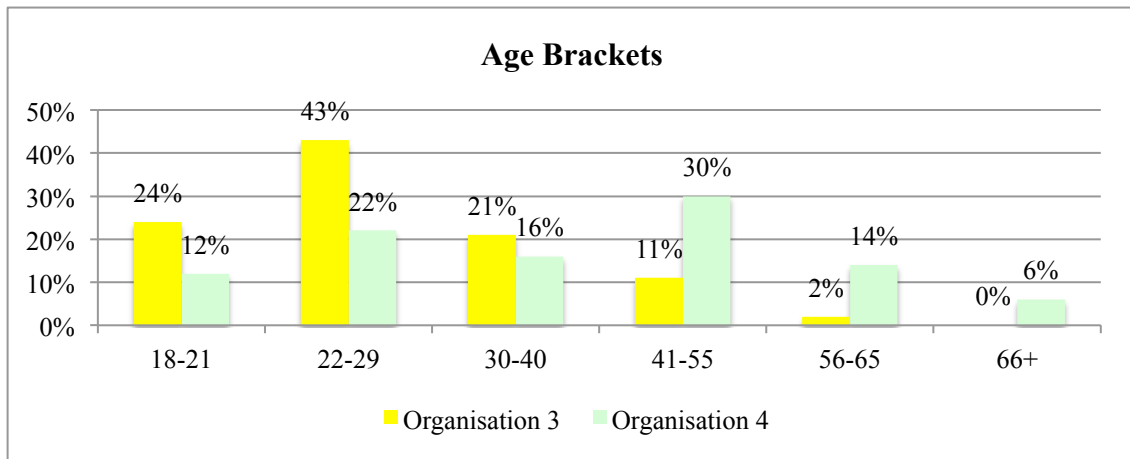


Table 57 emphasises that majority of people shopping at Organisation 3 are between the ages 18 to 40, whilst the age bracket shifts slightly to the right when looking at Organisation 4, with the majority of people being between 22 to 55. Moreover, Organisation 4 seems to also attract a larger population aged 41 and older compared to Organisation 3.

In order to understand how people feel about various aspects of a garment, it was important to also gain an insight on the participants work status. Tables 58 and 59 provide information of statistics, whilst Table 60 highlights the visualisation of the findings.

Table 58: Work status statistics

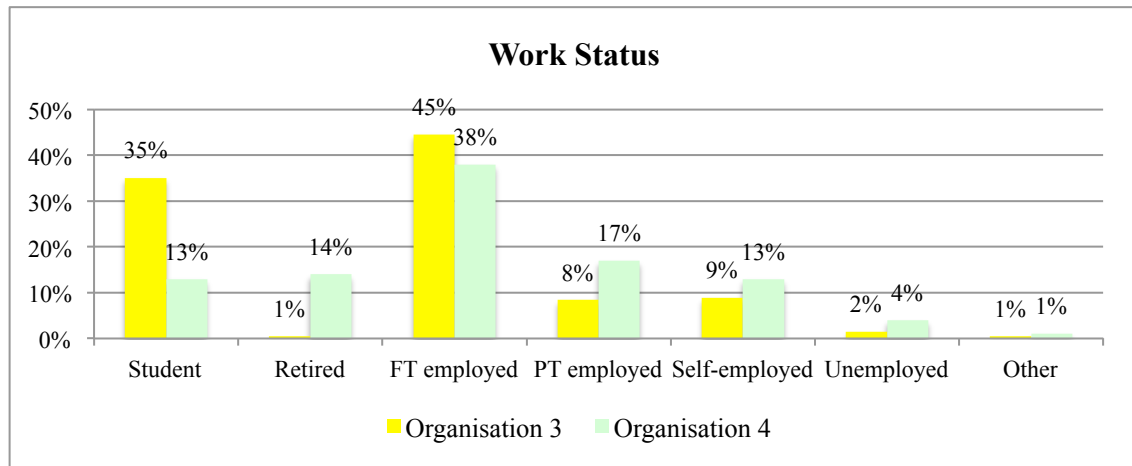
What is your current work status?			
	Valid	201	100
N	Missing	1	0
Mean		1.62	2.19
Std. Error of Mean		.098	.136
Median		2.00	2.00
Mode		2	2
Std. Deviation		1.392	1.361
Variance		1.938	1.361
Percentiles	25	.00	1.00
	50	2.00	2.00
	75	2.00	3.00

Table 59: Frequency and descriptive statistics

What is your current work status?									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	71	35.1	35.3	35.3	13	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Retired	1	.5	.5	35.8	14	14.0	14.0	27.0
	FT employed	90	44.6	44.8	80.6	38	38.0	38.0	65.0
	PT employed	17	8.4	8.5	89.1	17	17.0	17.0	82.0
	Self-employed	18	8.9	9.0	98.0	4	4.0	4.0	99.0
	Unemployed	3	1.5	1.5	99.5	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Other	1	.5	.5	100.0				
	Total	201	99.5	100.0					
Missing	System	1	.5						
Total		202	100.0			100	100.0	100.0	



Table 60: Aspects of work status



In accordance with the age brackets, Table 60 highlights that the majority of people walking in and out of Organisation 3 are either students or in full-time employment, whilst a larger proportion in Organisation 4 is either full/part-time employed or retired. Thus, the following observations can be made:

- The majority of people shopping at Organisations 3 and 4 are in full-time employment.
- More students shop in Organisation 3 than in Organisation 4
- Organisation 4 sees a larger population of retirees than Organisation 3
- The average age in Organisation 3 is younger than in Organisation 4.

In summary, the statistical data reconfirms what was observed throughout the in situ research: that there are more female than male consumers, and the average person in Organisation 3 is younger than in Organisation 4.

#### 5.3.4.1 Consumer perception of shopping aspects

The following section is concerned with product aspects and their importance to consumers when making a purchasing decision. The statistical data presented follow the same five point Likert scale system previously described in Chapter 4 and ranges from very unimportant to very important. Consumers were asked to rate various product aspects: price of product, quality of product, design & style, colour of product, and comfort of product. Tables 61 and 62 provide statistical background, whilst Tables 63 to 67 provide the visualisation of the consumer responses.

**Table 61: Product aspect statistics**

	Price of Product	Quality of Product	Design & Style	Colour of Product	Comfort of Product	Quality of Product	Price of Product	Comfort of Product	Design & Style	Colour of Product
N	202	202	202	202	202	100	100	100	100	100
Valid	202	202	202	202	202	100	100	100	100	100
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.21	4.37	4.44	3.93	4.15	4.39	4.15	4.18	4.17	3.77
Std. Error of Mean	.046	.045	.041	.060	.051	.086	.076	.090	.093	.100
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	.659	.642	.589	.855	.720	5	4	4	4	4
Variance	.434	.412	.347	.731	.519	.863	.757	.903	.933	1.004
Percentiles										
25	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
75	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00

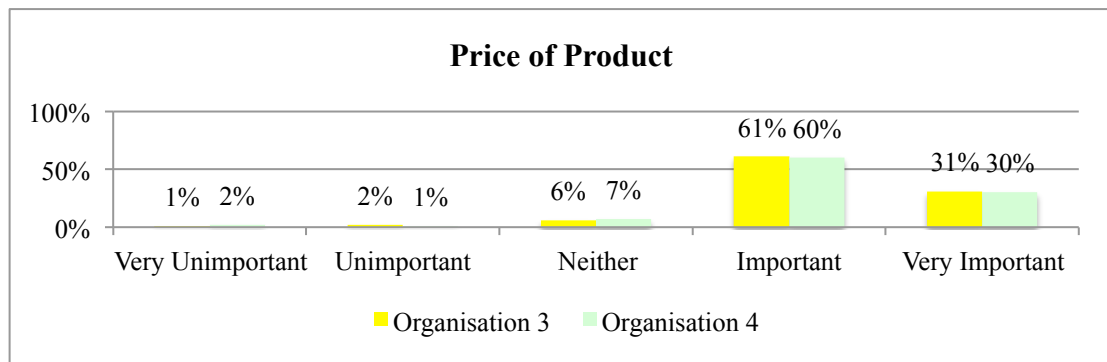
**Table 62: Frequency and descriptive statistics**

Price of Product					Quality of Product				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid Very Unimportant	1	.5	.5	.5	2	2.0	2.0	2.0	
Unimportant	3	1.5	1.5	2.0	1	1.0	1.0	3.0	
Neither	12	5.9	5.9	7.9	7	7.0	7.0	10.0	
Important	123	60.9	60.9	68.8	60	60.0	60.0	70.0	
Very Important	63	31.2	31.2	100.0	30	30.0	30.0	100.0	
Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0		

Design & Style					Quality of Product				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid Very Unimportant	10	5.0	5.0	5.0	4	4.0	4.0	4.0	
Unimportant	93	46.0	46.0	51.0	1	1.0	1.0	5.0	
Neither	99	49.0	49.0	100.0	9	9.0	9.0	14.0	
Important	99	49.0	49.0	100.0	46	46.0	46.0	60.0	
Very Important	99	49.0	49.0	100.0	40	40.0	40.0	100.0	
Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0		

**Table 63: Aspects of price of product**



**Table 64: Aspects of quality of product**

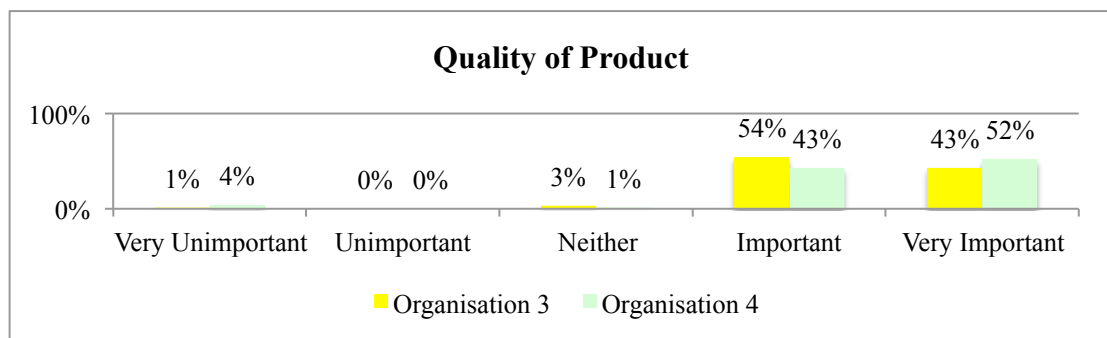


Table 65: Aspects of design & style of product

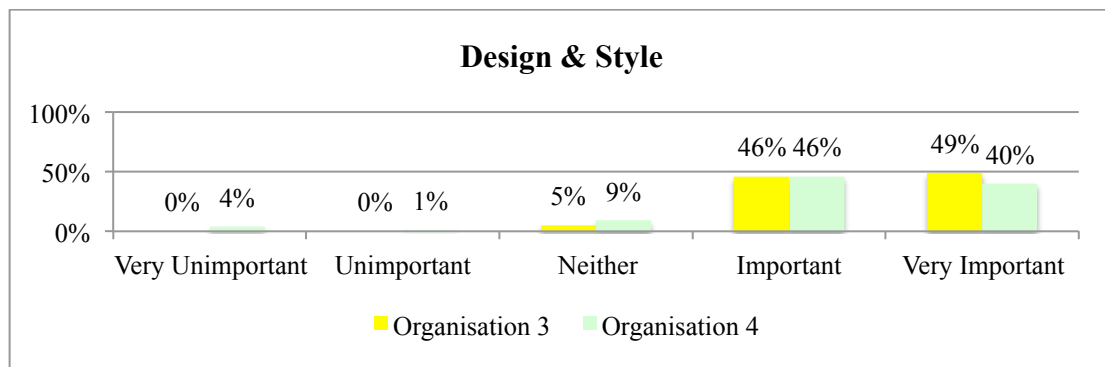


Table 66: Aspects of colour of product

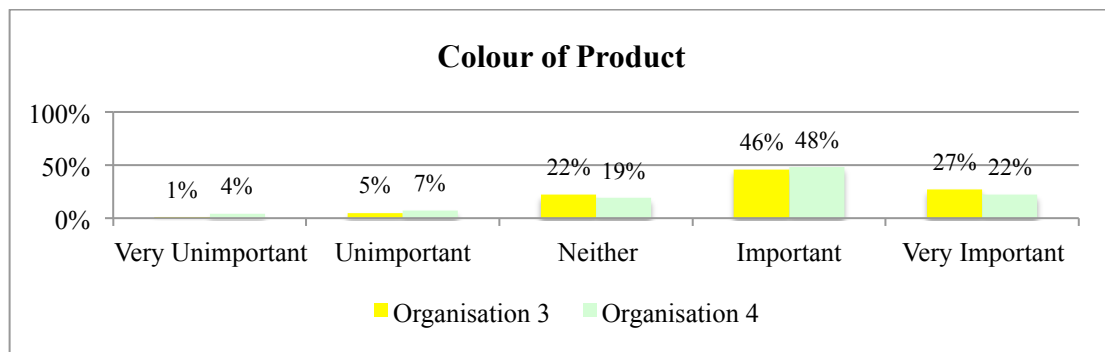
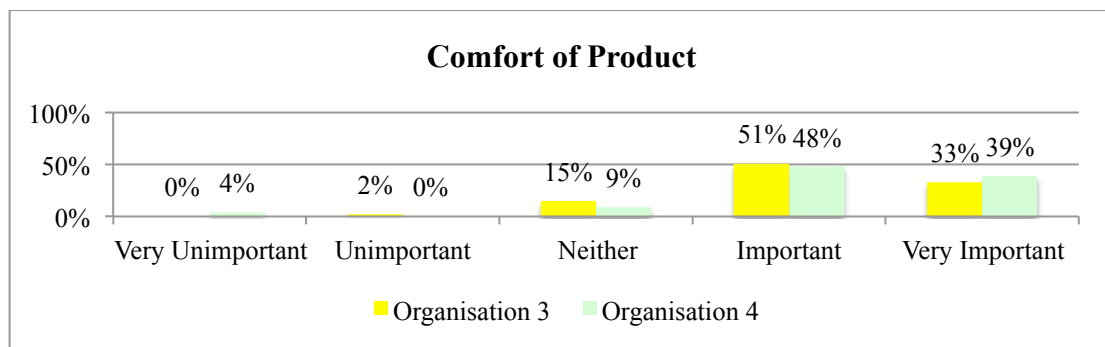


Table 67: Aspects of comfort of product



The tables highlight that participants in both Organisations rate the five aspects as either important or very important. This implies that no matter what the average age or work statuses, people shopping in both stores perceive these attributes as key features. This implies that the statistical data reconfirms the O/Ms assumption that price and quality are important influencers in the consumers' purchasing decision process.

Section 5.3.2.1 highlighted the position of the individual organisations in comparison to one another. Both O/M3 and O/M4 mentioned that some of the individual pieces sold in the co-operatives look 'cheap', which is reflected in the quality of the individual garments (Org3I7: 89; Org4I20: 94). Thus, feedback that will

be provided to them is that both their target audiences feel that quality is an important factor. This implies that having cheap, lower quality clothes on sale might reflect poorly on the brand overall.

In the same vein, consumes were asked to rate the value of money received in Organisations 3 and 4. Tables 68 and 69 highlight the statistical evidence, whilst Table 70 provides a visualisation.

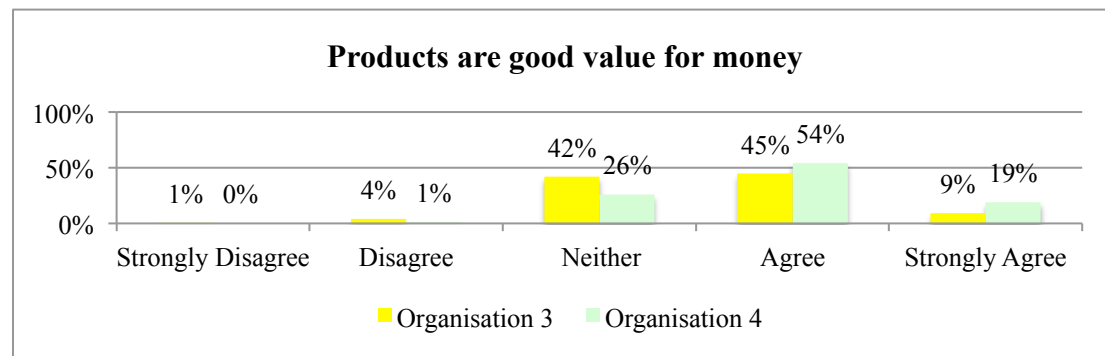
Table 68: Perceptions of value for money

N	Valid	202	100
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.57	3.91
Std. Error of Mean		.051	.070
Median		4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4
Std. Deviation		.731	.698
Variance		.534	.698
Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00
	50	4.00	4.00
	75	4.00	4.00

Table 69: Frequency and descriptive statistics

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	.5	.5	.5	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.5	26	26.0	26.0	27.0
Neutral	85	42.1	42.1	46.5	54	54.0	54.0	81.0
Agree	90	44.6	44.6	91.1	19	19.0	19.0	100.0
Strongly Agree	18	8.9	8.9	100.0	19	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 70: Aspects of value for money



The in situ research conducted in Organisations 3 and 4 highlighted that, in comparison to Organisations 1 and 2, the price-points in the two co-operatives are not only higher, but also broader distributed with prices starting from £1 and going up to £390 for a single item. When asking the O/Ms about the price structure, both, O/M3 and O/M4, highlight that they believe their products are reasonably priced for the quality they provide. Focusing on Table 70, the value for money aspect mentioned by the O/Ms is also supported by the results: participants highlight that they ‘agree’ and

‘strongly agree’ that the products sold in Organisations 3 and 4 are ‘good value for money’. This highlights that the consumers shopping in Organisations 3 and 4 are satisfied with the value for money offered.

Furthermore, the in situ research emphasised that the O/Ms believe that the store’s location is a key factor for consumers when shopping for garments. Thus, Organisations 3 and 4 searched for properties that were not only easily accessible, but also in city centre locations. The following statistic support the O/Ms decision-making process, as the majority of consumers feel that location is either important or very important. Tables 71 and 72 highlight the statistical background, with Table 73 demonstrating a visualisation of the findings.

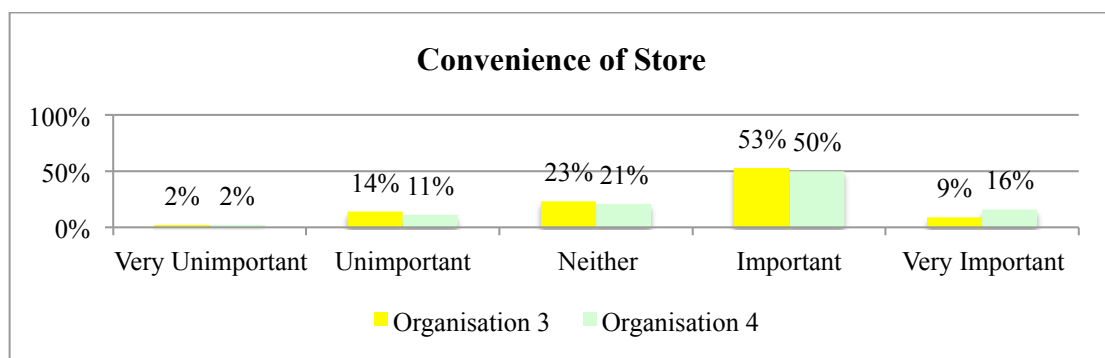
Table 71: Perceptions of convenience of store

N	Valid	202	100
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.53	3.67
Std. Error of Mean		.063	.094
Median		4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4
Std. Deviation		.899	.943
Variance		.808	.890
Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00
	50	4.00	4.00
	75	4.00	4.00

Table 72: Frequency and descriptive statistics

Convenience of Store									
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	3	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Unimportant	29	14.4	14.4	15.8	11	11.0	11.0	13.0
	Neither	46	22.8	22.8	38.6	21	21.0	21.0	34.0
	Important	106	52.5	52.5	91.1	50	50.0	50.0	84.0
	Very Important	18	8.9	8.9	100.0	16	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 73: Aspects of convenience of store



It can be said that the questionnaire results support the decisions made by the O/Ms, highlighting that consumers feel the convenience of getting to a store is important to them.

In conclusion, the questionnaire data thus far has further supported the qualitative findings of this PhD research. This highlights that in terms of aspects of shopping the various O/Ms are aware of their consumers' needs and wants.

### 5.3.4.2 Consumer perception of social media

Interestingly this research found that three out of four micro-organisations are very vocal on SNS. The O/Ms highlighted that they feel these platforms allow them to keep in touch with their stakeholders and build long-term relationships. Thus, participants were asked firstly how they heard about Organisations 3 and 4 and secondly, to indicate how they feel about finding a brand on social media. Tables 74 and 75 provide the statistical overview of the frequency and percentage with which the consumers responded to the question of how they heard about Organisations 3 and 4, which are visualised in a bar chart in Table 76.

Table 74: Aspects of consumer attitude towards finding brand on social media and how they heard about Organisations 3 and 4

Statistics					
		Finding Brand on Social Media	How did you hear about Org 3?	Finding Brand on Social Media	How did you hear about Org 4?
N	Valid	202	202	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.35	5.16	2.58	5.22
Std. Error of Mean		.077	.240	.114	.340
Median		2.00	8.00	2.00	8.00
Mode		2	8	2	8
Std. Deviation		1.088	3.406	1.139	3.404
Variance		1.183	11.600	1.297	11.587
Percentiles	25	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
	50	2.00	8.00	2.00	8.00
	75	3.00	8.00	3.00	8.00

Table 75: Frequency and descriptive statistics

How did you hear about Organisation 3?						How did you hear about Organisation 4?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Word of Mouth	71	35.1	35.1	35.1	Valid	Word of Mouth	36	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Magazine Ad	6	3.0	3.0	38.1		Magazine Ad	1	1.0	1.0	37.0
	Social Media	9	4.5	4.5	42.6		Social Media	4	4.0	4.0	41.0
	Google	1	.5	.5	43.1		Google	1	1.0	1.0	42.0
	Leaflet	1	.5	.5	43.6		Walked Past	54	54.0	54.0	96.0
	Website	3	1.5	1.5	45.0		Other	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Walked Past	97	48.0	48.0	93.1		Total	100	100.0	100.0	
	Other	14	6.9	6.9	100.0						
	Total	202	100.0	100.0							

Table 76: Aspects of hearing about Organisations 3 and 4

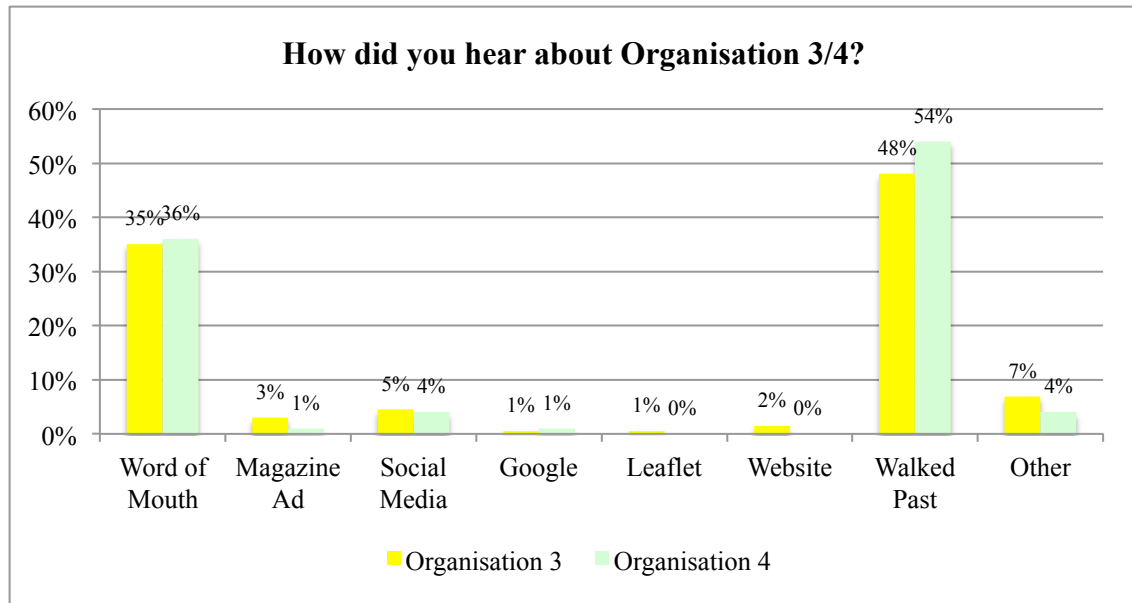


Table 76 indicates that the majority of consumers heard about the individual companies either by walking past the store or through word-of-mouth recommendations. Latter recommendations were predominantly made by friends, work colleagues, and/or members of staff. Looking at Tables 77 and 78, which provide the statistical evidence and visualisation of finding a brand on social media, the responses highlight that social media accounts are seen as ‘very unimportant’, ‘unimportant’ or ‘neither important nor unimportant’ in terms of finding a brand.

Table 77: Frequency and descriptive statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Unimportant	53	26.2	26.2	26.2	19	19.0	19.0	19.0
	Unimportant	65	32.2	32.2	58.4	32	32.0	32.0	51.0
	Neither	49	24.3	24.3	82.7	26	26.0	26.0	77.0
	Important	31	15.3	15.3	98.0	18	18.0	18.0	95.0
	Very Important	4	2.0	2.0	100.0	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total		202	100.0	100.0		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 78: Aspects of finding brand on social media

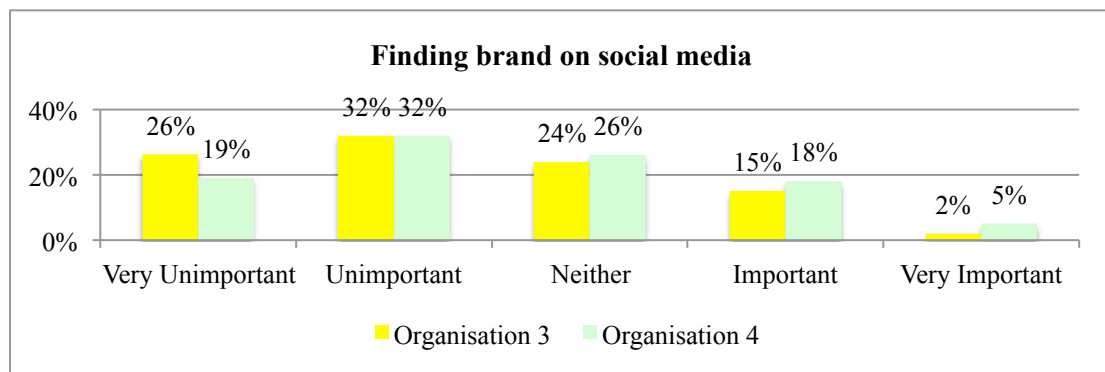
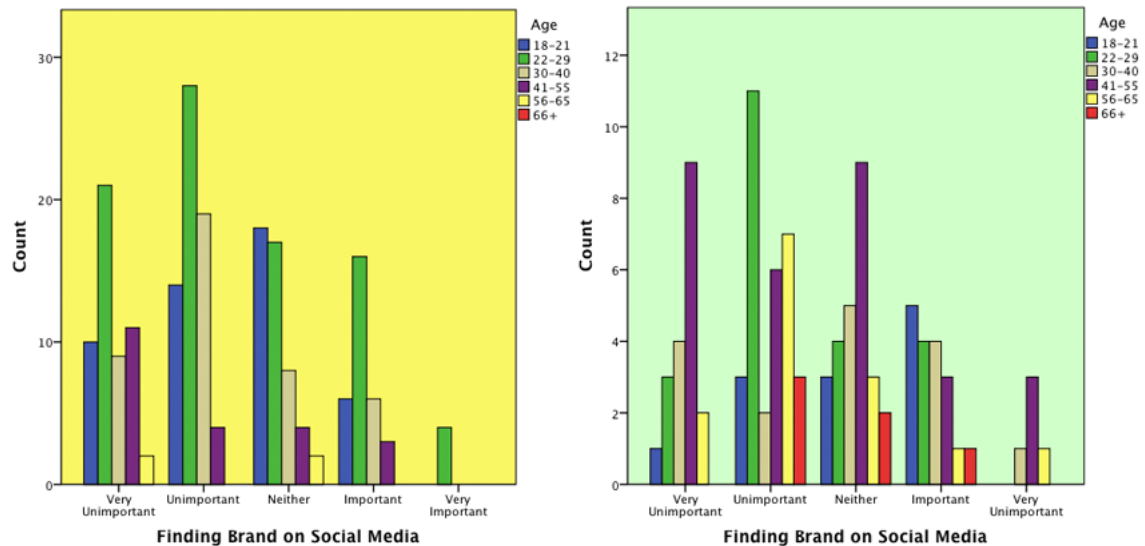


Table 79 provides a more detailed analysis of Table 78, in that it splits the individual answers by age group. In terms of the micro-organisations, Organisation 4 utilise their social media accounts at a limited capacity. A noteworthy observation that can be made from this graph is that even the ‘tech-savvy’ generation (Edwards, 2010b), which falls into the 18-21 and 22-29 age brackets, felt this way.

Table 79: Aspects of finding brand on social media according to age brackets



The follow-up interviews with various consumers from Organisations 3 and 4 offered some noteworthy results, in terms of digital communication. CI1 emphasises that “no matter how many times a label is to get their brand’s name on your Facebook page or Twitterfeed [...] [it] will [not] convince you to go and buy [that brand]” (CI1: 105). She furthermore states that although she is very active on social media, she would not follow clothing brands. In a similar manner CI2 highlights that for her, online platforms are valuable as research tools when it comes to specialist clothing, as recommendations can be viewed for specific products. However, she does not use social media to look for ‘everyday’ clothing or brands and, similar to CI1, does not follow them on any of her digital accounts (CI2: 106).

Looking back at Table 53 it becomes apparent that the average age of consumers shopping at Organisation 4 is 56 plus years, and have stated that they do not engage with social media (Q250Org4; Q273Org4; Q284Org4). In other words, various people highlighted that they neither have Twitter nor Facebook accounts, nor are they interested in online sales (Q250Org4; Q273Org4; Q284Org4 [hand written note that they do not look for brands on Facebook/Twitter as they do not have a social media account]).



The physical store provides the opportunity to touch and feel products, and talk to shop assistants “like in the old times” (CI3: 107). Thus, it can be said that Organisation 4’s digital engagement caters for the needs of their average consumer and does overall not play a dominant role.

In conclusion it can be said that the questionnaires highlight that there is a disconnection between the micro-organisations perception of using social media to promote their products to consumers, and the consumers actual use of social media. This observation and its implications will further be discussed in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

This PhD research investigated the corporate identity of micro-organisations in the UK's green slow-fashion industry. The key questions this research aimed to answer are:

- What are the elements of a micro-company's corporate identity within the context of the green slow-fashion industry?
- How do these micro-organisations fit within the sustainability agenda?
- What is the role of eco-labels in green slow-fashion organisations?

Chapter 2 provided an extensive literature review focusing on originally two main areas, which were then expanded to five: corporate identity, sustainability, and eco-labels, with the additional two literatures of value co-creation and entrepreneurship.

The following gaps were highlighted:

- Existing corporate identity models are predominantly focused on large organisations. Thus a question that remains is whether elements of these corporate identity frameworks are the same for micro-organisations.
- Corporate identity has neither a common definition nor a single dominant concept (Blombäck & Ramírez-Pasillas, 2012). In this manner, although they have some components in common, they also differ in others.
- Although authors (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2012) highlight that existing corporate identity models are too simplistic in nature and need to take the role of stakeholders into account, thus far, value co-creation and corporate identity have not been incorporated into the same framework.
- The relationship between slow-fashion, eco-labels, and micro-organisations has not been explored in-depth.

These gaps were not only addressed in the aim, objectives, and research questions, but also incorporated in the overall research process by utilising methodological tools that allowed the collection of rich data sets. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, it was vital to provide the reader with detailed information and examples on the individual cases, and thus an insight into the participants' perceptions of the individual micro-organisations. Findings were presented in Chapters 4 and 5, which also signposted key issues that are followed up in this section.

Three key aspects emerged in this PhD research: Firstly, Chapter 2 highlighted that corporate identity relies on the understanding and interpretation of the individual manager and how they see their organisation's identity (Blombäck & Brunninge,

2008). This implies that corporate identity is subjective and open to an individual's interpretation and much of the literature confirms this (Da Silveria et al., 2013). As is discussed in section 6.1 this aspect is key in understanding the newly established framework visualising a micro-company's identity: the Micro-Identity Model.

Secondly, Chapters 4 and 5 highlighted that in order to understand a micro-organisation's corporate identity one needs to take into account the micro-company's organisational processes including the supply chain and stakeholder relations. Thus, in order to be able to identify the individual components that make a micro-organisation's corporate identity, it is vital to understand the O/M's personal attributes, the underlying decision-making processes within the organisation, and the relationships with and the role of stakeholders.

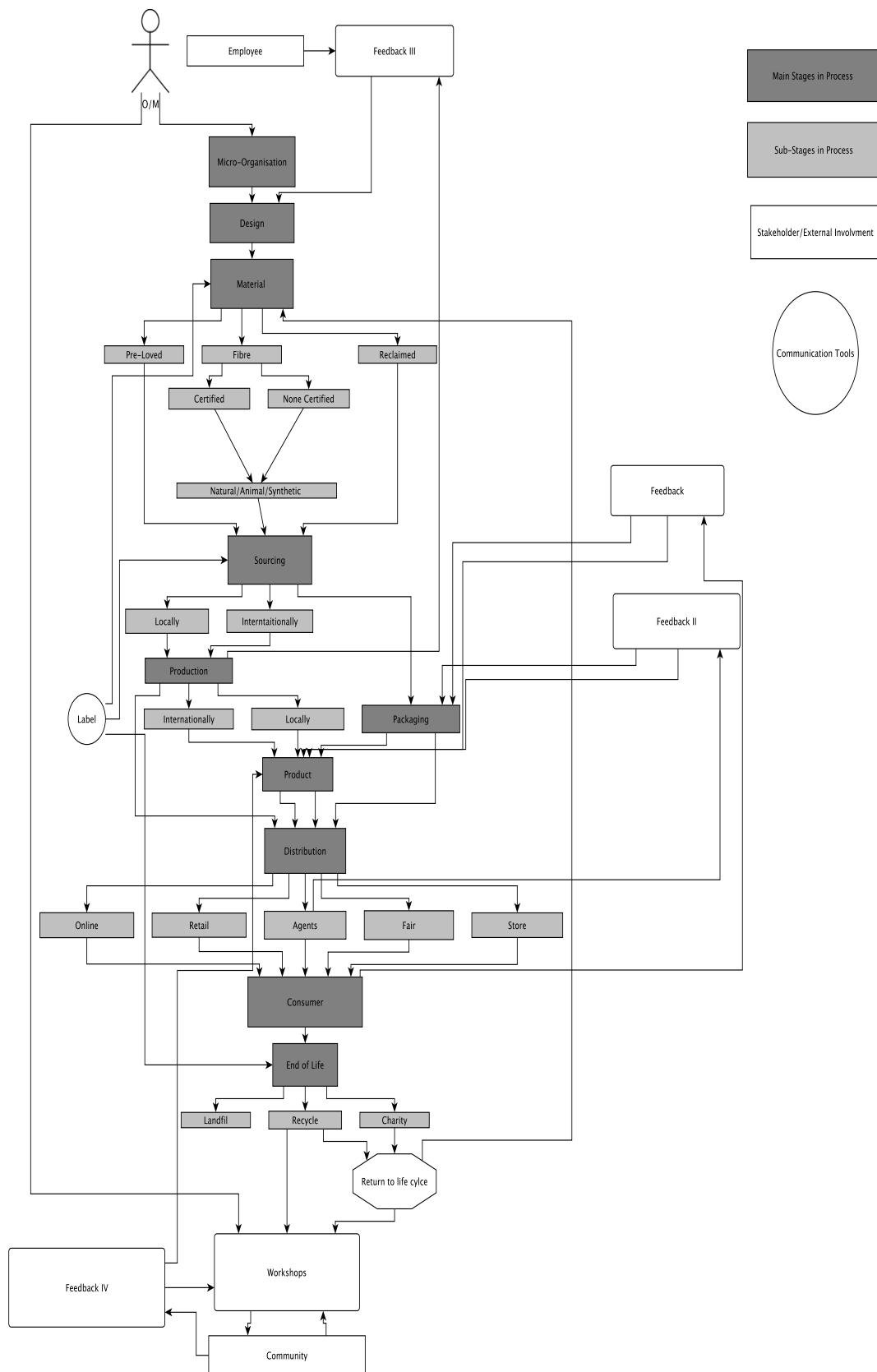
Thirdly, data indicated that whilst micro-organisations have an identity, which is the key focus of this discussion chapter, they do not have a corporate identity as portrayed by the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test (Balmer, 2012), the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003), or the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012). To reiterate this aspect further, the 'existing models'<sup>5</sup> can best be described as standalone concepts, which purely focus on elements of a company's corporate identity without necessarily taking the organisation's production processes, supply chain, and external environment into account. Although it can be argued that both the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003) and the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012) mention the external environment, this attention is rather limited in nature. The Corporate Identity Taxonomy only focuses on the industry identity as an external force (Melewar, 2003), whilst the Six-Station model expands on this premise and incorporates both stakeholders and environmental forces as key contributors to corporate identity (Suvatjis et al., 2012). The Micro-Identity Model builds upon these frameworks and extends their reach to the community as a whole, the physical environment (e.g. surroundings, location), and the decision-making processes behind establishing the individual micro-organisations. Thus, it can be said that a micro-organisation's identity is strongly linked to a company's organisational processes and a firm's interactions and relationships with stakeholders. Moreover, their identity, in the same vein as any corporate identity, could be strengthened through

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<sup>5</sup> From here on the 'existing models' refer to the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test (Balmer, 2012), the CIT (Melewar, 2003), and the Six-Station Model (Suvatjis et al., 2012).

communication tools, which are highlighted in Figure 62 as 'labels'. Practical contributions in terms of what these 'labels' incorporate, is highlighted in Chapter 7.

Figure 62: Organisational processes in micro-organisations operating in slow-fashion industry

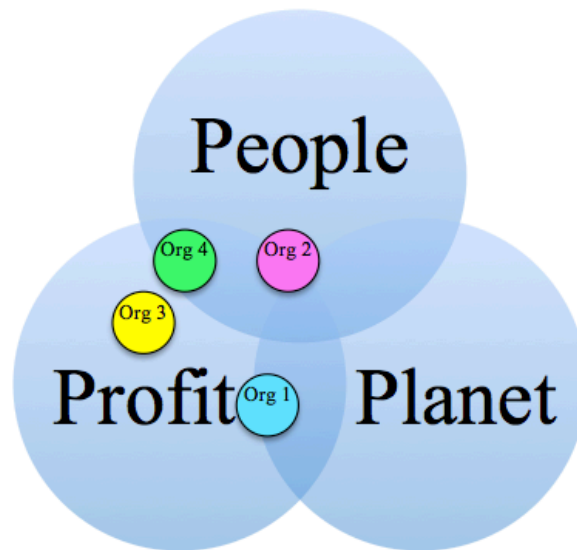


Before elaborating on the Micro-Identity Model it is vital to understand the underlying structure of micro-organisations. Figure 59 maps a micro-organisation's processes, their relationship with stakeholders and potential areas where communication tools could act as enhancers of its identity. The 'map' starts from the O/M and finishes at the box labelled 'community'. The dark grey boxes highlight the key stages in the production process; the light grey boxes indicate various options available to the O/M, which need to be decided upon before moving onto the next stage in the process; and lastly, the white boxes emphasise stakeholder/external involvement. The linking arrows between the individual boxes emphasises communication flow, which, for the purpose of making the infographic less complex, only point in one direction. However, it has to be emphasised that communication can be two-way, which is highlighted in section 6.2.2.

Furthermore, in order to understand the underlying implications of the decision-making process, it is vital to understand how the four focal micro-companies see sustainability. As was highlighted in Chapter 3, the participants were chosen in accordance with the following criteria: Firstly, the companies needed to be based in the UK and manufacture their garments and accessories locally. Secondly, the organisations needed to be operating within the green slow-fashion industry. Lastly, the organisations were classified as micro-companies. Although the micro-companies were selected according to these criteria, it was not specified how these organisations approached 'sustainability'. Chapter 2, section, 2.2.4 indicated that there are various ways to view sustainability, which may range from one extreme of seeing sustainability as an add-on strategy, to incorporating sustainability as a core value, to the other extreme of viewing sustainability as 'anti-capitalism'. Looking at the various findings an observation that can be brought forward is that although all participating micro-organisations highlighted that they incorporate aspects of sustainability, these might not necessarily be part of their essence, their core, or extended identity. To reiterated this further, O/M2 highlights that whilst she seeks to source environmentally friendly raw materials, the economic bottom-line of being a viable business is as important to her as the rest of the TBL. Similarly, O/M1 highlights that money plays a crucial factor and affects the way they are producing their garments, in the sense that she needs to be able to make a profit to pay her employees and invest in new raw materials. Moreover, whilst O/M1 claims to be sustainable, as she is using upcycling and recycling techniques, she collects her raw

materials by driving an ‘old banger car’ that is not environmentally friendly. This further reflects the debate on what is ‘sustainable fashion’ and who can truly claim to produce it? Whilst this PhD research is not laid out to provide a fully satisfying answer to this question, due to the focus of this study being on corporate identity, it can however highlight where the individual organisations are positioned within the sustainability spectrum. The findings have indicated that although the focal companies claim to be focusing on environmentally friendly production and seeking to be part of the local community, their ‘sustainability strategy’ has an add-on feel to it that provides the individual companies with a differential advantage. Figure 63 provides a visualisation of where the researcher sees the participants within the ‘people, planet, profit’ Venn diagram version of Elkington’s (1998) TBL. Organisation 1 was located at the intersection of profit and planet, as in the researcher’s opinion the company predominantly communicates the benefits of their production techniques: upcycling and recycling. At the same time, generating profits is of key importance, as Organisation 1 is O/M1’s main source of income. Organisation 2 comparatively has a more ‘rounded’ approach in that O/M2 wants her employees to feel valued and part of the brand. O/M2 stated that profits are important, as making money guarantees a sustainable business model. Aspects of the environmental component are touched upon, with raw materials being carefully sourced. However, a majority of them are sourced from overseas, which implies a larger carbon footprint. From the data it emerged that Organisation 3, whilst advertising to be a ‘local shop for local people’, the focus is on making money. Comparatively to all other participants, O/M3 does not involve her stakeholders in a majority of decisions. Organisation 4 seems to be taking great care of her stakeholders and profits at the same time. Whilst the designers have to be from a certain area and produce their products there, the raw materials do not necessarily come from the region. It has to be highlighted that Figure 60 is based on the researcher’s own perceptions of the companies, which similarly to sustainability, can be interpreted differently according to one’s own ‘reality’. However, this visualisation may help to understand what aspects are most important to the individual owner-managers and how this influences the overall decision-making process and components that are presented in the Micro-Identity model.

Figure 63: Perception of sustainability of the individual micro-organisations



A further way to illustrate the various stances taken and indicate the relationship between the four focal organisations is by mapping them according to Figure 1 (p.57), which was brought forward in the literature review. In this manner, Figure 64 provides a visualisation.

Figure 64: Visualisation of case companies and sustainability



To explain, Organisation 3 seems to be focused solely on profits, with environmental and social aspects taking a backseat, which is also reflected in the clothing production. On the other hand, Organisation 4 highlights that all products must be produced locally and, where possible sourced within the region. However, data indicate that this might be more of a differentiation strategy, to distinguish themselves from the high street. Both Organisations 1 and 2 seem to be closest to having incorporated sustainability as a part of their vision, mission, and values, however, as the findings indicated, they are also, at times, contradicting themselves.

In returning to an earlier point made, the following section highlights the stations (Figure 62) that emerged from Chapters 4 and 5 and are broken down into four sections (highlighted in the legend on the right hand side).

### Main stages in process

Altogether there are eleven main stages within the organisational processes of a micro-company, which are highlighted in a dark grey colour (Figure 59) and start from the O/M and finish at the box labelled 'End-of-life'. Any main stage marked with a '\*' highlights that various decisions need to be made before moving onto the next stage in the process. In other words, these stages have sub-categories. The main stages are briefly explained in the following:

O/M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founder of the company, sole-risk taker, key decision maker</li> </ul>
Micro-Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established as extension of O/M's personality</li> <li>• Incorporates O/M'S vision, values, and ideals</li> </ul>
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to the visual identity, the product design, and the brand's design (e.g. layout, production technique)</li> </ul>
Material*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to any (raw) material used within production process</li> </ul>
Sourcing*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on gaining raw materials for production processes</li> </ul>
Production*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place of manufacturing site</li> </ul>
Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material used to package finished products</li> </ul>
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This refers to the end product</li> </ul>
Distribution*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on the distribution of the end-product</li> </ul>
Consumer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipient of end-product</li> </ul>
End-of-life*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally the end of a product's life-cycle, within sustainable fashion organisations, there are various options to extend this life-cycle</li> </ul>

### Sub-stages in process

Five of the main stages have sub-stages, which implies that there are various choices available to the O/M. Within Figure 59 the sub-stages are highlighted in light grey and are as follows:



Material*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Material options available include, but are not limited to: (non-)certified fibre, pre-loved garments, reclaimed material, and natural and animal material</li> </ul>
Sourcing*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Dependent on availability, but can either be locally, nationally, or internationally sourced</li> </ul>
Production*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•In this specific research context production is locally, but depending on the circumstances could also be outsourced internationally</li> </ul>
Distribution*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Through various channels, such as: agents, online, or retail</li> </ul>
End-of-life*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Formally the end of a product's life-cycle, in this context there are various options to extend this life-cycle: e.g. landfill, recycling, charity shop</li> </ul>

### Stakeholder/external involvement

Boxes shaded in white concern stakeholder and/or external involvement with the individual micro-organisation.

Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Members of the organisation</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Actively engaged to enhance product's life-cycle, ideally co-creator of value</li> </ul>
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Organised by micro-organisation for educational and VCC purposes</li> </ul>
Feedback Loops (I-IV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Highlight areas of enhanced two-way communication</li> <li>•Mark areas for value co-creation</li> </ul>

### Communication tools

The last two areas that need to be further explained are 'label' and 'return to life cycle'. Label refers to any communication tool that would allow these micro-organisations to enhance their aspects of sustainability within the end-of-life stage, the sourcing process and the material in more general terms. The 'return to life cycle' refers to educating consumers about end-of-life options of their garments.

Although it has previously been stated that a micro-organisation's identity differs from the interpretation of the existing models, Chapters 4 and 5 clearly demonstrate that various components, including, but not limited to behaviour, communication, symbols, culture, structure, strategy, and stakeholders are featured in the Micro-Identity Model. Contrary to the existing models, these elements cannot be

clearly separated and placed in individual boxes leading to the creation of a corporate identity. Instead, it appears that these components are strongly overlapping and can be found at various stages within a company's organisational processes, which is visualised in Figure 65<sup>6</sup>. The infographic highlights one key important aspect: a micro-company's identity is messy in nature, which implies that it is continuously evolving and individual components are not only featured across the organisational processes, but also overlap strongly in some parts. Depending on the O/M's interpretation the individual components vary in strength and thus are open to an individual's interpretation (Da Silveria et al., 2013).

Building on Figure 65, Figure 66 provides a visualisation of the various themes found in Chapters 4 and 5 and how they relate to and are linked with the individual micro-companies' organisational processes. In other words, this infographic highlights where themes from Chapters 4 and 5 emerged and how they relate to one another. A noteworthy observation is that the key Micro-Identity Model components were partly found in similar places as the existing model themes, which implies that the components are strongly interlinked. This aspect and the individual components of the Micro-Identity Model are further discussed in the following sections.

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<sup>6</sup> For presentation purposes, the colourful spots have been limited, which means that various components spread over even more aspects than the ones indicated.

Figure 65: Corporate identity elements and organisational processes in micro-organisations

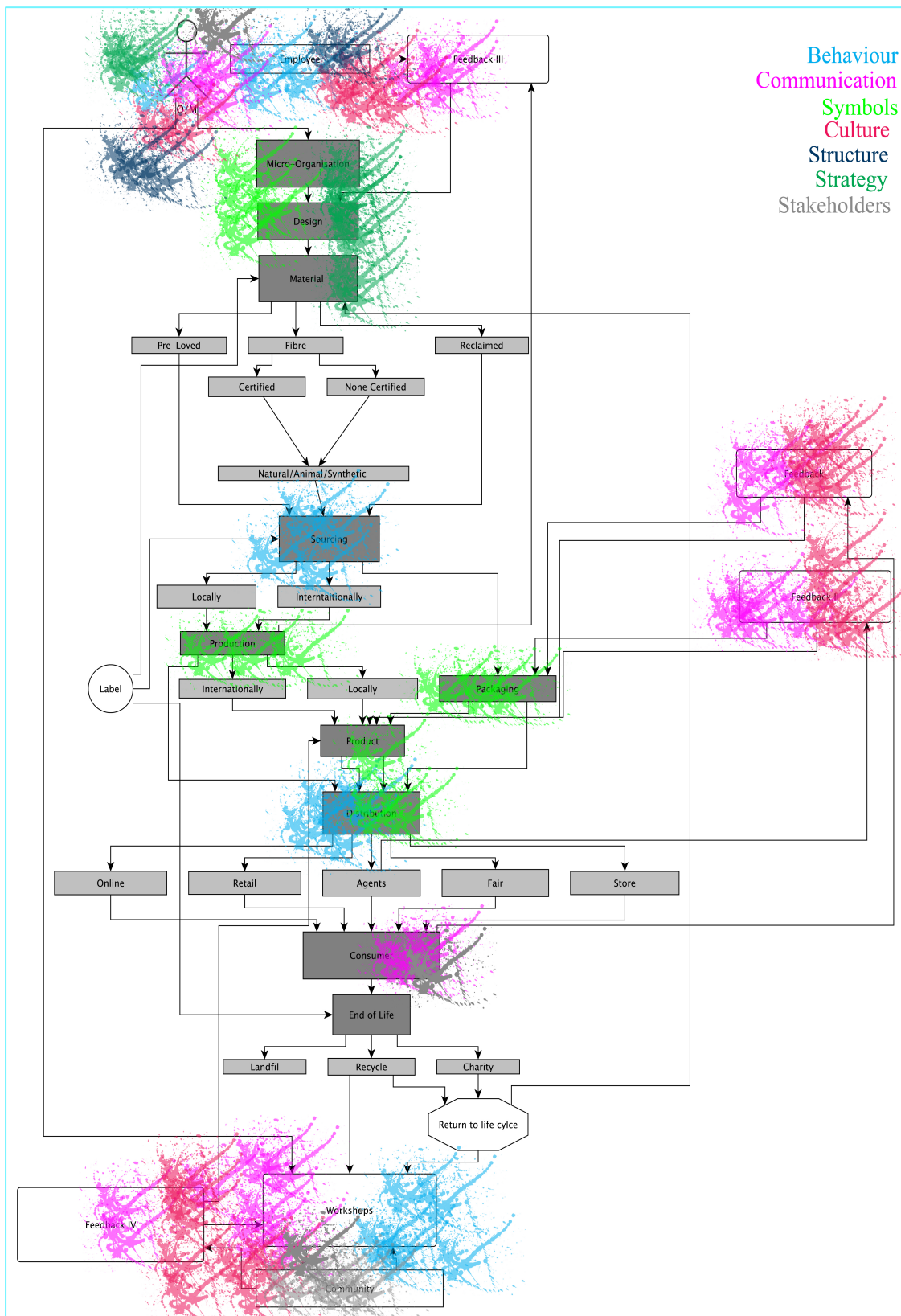
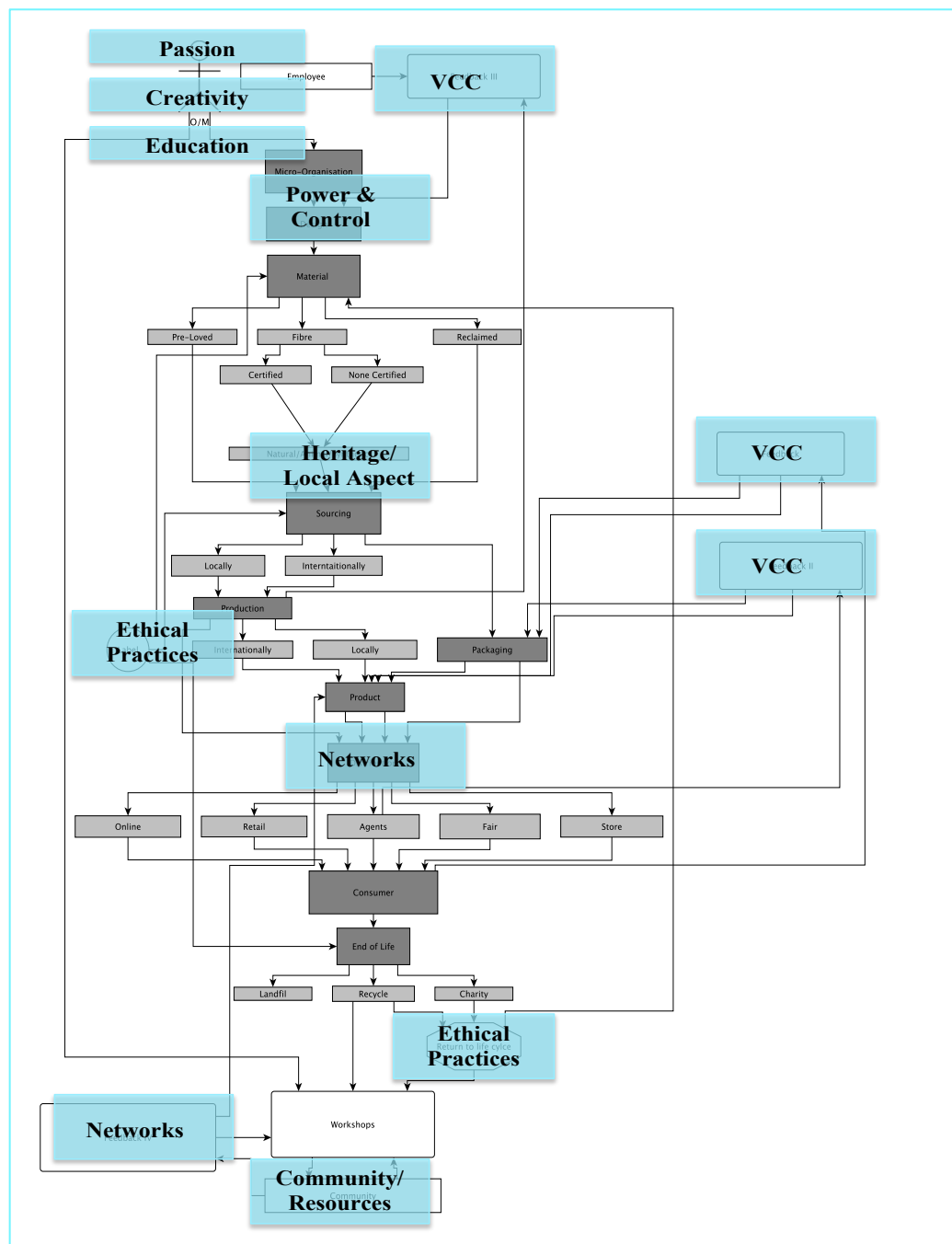
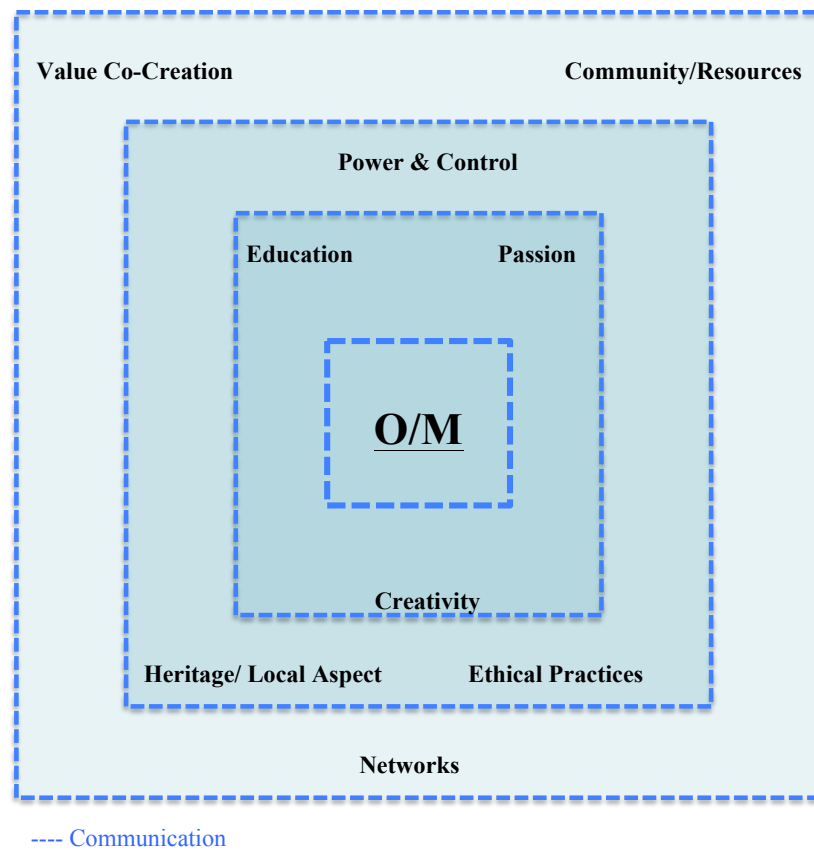


Figure 66: Key themes and organisational processes in micro-organisations



Moving on from Figure 66, the key themes highlighted in the blue boxes were lifted from the organisational process map (Figure 66) and displayed in terms of their relation to each another, which visualises the newly developed Micro-Identity Model (Figure 67). This model not only contributes to an on-going debate about corporate identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007; Urde, 2013), but also to two understudied fields: micro-organisations and the creative and cultural industries (Chaston & Sadler-Smith, 2011).

Figure 67: The Micro-Identity Model



The following sections firstly highlight general remarks about the Micro-Identity Model and secondly break the model down into various stages and discuss the individual components. Parallels (where possible) are drawn between the newly created model and existing frameworks, whilst highlighting any links to the areas of sustainability, value co-creation, and eco-labels, as discussed in Chapter 2. Novel insights are identified and discussed in terms of contributions to theory, practice, and policy.

### 6.1 General remarks about the Micro-Identity Model

A key distinction between the existing models and the Micro-Identity Model is that a micro-organisation's identity is strongly linked to and cannot be seen separate from a micro-organisation's organisational processes. This implies that the founding history, the decisions made about materials used, the production processes, and design(s) are as much part of the Micro-Identity Model as the company's culture, its visual identity, and its management style. Thus, it can be said that general contributions of this research are: firstly, the detailed mapping of a micro-organisation's processes and

secondly, the link between a micro-organisation's processes and their identity. In other words, within this research the way micro-companies operate is key to their differentiation strategy and enables them to determine who they are as an organisation and what they stand for. In this sense, their '*reality*' of sustainability influences various aspects of their identity. The way the individual owner-managers perceive their '*reality*' of sustainability has an impact on the decision-making process within the way these companies produce their fashion garments. The only existing model that touches upon organisational processes, in terms of production and supply chain, is the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012): The *strategy station* incorporates the company's products and services, whilst the *human power station* highlights that stakeholders (external) play a key role in the creation of a company's corporate identity. The Micro-Identity Model builds upon these aspects by not only focusing on stakeholders as part of the supply chain, but also as allies for value co-creation and key parts in the production processes. These stakeholder relationships are a vital part of these micro-companies' identities and are incorporated in the underlying decision-making processes, which are key to understanding their identity.

The Micro-Identity Model infographic (Figure 62) was carefully organised and continuously developed to reach the final design. Initial attempts to visualise the model featured a flower-like arrangement, various overlapping circles, and boxes with a manifold of arrows leading from and to the individual components. After careful consideration however, previous drafts were dismissed on various accounts: Firstly, in accordance with past research, the Micro-Identity Model does not weight any of its components and thus, sees all its elements as equally important. Therefore, circles in various sizes and boxes connected with varying arrow lengths were dismissed, as the researcher was not able to provide any valid justification or support for putting more emphasis on one component over another. Although it could be argued that in reality an O/M might rate one component higher than another one, which was demonstrated in Chapter 5, and thus weighting components could be justified, the contrary is argued. The importance of individual themes is solely dependent on the O/M's interpretation and can only be judged by the person in charge, which reinforces past findings (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2008; Rodrigues & Child, 2008; Da Silveria et al., 2013). To reiterate this point further, some O/Ms may feel that, for example, creativity is more important to them than education, due to their background and own personality, whilst others may believe it is the other way around. Thus, within this

chapter it is not argued which strand is of more importance in the model, but rather that each theme displayed in Figure 62 is necessary to establish and maintain a micro-company's identity.

Secondly, similarly to the role of the O/M the role of communication differs dramatically from the existing models. Both, Balmer (2012) and Melewar (2003) recognise that communication is a key variable in establishing a company's corporate identity and make it an integral part of their framework. Suvatjis et al. (2012) take the communication component one step further, indicating that communication is not only a building block, but also links the individual corporate identity parts together. This is visualised through arrows that indicate a clockwise movement from one component to another (Figure 6), which has been flagged up as a key criticism of the framework.

In the same vein as previous models the Micro-Identity Model deems communication as a vital component. Contrary to the existing models, Chapters 4 and 5 have emphasised that communication is not simply a standalone part, but rather is the essence underlying the Micro-Identity Model construct. Stated alternatively, the data have indicated that without communication none of the individual components can function, and the O/Ms are unable to reach their stakeholders, discuss their ideas, and inform anyone interested in the company about their ways of producing slow-fashion. This implies that the Micro-Identity Model sees communication not only as part of all micro-identity components, but also as an element that facilitates the exchange of information, knowledge, and discussions. In this manner, it could be said that the lines between communication and other components are blurred to the extent that they are not only strongly overlapping, but also are key parts of one another. This is further elaborated in section 6.2.2.

Moreover, in contrast to the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012) this research found that communication is not simply a clockwise focused function, but rather is messy and all-inclusive in nature. Within the Micro-Identity Model communication is visualised through blue dotted lines that surround all elements of the Micro-Identity Model at all levels. The dotted lines were chosen on purpose, to illustrate that communication is not a one-way system, but rather a fluent, two-way process that allows micro-companies not only to inform their stakeholders about their values, offers, and philosophy, but also to enable stakeholders to lead discussions and suggestions with the O/M. This is further discussed in section 6.2.2.

Thirdly, this research has found that one can distinguish between three levels within the Micro-Identity Model: personal, organisational, and community level, which are highlighted in different shades of blue. Although there is no weighting between individual components per se, the research highlighted that there is a level of influence and control that distinguishes the personal level (closest to O/M), the organisational level (middle square), and the external environmental factors (furthest away from O/M) from one another. The three different shaded squares indicate that the closer the components are to the O/M the more they can be ‘influenced’ and ‘controlled’ by the O/M. For example, whilst an individual can control their own educational paths, they are unable to influence people’s contributions to help further develop and improve their products/services (Mahr et al., 2014). This complements what has been stated in Chapter 2: whilst value co-creation is desirable and can add value to an organisation, it is dependent on the external environment and their commitment to co-creating value (Lusch & Vargo, 2006b).

Fourthly, Chapter 2 highlighted that the majority of existing models were illustrated either as circle-like creations (Balmer & Greyser, 2002; Suvatjits et al., 2012) or in a fan-like diagram that gradually narrows down its sub-categories and key components to reach the end result: corporate identity (Melewar, 2003). Whilst it could be argued that this would make a strong case to create a new Micro-Identity Model following in these footsteps, the research data has indicated that this is not the best fit for these micro-organisations. The key difference between the existing models and the Micro-Identity Model is the fact that a micro-organisation’s identity is established from the inside out. In other words, the core of the Micro-Identity Model is focused around the O/M, who plays a key role in continuously designing and re-shaping the company’s ‘identity’, which is further investigated in section 6.2.1.

Lastly, a further distinctiveness of the Micro-Identity Model is that it acknowledges that several of its components take a long time to establish and need to be carefully nurtured. For example, the community level themes are predominantly focused on working together with third parties, such as supply chain members or the general public. In order to gain insider knowledge into their stakeholders’ expertise, relationships need to be established, which are based on mutual trust and, ideally, long-term commitment. These relationships can bridge and facilitate aspects surrounding value co-creation (Lusch & Vargo, 2006b), which is a key part of differentiation for these micro-organisations and thus, a vital element in their identity.



In summary, the Micro-Identity Model acknowledges not only a central role for the O/M and communication, but also emphasises that a micro-company's identity is created from the inside out. Moreover, in the same vein as previous frameworks highlight that individual components are not weighted, the Micro-Identity Model takes this even further by suggesting that various themes, depending on the O/Ms personality and attitudes, could not only be stronger represented in their organisation's Micro-Identity Model, but also may strongly overlap. The following sections discuss the individual components in more depth.

## **6.2 The role of the O/M and communication in the Micro-Identity Model**

This section focuses on: **A)** The O/M's central role in the identity creation process, which can best be described as an 'explosion' from the inside out. **B)** The role of communication as not simply a standalone component, but rather the underlying construct of a micro-organisation's identity.

### **6.2.1 The role of the O/M**

Throughout Chapter 2 it became apparent that management, leadership, and corporate structure are vital elements of the existing models. Within the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test the actual identity incorporates aspects of leadership and management style and reflects on what "values [are] held by management" (Balmer & Greyser, 2002: 73). Similarly, the Corporate Identity Taxonomy acknowledges that management plays a key role (Melewar, 2003) in that they can influence and encourage certain types of behaviour (Kelliher & Reinl, 2009). The Six-Station model further expands on previous frameworks, by dedicating the *head station* to issues surrounding top management, leadership, and mission/vision/values (Suvatjis et al., 2012). This highlights that incorporating aspects of management, leadership, and corporate structure are not new phenomena, but rather can be seen as key components in shaping a company's corporate identity. A further commonality between the existing models is that these three components predominantly refer to a group of people rather than a single individual. This can be explained due to the nature and setting of previous research designs: large organisations. In this sense, Chapter 2 indicated that the creation of a large organisation's corporate identity lies with top management, who seek to ideally project a positive image to the individual stakeholders (Brønn & Berg, 2005).

Accordingly, the implementation process of corporate identity in large organisations follows a top-down approach (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; Powell et al., 2008), which implies that key decisions are made at top level and is implemented throughout the various layers until it reaches the ‘bottom’ of an organisation (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

The Micro-Identity Model agrees with the existing models in that top management, which in the case of micro-companies refers to the O/Ms, plays a key part in shaping an organisation’s identity. A key distinction however is that the findings highlighted that the O/M is more than simply a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. Chapter 5 especially emphasised that the O/M plays a central role and is what completes this jigsaw. To reiterate this point further, whilst the founder of the company was explicitly mentioned in the Corporate Identity Taxonomy, it merely sees the founder as a sub-category that helps to shape an organisation’s corporate culture (Melewar, 2003). In addition, the Micro-Identity Model sees the O/M as the core of the micro-company’s identity, creating its essence from the inside out. This can be explained due to characteristics associated with and the nature of micro-organisations: in contrast to large companies in which ownership and management are often detached from one another (He & Sommer, 2010), within micro-companies the O/M as the sole risk-taker embodies both roles (Devins et al., 2005). Thus, within micro-organisations the O/M is actively engaged with the business and involved in developing new strategies to move the company forward (Voss et al., 2014), which is also supported in the literature (Devins, 1999).

Furthermore, after consulting the entrepreneurship literature, it became apparent that the owner-managers are much more than individuals who established a business. Rather they can be seen as people, who embraced an opportunity and made their dreams a reality (Audretsch, 2012). They took advantage of being able to set up their own business and embraced their idea without necessarily thinking about risks. Instead they are more focused on ‘profitability’ in terms of being able to experiment with garment creations and gain experience in working with different people, materials and techniques (Scott, 2012). In other words, it is the owner-manager’s personality and drive that creates tangible and intangible assets, which over time can manifest in a competitive advantage (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001).

The findings highlighted that the O/Ms describe their company as an extension of themselves, which implies that their personal beliefs, attitudes, and values are

mirrored within the vision/mission/values of their organisation. This has a key implication: differing from existing models, the Micro-Identity Model suggests that a micro-organisation's identity is strongly dependent on the O/M's personality and attitudes: without the O/M the micro-organisation would not and cannot exist. Although no organisation can exist without having someone establishing the company first, the Micro-Identity Model indicates that a micro-organisation lives and dies with the O/M. Accordingly, if the O/M of such a company was to step down, this micro-organisation would either disappear completely or realign its identity to the new owner's personality traits and thus change dramatically. This is further supported through the social constructionist theory that was utilised to explain the various different viewpoints that can be held about sustainability. As was highlighted, there are different 'realities' in existence, which depend on the social construction of an individual's mind and/or their interaction with other people (Shotter, 2003). In this sense, if a micro-organisation was to change ownership, the new owner depending on the way they understand the founder's original intentions could interpret the founder's reality of what the company stands for differently. Whilst the *realities* may overlap, they will not be the same, as they are dependent on the individual (Klostermann & Cramer, 2007). To reiterate this further, detailed explanations that can be provided are: Firstly, and especially in this case, these micro-organisations' values are strongly aligned with the O/M's personal beliefs and attitudes. This implies that finding someone with similar personality traits wanting to take over such a company could be challenging. Secondly, the O/M in such ventures is the sole risk-taker and as such usually established the company using his/her own assets (Clark & Douglas, 2010; EC, 2013a). Depending on the profitability of the business they might find an investor willing to take over the organisation, which links to the third and last aspects: O/Ms of micro-organisations may fail to put a succession plan into place (Clifford, 2008) and thus neither find an investor nor opportunist to take over the organisation. The lack of implementing a succession plan emerged in Chapter 5, highlighting that the majority of O/Ms, whilst believing in future growth of their business, did not have any long-term perspectives (10 to 15 year planning strategies). This has various implications, whilst the O/Ms, in order to stay competitive, need to produce garments that are fashionable and accommodating their consumers' taste, they also need to be able to demonstrate strong business skills that leads the organisation in a clear direction for future prosperity. In this sense, this research findings agree with previous

research that suggests that there needs to be a balance between producing innovative fashion garments and practical business skills (Marlem et al., 2009; BFC, 2010). However, this being said, there needs to be room for the individual's personality to unfold. As highlighted, the entrepreneurial spirit can provide unique assets that distinguish these micro-organisations from others. It is the owner-manager's personality and creativity that provides these businesses with character, which is also reflected through their identity. Thus, whilst a balance between innovation and practical business skills is essential in sustaining the business, putting too much focus on this balance may hinder the creation of entities that truly mirror the O/Ms personality and ambition.

A further distinction between the existing models and the Micro-Identity Model is that the latter is implemented using a bottom-up approach. The data highlighted that the O/M is continuously integrating their stakeholders in the decision-making processes and asking for feedback. Rather than 'forcing' their ideas onto their workforce, the O/Ms seek advice and guidance from them, which links with the bottom-up approach. Interestingly, one of the case organisations did not integrate a bottom-up approach per se, but rather 'forced' her own style of doing things and her ideas onto her employees. After the initial in situ research the researcher herself has been keeping in touch with the focal companies and learned that this company not only lost various employees/designers to competition, but also is currently struggling to keep the business afloat. This suggests that including a bottom-up approach and incorporating stakeholders into the businesses processes is vital for these organisations. This also supports the metaphor of the explosion from the inside out: similarly to a firework, an owner-manager can grab their audiences' attention. Thus, rather than only igniting a single firecracker, multiple ones need to explode in order to create a spectacular show. Similarly, if the O/M can convince their stakeholders to buy into their brand and let them be part of it, their corporate identity could grow and potentially become stronger from the inside out. This further relates to the literature on value co-creation, which sees establishing a relationship with stakeholders, both internal and external, as a prerequisite in becoming a business that can truly create a USP with the needs and wants of consumers in mind.

Moreover, a noteworthy aspect that emerged from the data is that a micro-organisation's identity is continuously evolving and re-shaping through feedback and guidance provided by individual stakeholders and changes in the environment. This

phenomenon can be explained through characteristics associated with micro-organisations, as they are said to be able to adapt to changes in the environment quicker and easier than for example large organisations (Goffee & Scase, 1995). Although this aspect is not a new finding per se, as Topalian (2003) acknowledged that corporate identity itself is not a static asset and thus continuously adapts to the transforming environment, the author implies that these changes happen over a (long) period of time. The data gathered from employee shadowing has indicated that within these micro-organisations change can happen quickly and even spontaneously.

In summary, it can be said that although there are similarities between the understanding of the role of management, leadership, and corporate structure in the old corporate identity frameworks and the Micro-Identity Model, they also contrast dramatically in the way the individual components influence the overall identity of the micro-organisations. As demonstrated throughout Chapter 5 the O/Ms are more than simply the founders of these micro-organisations, they are the creators of an entity that inherits their personal features and attributes and continuously develops over time. Stated alternatively, the role of the O/M within the Micro-Identity Model is more than simply being the individual enforcing what the organisation stands for, but rather is the driving force in creating a unique organisation with a unique identity that similarly to any human being can change their behaviour and attitude (Juntunen, 2012). This implies that the Micro-Identity Model is created from the inside out, with the O/M taking on a new role and function within the corporate identity creation process.

### **6.2.2 The role of communication**

Communication plays a vital part not only within the existing models, but also for the individual micro-organisations. It is the underlying essence that allows a micro-company to inform its stakeholders on what the organisation stands for, whilst also promoting their products to their target audiences.

The previous section briefly touched upon the importance of communication: within the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test (Balmer & Soenen, 1999) the c<sup>1</sup>ommunicated identity focuses on communication strategies, thereby distinguishing between controllable and uncontrollable elements (Kleyn et al., 2012). The Corporate Identity Taxonomy extends these aspects and broadens the meaning by acknowledging that

communication can be utilised to either share information, knowledge, or meaning (Leydesdorff, 2001). Thus, it can be divided into three categories: marketing, organisational, and management communication (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). The key advancement brought forward in the Six-Station model is the inclusion of digital communication (Suvatjis et al., 2012), which, over the past two decades, has become a prominent part in organisations' daily routines (Ryan & Jones, 2012; Samson et al., 2014).

Similarly to the existing models the Micro-Identity Model acknowledges that communication is vital. This research indicated that communication is neither a standalone component, nor a one-way process. Chapter 5 highlighted that communication is constant, not only within the micro-organisations, but also in terms of keeping in touch with external stakeholders and facilitating discussions. The data clearly demonstrated that all aspects of these micro-organisations are linked to communication. Thus, within the Micro-Identity Model communication is seen as a strategy, a way of interacting with stakeholders, and the underlying essences of establishing, creating, and maintaining an identity. Within the Micro-Identity Model the theme is visualised through dotted lines, which were purposefully chosen: Not only do these dotted lines indicate that communication flows between the various elements and are strongly interlinked, but also that communication is a key part of all components. This reinforces a statement made earlier: the lines between communication and the various Micro-Identity Model components are blurred and overlap strongly. Chapter 5 clearly highlighted that communication is represented in all aspects of the business, thus a distinctive feature of the Micro-Identity Model is that 'communication' as a theme cannot be illustrated as:

- A) A separate component that shows no interactions with other strands and is directed in that arrows point in only one direction - to corporate identity – as is the case in the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003).
- B) A station that is situated between the *creativity* and *human power station* and similarly to the Corporate Identity Taxonomy is directed in a one-way clockwise direction (Suvatjis et al., 2012)
- C) An identity that “is most clearly revealed in terms of ‘controllable’ channels of corporate communication” (Balmer & Stuart, 2004: 5). Although the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test is the only corporate identity model that acknowledges that communication is linked to each of the various identities, it does not indicate that communication is necessary for other ‘identities’ to be projected.

In accordance with the existing models, the Micro-Identity Model sees communication as a strategic tool that informs, shares knowledge with, and creates meaning for stakeholders (e.g. Melewar, 2003). A noteworthy observation that emerged from the data is that the Micro-Identity Model puts a strong emphasis on two-way communication processes. This means that these micro-organisation not only use communication as a strategic tool to share and promote their products/services offered to their various audiences, but also actively seek to engage with all members involved in the individual companies by providing opportunities in form of feedback sessions and comments boxes. This was touched upon in Chapter 5 and indicated as feedback loops (Figure 50). The active engagement with stakeholders links to a further component: value co-creation, which is discussed in section 6.5.1.

As previously highlighted, the existing models spilt communication into three sub-categories: controlled, uncontrolled, and indirect communication (Melewar, 2003) or external, internal, and digital communication (Suvatjis et al., 2012). Similarly to the existing models, the Micro-Identity Model agrees that there are aspects of controlled, uncontrolled, and indirect communication, which are spread across three main methods of communication: face-to-face, digital, and print. This implies that contrary to the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012), which categorise digital communication as a third stakeholder group, the Micro-Identity Model sees digital communication as a means to reach their target audiences. Stated alternatively, within the Six-Station model the *communication station* focuses on internal, external, and digital communication. However, Chapter 5 indicated that the O/Ms utilise digital communication, such as SNS, email, and websites as tools to build upon existing relationships with stakeholders (internal and external) and keep followers up-to-date about events and workshops. Thus, it can be said that within this research the two main groups with whom O/Ms and/or micro-organisations communicate are: internal and external stakeholders. This further emphasises a statement made previously, communication within these micro-organisations is integrated.

Within the existing models communication strategy predominantly focuses on aspects of content in terms of whether it is controlled by the organisation, is uncontrolled, or indirectly related to the business. These aspects are the same within the micro-organisation's identity. However, the existing models also distinguished between marketing, organisational, and management communication (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Although this distinction might be vital for large companies, within

the research findings they did not emerge as dominant topics. Chapter 5 highlighted that the majority of O/Ms communicate the same messages to their various audiences: the only difference that one might see is in terms of the formal and informal use of language. Whilst the O/Ms and their employees converse in an informal manner, the communication style with external stakeholders takes on a more formal approach. Moreover, as has been previously stated the O/M is the epitome of the organisation, thus management and organisational communication, in this case fall into the same category. Although it can be argued that marketing communication in terms of promotion and advertising is represented in the data, it also becomes apparent that this type of communication is currently not only under used in these organisations, but also not a top priority for the individual O/Ms. A further question that was raised within Chapters 4 and 5 is whether the O/Ms actually understand the meaning of marketing. Although the researcher is unable to provide a clear-cut answer to this question, Chapter 7 suggests various practical contributions that enable the individual micro-organisations to enhance their overall profile on SNS and create more effective advertising materials, based on the findings.

A further distinction to previous models is that the Micro-Identity Model sees communication as a connector between the various components. Although arguably Suvatjis et al. (2012) touch upon this aspect by acknowledging that communication is not only a component, but also a link between the individual stations, they emphasise that the communication stream is moving in a clockwise direction only. The data in this PhD research did not indicate that communication is directed one way, but rather flows 'freely' across all elements. The findings demonstrated that communication is constant, continuous, and can be initiated by any member involved in the micro-organisation. Thus, the communication process within these organisations can best be described in the same manner as semi-structured interviews: "conversational, flexible, and fluid" (Mason, 2002: 225). This implies that these micro-organisations not only communicate with their stakeholders, but also can engage with them over topics of interest, which include, but are not limited to their designs and general practices. This links back to the company's underlying processes: stakeholders are involved at all stages in the production process, thus in order to encourage the co-creation of value a dialogue between the micro-organisation and stakeholders is necessary. The involvement can happen at any stage, which further justifies illustrating communication as an open system.



In summary, communication is not only a key component of the Micro-Identity Model, but also the essence that connects one theme to another. This implies that stakeholders are constantly involved in the communication process, and able to provide feedback and guidance, whilst the O/Ms have the opportunity to respond quickly to them. Linking this back to the justification for visualising communication as dotted lines, both Chapters 4 and 5 repeatedly highlight that communication is present at all times. Thus, rather than indicating direction of individual communication processes through arrows, which would make a model messy and unclear, and weighting the component as a whole more important than others, the theme in the Micro-Identity Model, is visualised as an all-inclusive element that forms the baseline of creating an identity.

### **6.3 Personal level: the role of passion, creativity, and education**

The three themes forming the personal level are strongly linked to the O/M, and thus, as aforementioned, can be more easily controlled and influenced by them. Looking back at Figure 61, it becomes apparent that these three strands are also influenced by components of the existing models, including, but not limited to behaviour, communication, culture, symbols, and structure.

#### **6.3.1 The role of passion**

Passion emerged as a dominant theme throughout the various data sets. Chapter 5 highlighted that this strand was found radiating from the individual O/Ms when talking about their organisation, about their production, and their intentions behind setting up the business, the employees, who were enthusiastic about their place of work, and other stakeholders, who commented positively about the atmosphere and the products/services. This links to the characteristics that can be found in cultural entrepreneurs: individuals that seize opportunities and take advantage of them, who at the same time can be described as dreamers (Pinchot, 1987). It is their belief in and their attitude towards their garment collections that is reflected within ‘passion’. To reiterate this point further, the term *passion* can best be described as a “strong and barely controllable emotion [or] an intense desire or enthusiasm for something” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014a). The aspect of passion in SME research is not a new phenomenon per se, as it is seen as a key component within organisational learning

(Morrison & Bergin-Seers, 2002) and inevitable for establishing a bond between stakeholders and a brand and/or a brand's products/services (Simões et al., 2005). Although this theme is reoccurring within various areas of business management, to the researchers knowledge it has – thus far - not been incorporated and/or considered in corporate identity research.

Figure 61 clearly illustrates that a number of themes from the existing models not only feature within various areas of a micro-organisation's processes, but also strongly overlap. Various links can be drawn between passion and the Corporate Identity Taxonomy's corporate culture and behaviour theme (Melewar, 2003), the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test's c<sup>4</sup>ultural identity (Balmer, 2012), and the Six-Station model's *human power* and *critical triplet station* (Suvatjis et al., 2012). Both the c<sup>4</sup>ultural identity (Balmer, 2012) and corporate culture (Melewar, 2003) acknowledge that the O/M plays a key role in shaping a company's internal dynamics. Their personal attitudes set the tone of how people interact with one another, which, in this research, was described as friendship-like and welcoming. This links to the theme of behaviour, which focuses on the way an organisation represents itself within the wider community and how the O/Ms and employees act on behalf of the company (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012). In a broader sense, both corporate culture and behaviour highlight a company's personality (Suvatjis et al., 2012), which "plays an important role in generating consumer engagement with the brand" (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012: 11). Although arguably Suvatjis et al. (2012) and Balmer and Stuart (2004) mentioned stakeholders as an integral part of, on the one hand, the *human power station* within the Six-station model and on the other hand, as the recipient of the c<sup>1</sup>ommunicated identity in the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test, their overall role is not described as dominant. Moreover, the Micro-Identity Model sees passion as strongly linked to the O/M, which has key implications: ideally, the owner-managers can inspire their internal and external stakeholders with their passion and make them part of the brand. Their passion can create a positive atmosphere in the workplace, which not only affects the micro-organisation's culture, but also the work ethic among employees.

Although this strand has been classified as part of the 'personal level', which can be most strongly influenced and controlled by the O/Ms, it is also associated with the enthusiasm of anyone involved with the company. This further highlights a key challenge of corporate identity research, which was flagged up in Chapter 2: firstly, the fact that the individual components of corporate identity are hard to measure.

Secondly, they cannot always be clearly defined in terms of where one starts and another one finishes. And lastly, specifically when looking at the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012) various sub-categories could arguably be merged or placed within the same overarching umbrella. This refers to the sub-categories of marketing and advertising, which were placed in separate stations: the *strategy* and the *creativity station*. Although it could be argued that a person's passion, similarly to the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test's components, cannot be measured, the contrary is suggested. A person's *passion* can be determined through employee shadowing, by observing the individual's work ethic and attitudes and through semi-structured interviews, in terms of intonations, hand gestures, and emphases made. The incorporation of employee shadowing as a key research tool within corporate identity can be seen as methodological contribution, which is discussed in Chapter 7. Moreover, the theme passion allows for more flexibility within the Micro-Identity Model: whilst the O/M plays a key role in initially creating a micro-company's identity, other stakeholders are involved in the shaping and re-designing of its nature.

Passion not only refers to people's enthusiasm for an organisation, but also to the O/M's ideals that surround the founding history. The O/M's passion influences their company's organisational and decision-making processes. Chapter 5 has indicated that the case organisations comply with aspects of the triple bottom line (TBL) in that they utilise renewable materials and keep a green balance in terms of ensuring good working conditions and fair wages, whilst maintaining a profitable business (Harris, 2003). Although incorporating the TBL into various aspects of a company is not a sole trade relating to micro-organisations, as various headlines in the news have indicated that multi-national retailers, such as H&M and M&S, also actively seek to reduce their impact (H&M, 2013; M&S, 2013), they (micro-organisations) do not see aspects of sustainability as an add-on strategy, which might be the case in large companies (Austgulen & Stø, 2013). This means that the O/Ms make the TBL part of what their organisations stand for and incorporate its aspects into their daily business proceedings. The O/Ms' dedication to sustainable practices and technologies, as well as the size of the company, enables them to create transparent organisational processes that in turn fuels trust and long-term relationships. However, it has to be highlighted that their 'dedication to sustainable practices' is influenced by the way they understand the term 'sustainability'. Their education background and interactions with their surrounding environment shapes an

image or ‘reality’ of sustainability that is strongly context dependent. This implies that although the O/M may think that everything they are doing is based on principles of sustainability, in a different ‘reality’ this may not be the case (Shotter, 2003). Moreover, the fact that transparency in the overall business processes may fuel trust and long-term relationships links back to both the value co-creation and entrepreneurship literature. Promoting transparency implies that all cards lay on the table, thus anyone who is interested in the company sees how they operate and with whom. Value co-creation implies working together with a third party to create a good that is of more value for both the organisation and the consumer (Vargo & Lusch, 2006b). If third parties are able to understand how a company works and what their values are, it might be easier for them to approach this organisation and suggest possible ways of moving forward together. At the same time, the entrepreneurship literature supports these findings, as entrepreneurs seek new opportunities that allows them to enhance their creativity and work together with others that share their passion (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Audretsch, 2012).

In summary, passion as a component overcomes various challenges that were remarked upon on the existing models: firstly, the theme in itself is inclusive and allows for components such as corporate culture and behaviour to overlap. Secondly, it acknowledges that a micro-organisation’s identity is not solely created by the O/M, but incorporates stakeholders, which is also partially acknowledged in the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012). The theme furthermore allows for issues concerning the organisational processes to be taken into account. Thus, it acts as a driver to bring people together and work towards a common goal.

### **6.3.2 The role of creativity**

Similarly to passion the theme of creativity incorporates various strands of the old corporate identity models, including: symbols, communication, strategy, and behaviour, which were identified as key components throughout the development of corporate identity frameworks.

*Creativity* itself can best be described as “the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014b). Within the literature aspects of creativity have emerged as dominant themes that not only link to the initial idea generation, but also to creating a distinct competitive advantage

(Audretsch, 2012; Anderson et al., 2014). The Six-Station model is the only framework that explicitly mentions the term within the *creativity station*, which looks at advertising, visual identity, and the corporate visual identity systems (Suvatjis et al., 2012). Visual identity and its enabler, the corporate visual identity system, link to corporate design (Melewar, 2003). Parallels between creativity and symbol can be drawn in that symbols can spark ideas and act as visual cues such as logos, slogans, and/or tags that create a coherent brand image and enable stakeholders to identify one organisation's products/services from that of another (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al. 2012). These symbols then capture, in this case, an O/M's initial idea of setting up a business and make it visual to the outside world. The theme of creativity expands on corporate design by not only focusing on visual cues, but also by looking at the meaning behind these symbols. Chapter 5 demonstrated that each micro-organisation chose their respective company names with great caution: they are either related to the O/M's name, are industry jargon, or describe the brand's products. Thus, these names not only act as attributes that distinguish them from other micro-organisations, but also carry a hidden message. These hidden messages can be linked to differentiation and communication strategies, as they seek to symbolise what the fashion brand stands for, which links to aspects found in previous research (Zaichkowsky, 2010). In the same vein, the visual design and colour choices are not coincidental creations, but rather, the logos were created to be easily transferable across various media. Thus, it can be said that creativity incorporates more than simply enabling stakeholders to recognise the brands, but rather focuses on the associations and perceptions these symbols generate in stakeholders about the brand and its products, which links back to characteristics of a corporate brand (Brown, 2011; Jegethesan et al., 2012). Moreover, a distinct link can be made between hidden messages in symbols and the use of semiotics in marketing research. It was highlighted that a strong visual identity has the potential to make a brand known forever (Moore, 2003). This is especially important within a highly competitive environment such as the fashion industry, where it is essential to create a unique message that has the power to distinguish one company from the competition through the use of imagery.

The aspects of brand recognition are also linked to advertising, in that symbols ideally are placed on any promotional material when distributed to stakeholders. These advertising campaigns can be linked to creativity: they (campaigns) themselves may be inspiring and attention grabbing. An interesting finding was that although the

micro-organisations did have corporate logos and visual cues, they were placed sporadically on promotional and advertising material. The data indicated that the creative spark in terms of providing a positive working environment and building a platform for creative outlets to stakeholders is more important than a coherent visual strategy. In other words, the findings clearly surfaced that efforts are focused on design issues and stakeholder involvement rather than marketing communication. Practical contributions in how to overcome these challenges are highlighted in Chapter 7.

The theme of creativity can furthermore be linked to management behaviour and leadership. In order to continuously bring forward ideas that, ideally, create financial success management needs to create opportunities that encourage enthusiasm about a product and innovation (Klemm, n.d.). In other words, creativity is a key component in inspiring employees and creating a favourable working environment (Amabile, 1997). The data highlighted that the O/Ms seek to work with their stakeholders and create a unique identity that encourages mutual support. The findings reinforce what has previously been stated: creativity not only enhances enthusiasm in the work place, but also leads to the development of a USP (Anderson et al., 2014). This is supported by findings indicating that for individual O/Ms it is more important to create something that is unique and fits in with their values, rather than following fashion trends in the industry. In some cases this even implies that they are sacrificing their company's success.

In summary, creativity is not only concerned with the initial idea of establishing a business, but also takes into account issues of culture, leadership, behaviour, and communication. Whilst visual aspects and design do play a key role, coherent symbolism, slogans, and tag-lines seem to be taking a backseat. Overall it can be said that creativity is predominantly driven by the O/M herself, who can then inspire stakeholders and induce a favourable working atmosphere. Although, similarly to passion, creativity is an intangible asset, past research emphasises the importance of this theme within SME research (Zaichkowsky, 2010).

### **6.3.3 The role of education**

Education is the last theme within the personal level to be discussed that shows a key influence on a micro-organisation's identity. The component itself is strongly

influenced by aspects such as behaviour, stakeholders, culture, communication, leadership, and strategy.

Education shows a relationship with corporate culture (Melewar, 2003). The company's founder, his/her values, mission, and principles are shaped by their education. In this sense, education refers to more than simply school and/or higher education, but rather widens to all aspects of life experience. Although it could be argued that instead of having education as a key component in the Micro-Identity Model, culture should replace its position, due to culture incorporating key aspects such as values, principles, rituals, and beliefs, the research itself provided stronger support for education. Culture is described as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organisation from another” (Hofstede, 2009). The theme of education however, seeks to go even further than simply creating an organisational community, but rather extending knowledge and sharing it with any person interested in sustainable fashion and their brand's products/services. It can be said that the O/Ms seek to share their passion for sustainable fashion with a greater audience by educating people interested in their brand and its products. Similarly to culture, the aspect of education can best be described as “a garment that cannot be removed” (Peshkin, 1988: 17), but is present at all times. It is an influencing factor on “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982: 252).

To reiterate a previous point further, through education the O/Ms seek to enhance the understanding of the *useful* time of a garment (WRAP, 2012a), by not only encouraging people to wear clothes that would have been discarded otherwise (Smithers, 2012), but also enlighten stakeholders about their options to ‘discard’ unwanted garments. This links back to the principles of SCAP, which were described in Chapter 2.

Aspects of both culture and education can be learned and are dependent on the society one grows up in and the surrounding environment in more general terms (Engle et al., 1995; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). In comparison to culture however, knowledge gained through education can easily be changed and further developed: for example, O/Ms can continuously improve their technologies and sustainable production techniques, updating them to the newest standards and trends. Aspects of culture however cannot easily be amended (Desson & Clouthier, 2010). Any attempt to alter *culture* is in most instances either time consuming, and in some instances even impossible (Denning, 2011).

The theme of education not only focuses on the O/Ms personal educational background, but also on issues relating to sustainability and the micro-organisation's processes. To reiterate this point further, Chapter 2 indicated that institutions of higher education that have a strong focus on fashion design incorporate aspects of sustainability into their curriculum (CSF, 2011). The data indicated that the O/Ms show a strong concern for issues relating to the TBL, in terms of economic, social, and environmental aspects (Jones, 2008). Thus it can be said: "higher education with a focus on sustainability [...] provides a framework for leadership development that strengthens the [...] understanding of sustainable issues" (James & Schmitz, 2011: 2). The data supports these findings in that the case organisations' production techniques are influenced by the O/Ms' backgrounds and focus predominantly on recycling and upcycling, which three out of the four O/Ms were introduced to during their studies.

Although education is a theme that can be strongly influenced by the individual O/Ms themselves, it also relates to aspects that are less controllable. In this sense education and communication are strongly interwoven: the O/Ms emphasised that they seek to share their values, beliefs, and knowledge about issues concerning sustainability with their stakeholders. In their capacity as the sole risk-taker and leader of the micro-organisation, the O/Ms seek to influence their stakeholders' behaviour and attitudes to become more conscious of the environment and the impact they have on their natural surrounding. Thus, a majority of the case organisations put on workshops, pop-up stalls, and networking events for exactly this purpose: educating people. This however, links to a challenge that was highlighted in Chapter 4: the definition of sustainable fashion and sustainability in more general terms. The O/Ms can only provide information on sustainable fashion in terms of how they understand it, which might not incorporate all aspects identified in Chapter 4. Suggestions on how to overcome these challenges, as well as those associated with eco-labels are highlighted in the practical contribution section in Chapter 7.

In summary, it can be said that education is a vital part of the Micro-Identity Model as it not only influences the O/M's values and principles, but also alters decisions within the organisational processes. The literature has indicated that there is a move towards incorporating sustainability and sustainable practices into the curriculum, and thus changing current business models. This has also been observed within the data sets collected. Therefore, it can be said that education is a key



influencer, shaping not only a company's production processes, but also its values, mission, and understanding of issues.

#### **6.4 Organisational level: the role of ethical practices, heritage/local aspect, and power & control**

The three themes of the organisational level are strongly linked to a micro-organisation's production processes. In terms of their relations to components of existing models, these themes are linked to aspects such as behaviour, symbols, culture, and strategy.

##### **6.4.1 The role of ethical practices**

Ethical practices are not only a vital theme within Micro-Identity Model, but also link strongly with the findings described in Chapters 2 and 4: firstly, in terms of ethical and sustainable issues emerging as hot topics within the fashion industry (Minney, 2011; FashionUnited, 2013b; Winter, 2014), and secondly, in terms of the definition of sustainable fashion and the role of eco-labels within the overall fashion industry.

Chapter 5 repeatedly emphasised that the O/Ms ensure their products have a low environmental impact, by choosing sustainable materials and reducing their carbon footprint where possible. Thus, in a sense this component validates past research that highlighted that aspects of sustainability are moving away from the needs of the customer towards incorporating them into organisational values and the company's responsibility to its overall stakeholders beyond simply the consumer (Crane, 1997).

The theme 'ethical practices' features in various aspects of the existing models: the Corporate Identity Taxonomy's corporate culture (Melewar, 2003), the Six-Station model's *head station* (Suvatjis et al., 2012), and the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test's **d**esired and **c**<sup>3</sup>ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004). Corporate culture, the **d**esired identity, and the *head station* look at a company's principles, its guidelines, its values and vision, which play a key part within any organisation (Balmer & Greyser 2002; Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012). An interesting observation that can be made from Chapter 2 is that Melewar (2003) sees a company's vision and guidelines as sub-categories of corporate culture, whilst Suvatjis et al. (2012) declare mission/vision/values as part of the *head station* and thus, see it as part of top

management and leadership. Similarly to the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003) the Micro-Identity Model suggests that ethical practices influence a micro-company's culture: on the one hand it provides guidelines on how to produce garments and source their raw materials within an organisation, and on the other hand it emphasises how people within these production processes should be treated. These procedures are implemented by the O/M and based on their own values and principles, which, in a way, justifies the placement of the mission/vision/values in the *head station* (Suvatjis et al., 2012).

Incorporating ethical aspects into corporate identity is not a new phenomenon and has been previously done through the creation of the corporate ethical identity (Berrone et al., 2007). In this sense, Chapter 2 emphasised that a wider range of organisations seek to internalise aspects of sustainability (Black, 2008), by taking greater care when sourcing materials (UNCTAD, 2010), utilising techniques and processes that have a lower impact on the natural environment (Allwood et al., 2008), and incorporating reused/recycled materials in their creations (Fletcher, 2008). To reiterate this point further, the O/Ms indicated that their businesses are based on sustainable values: they highlight that they not only take great care to utilise raw materials that are less harmful to the environment, and use upcycling and recycling techniques, but also emphasise that they see good and safe working conditions, as well as having a low environmental impact as their top priorities. This links to the *c*<sup>3</sup>ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004), in that producing sustainable fashion is a promise they as a company make to their stakeholders. Stated alternatively, ethical practices are a company-wide directive that is integrated, communicated, and coordinated throughout all parts of the organisation (Cheney & Christensen, 1999; Balmer, 2008; Stuart, 2011). This links to aspects of organisational learning, in which these ethical aspects and the underlying values based on environmentally friendly thinking and sustainability are shared among members of the micro-organisation (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Nevertheless, as repeatedly stated, the way 'sustainability' is interpreted is strongly context and person dependent. Thus, whilst aspects of sustainability may be commonly agreed upon amongst one group of people, these may not be the same attributes that are valued by another.

In the same vein that organisational learning is a further advancement of the Micro-Identity Model, so is the incorporation of end-of-life management of garments. Rather than simply incorporating 'green' and 'sustainable' strategies that solely focus

on the production processes and supply chain, data has highlighted that these micro-organisations seek to educate their stakeholders about extending the useful life of their garments. Although Suvatjis et al. (2012) mention a brand's product/services as a sub-category in their *strategy station* they do not acknowledge any end-of-life treatment. In this sense, ethical practice is linked to the c<sup>3</sup>ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004) in that these micro-organisations make their organisational processes and end-of-life management part of their identity. However, the findings have also indicated that due to the size and financial constraints, the micro-organisations have, as of yet, not successfully managed to execute a full 'circular economy'. A circular economy is defined as:

[A]n alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life (WRAP, 2014).

Although this usually refers to an industry sector in which various organisations work together and create a circular economy, the data has indicated that these micro-organisations have the potential to do so due to their strong emphasis on ethical practices. Thus it can be said that in order to fully exploit their potential, these micro-companies could shift their focus to the end stages of their supply chain to further enhance their core identity. Practical solutions are suggested in Chapter 7.

An interesting question that emerged in Chapters 4 and 5 is whether sustainable fashion is a reality or a myth: various authors indicate that although these micro-organisations manufacture clothing in a more environmentally friendly way than their competition, they are still producing fashion and thus are not only part of, but also contribute to a highly polluting industry (UNEP, 2013). This links back to a discussion in Chapter 4 that indicated that slow-fashion can be described as an oxymoron and the antipode to consumerism. Although this research does not provide an answer to this debate, it highlights that within these micro-organisations ethical practices play a key role and shape their core identity. In the same vein, Chapter 5 highlighted that due to the size of these micro-organisations, they are able to fully disclose their supply chain and production processes, which implies that they are able to be transparent in nature. This however has a key implication for potential future growth of the individual micro-companies: transparency in the supply chain seems to be key to their ethical practices, which indicates that it might be challenging to

expand operations in the future. Potential solutions on how to overcome these challenges are highlighted in Chapter 7.

Ethical practices can also be linked to aspects of the TBL (Elkington, 1994), which influence the organisations' overall processes. Chapter 1 indicated that the fashion industry is still truly competitive, thus being different is key (Europa, 2013). Although differentiation strategies are part of various previous frameworks, they are predominantly focusing on the product/service the organisation offers. Implementing ethical practices as part of the MIM implies that not only the products are different, but also the micro-organisation's organisational processes as a whole can act as a USP.

In summary, it can be said that ethical practices and corporate ethical identity show a strong link: both are concerned with implementing issues concerning sustainability into the daily business proceedings. Thus, it can be said that certain aspects of the corporate ethical identity hold true for micro-organisations. In contrast to the corporate ethical identity ethical practices are not only sets of guidelines, an O/M's mission and values, but also strongly interlinked with the micro-organisation's production processes and supply chain. It is more than simply a promise that highlights a company is more environmentally friendly than their counterparts, as it ensures transparency and end-of-life treatment, which is key to these organisations. Thus, it can be said that rather than simply adopting ethical practices, within these specific micro-organisations they are made part of their identity, thereby internalising what it means to produce sustainable fashion.

#### **6.4.2 The role of heritage/local aspect**

Heritage/local aspect emerged as another dominant theme throughout Chapters 4 and 5. The O/Ms emphasise that producing locally is key to who they are, which is also the reason why they do not outsource their production processes. This is further highlighted through the use of symbolism in terms of producing either a Union Jack on the various clothing tags or using 'local', 'Made in the UK', or 'city name' within their advertising material. Stated alternatively, the production place plays a key part in determining their identity, as well as providing the companies with evidence to support their claims about transparency in their production processes. Having the manufacturing site on the doorstep enables these micro-organisations to demonstrate

transparency, in that they can guarantee who, where, and when a garment was produced.

To reiterate this point further, this theme not only relates to the country's strong link with the fashion industry, but also to traditional production techniques, materials, and the aspect of having a local production plant. Looking at the literature, it becomes apparent that heritage in the sense of cultural heritage and SME research is not a new phenomenon. Aaltonen et al. (2011) highlight that SMEs, including micro-companies, can create a competitive advantage by emphasising on "traditional production methods or products themselves" (p. 2). This in turn links to aspects of leadership and management skills: Chapter 5 highlighted that both are present within these micro-organisations, as the O/Ms not only manage their own local production plants, but also 'source' raw materials and talent from their surrounding areas, if possible. The competitive edge provided by heritage/local aspect is based on mutual support: they (micro-companies) are providing jobs to local people and offer workshops, whilst in return they expect support from the community to buy their products. In this sense, heritage/local aspect is also strongly linked to the Corporate Identity Taxonomy's corporate culture (Melewar, 2003), which is the only one out of the three existing models that explicitly mentions the country of origin as part of the corporate identity creation process. In the same vein, various authors (Sedera et al., 2004; Urde et al., 2007) have indicated that a country's cultural heritage can be used to the organisation's advantage in that it can act as an inspiration, or a resource itself.

Apart from cultural aspects this theme also goes hand in hand with issues concerning sustainability and the  $c^3$ ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004). Authors (Feagan, 2007; WEF, 2009) emphasised that aspects surrounding sustainability, creativity, and local aspects are rated highly among consumers worldwide. Thus, there is a demand within the consumer market to produce garments and accessories locally, especially since the Rana Plaza incident, which saw retailers commit to including home-grown products in their assortments (Turner, 2013). A key challenge however that needs to be overcome is these sustainability features need to be clearly communicated: the research has indicated that although consumers are inclined to support local talent, they cannot always identify the local from the non-local products. Whilst heritage and local aspects provide the consumer with, what has been described as the  $c^3$ ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004) in the AC<sup>4</sup>ID test, this implies that consumers need to be aware of the brand's promise first, before being able to buy into

the brand. As highlighted in this research project, advancements were made to incorporate an official label on home-grown products across various industries, this label itself has, as of yet, not found approval by the government. Furthermore, even if such a label was to enter the market, it could be argued that it would face similar challenges as have previously been highlighted in Chapter 4: trust versus distrust of standards, financial constraints, and one-fits-all certifications. Suggestions on how to overcome these challenges and thereby strengthen the Micro-Identity Model are highlighted in Chapter 7.

In summary, similarly to all previous themes described, heritage/local aspect has a strong link to the company's organisational processes. It is not only associated with aspects relating to cultural heritage, but also those of sustainability. It is strongly interlinked with ethical practices in that the themes complement each other. It is a key determinant of providing a competitive advantage and USP.

#### **6.4.3 The role of power & control**

Power and control are two dominant aspects that emerged throughout the data collection and analysis in Chapter 5. Figure 61 indicates that the components of the existing models most strongly associated with this theme are: strategy, behaviour, and symbols.

Power and control relate to corporate strategy in the Corporate Identity Taxonomy (Melewar, 2003), more specifically the differentiation strategy, in that participants seek to produce and source locally where possible and highlight that they are unwilling to outsource their production processes. The theme of power and control emerged especially strong in Organisations 1 and 2, which can be explained due to the fact that these companies work on one single production process, whilst Organisations 3 and 4 are co-operatives, which implies each individual member has their own production process. Aspects such as the 'Made in the UK' factor and transparency across the supply chain provide these micro-organisations with a key advantage, especially since tragedies such as the Rana Plaza incident made headlines (Burke, 2013). It is noteworthy that neither of the O/Ms felt this incident had an impact on their organisations as they are home-grown. In a similar manner, the power and control theme can also be related to the *critical triplet station*, which focuses on an organisation's reputation, corporate image, and corporate personality (Suvatjjs et al.,

2012). The data highlighted that the O/Ms seek to establish go-to-brands that are associated with environmentally friendly aspects and a positive image creation.

However, power and control not only focus differentiation strategies and image creation, but also link strongly to the O/Ms' personal attitudes and beliefs. Within the individual organisations nothing is left to chance: the workspaces are open plan designs and the production of the garments is local. This has various implications: an open-plan structure influences a company's culture, both positively and negatively. Providing a negative example first, open plan spaces can enhance unease and stress levels amongst employees due to being constantly watched (Kim & de Dear, 2013). Especially for micro-organisations in which employees cannot hide, being comfortable in a workspace is vital. A positive example of open plan work environments is the creation of strong bonds between individuals and the encouragement of teamwork (Kim & de Dear, 2013). Thus, within these micro-organisations the theme of power and control is also strongly affecting the company's overall culture.

Power and control also feature strongly in terms of local production: due to wanting to be on top of things and O/Ms unwilling to sacrifice their own values, they decline offers from major corporations to outsource their production processes. Although they would still own the company, their supply chain would become less transparent, which implies that it would be more challenging to deliver their brand promise based on their values, which include, but are not limited to environmentally friendly raw materials, good and safe working conditions, and fair wages. Thus, it can be said that this theme ensures that each micro-organisations are portraying an accurate *c*<sup>3</sup>ovenant identity (Balmer & Stuart, 2004) that reflects the mission and values of the company.

In summary, it can be said that the aspects of power and control provide these micro-organisation not only with a unique corporate culture, but also with a USP. Being able to not only name all employees and suppliers, but also knowing the working conditions the products are produced in implies micro-organisations are focusing on social aspects within their company and across their supply chain. Stated alternatively, these four micro-organisations highlight that power and control is not only a determinate of corporate culture in that the O/Ms' personal characteristics, values, and attitudes (Juntunen, 2012) are adhered to, but also link to behavioural

aspects and management style. Overall, it can be said that power and control translate into a supportive environment that is based on transparency.

## **6.5 Community level: the role of value co-creation, community/resources, and networks**

The community level is furthest away from the O/M and is comprised of value co-creation, community/resources, and networks. As indicated in the name, these themes link to interactions with – predominantly – the external environment. Themes from the existing models that strongly feature within the three strands are: culture, communication, behaviour, and stakeholders.

### **6.5.1 The role of value co-creation**

Value co-creation is strongly linked to aspects surrounding power and control and communication. The concept itself emerged during the data analysis process and was incorporated into Chapter 2 at a later stage of the PhD research. Interestingly, after the researcher read up on the subject matter, she discovered that various authors (Abimbola, 2009; Cornelissen et al., 2012) highlighted that corporate identity is too simplistic in nature and urge to incorporate stakeholder involvement in the form of value co-creation into corporate identity frameworks. In simple terms, value co-creation looks at the collaboration between an organisation and stakeholders (Vargo et al., 2008), which in this specific case are employees, suppliers, distributors, customers, and members of the public. These stakeholders, as has been demonstrated in Chapter 5, all play a key role in shaping and ‘creating’ products available in the individual micro-organisations, which aligns with findings in the literature (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Ballantyne, 2004; Payne et al, 2008).

Although various existing models mention stakeholders as part of their components, their role within the frameworks seem to be derivative. Suvatjis et al. (2012) within their model give stakeholders slightly more dominance compared to the other existing models, and incorporate them into the *human power station* (Suvatjis et al., 2012). They acknowledge that “the human factor and the concept of corporate identity are closely related” (Suvatjis et al. 2012: 156). The authors see stakeholders as influencers on the company’s ethos, its values, and attitudes (Suvatjis et al. 2012), but do not explicitly mention that these very stakeholders have any kind of influence



on the creation process of a company's products and services, the company culture, or corporate design.

This research's data indicated that stakeholders (internal and external) contribute to more than simply the ethos and values surrounding a micro-organisation, in that they are a key part of the upstream and downstream process of value co-creation, which is highlighted in Figure 50 through the 'feedback loops'. This implies, that anyone involved with the micro-organisation is encouraged to bring forward their ideas either before or after the product has been released onto the market (Frigo, 2010). Similarly to what has been highlighted in Chapter 2, the findings confirm that there is no longer a divide between the consumer/employees and the organisation, but rather they are part of a new entity that seeks to provide added benefits to both parties (Vernette & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). The motivation behind incorporating stakeholders follows the idea that if employees, consumers, and members of the supply chain are engaged with the micro-company's brand, understand their business processes, believe in the 'core' values of the organisation, and agree with what the company represents, they (stakeholders) can act as 'brand ambassadors' (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Roper & Fill, 2012). Thus, value co-creation as part of the Micro-Identity Model provides micro-organisations with a competitive edge, which links to what has previously been stated in the literature (Lusch & Vargo, 2006a).

Value co-creation in the context of the micro-organisations and the green slow-fashion industry plays a vital role. The Introductory Chapter indicated that the fashion industry as a whole is highly competitive (Europa, 2013), thus it is vital to distinguish oneself from the competition. Whilst it can be argued that this is the purpose of a corporate identity as a whole, this research suggests that value co-creation provides the icing on the cake, in that it allows micro-organisations to 'personalise' their products and services to their clientele. Stated alternatively, value co-creation not only influences a company's culture and communication processes, but also enables a micro-organisation to create a complex identity that is hard to imitate. Moreover, the Micro-Identity Model extends the meaning of the term stakeholders, by not only focusing on employees and members of the supply chain, but also incorporating the community at large. Workshops put on by the individual micro-organisations enable the O/Ms to find out more about the needs and wants of their stakeholders (Frigo, 2010), which ideally leads to the creation of an emotional bond and brand buy-in. However, the main challenge highlighted in Chapter 2

remains, which is the question of how to identify the ‘right’ stakeholders and create bonds with these stakeholders that allows the micro-organisation to produce a product/service that maximises its potential (Vermette & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013).

Chapter 2 highlighted that the greatest challenge organisations face with value co-creation is to actually understand what consumers want and need (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Day, 2002; Flint et al. 2011). Thus, a further advancement that the Micro-Identity Model brings forward are aspects of time: the model acknowledges that although, in this case, consumers have more access to information and could theoretically speaking, get more involved with the micro-organisations and co-creative value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Lusch & Vargo 2006b; Grönroos, 2006a; Mahr et al., 2014), not every stakeholder is appropriate to do so. Thus, these relationships are not only built on trust, but also are nurtured and maintained over a long period of time.

In summary, it can be said that value co-creation can lead to a USP: in order to survive in a highly competitive environment micro-organisations need to distinguish themselves from other businesses producing ‘sustainable fashion’ and provide stakeholders with added benefits so that their garments are chosen over high street mass-produced collections. Value co-creation changes the way these micro-organisations develop their products and manage their business. In other words, the product itself is no longer the focus or key selling point of a micro-organisation, but rather the experience the individual collections provide to the stakeholders. Through constant communication, the organisations identify the needs and wants of their stakeholders and develop workshops, events, and products that meet these expectations.

### **6.5.2 The role of community/resources**

Looking back at Figure 61 it becomes apparent that the theme of community/resources is projected on top of the box labelled ‘community’ in the organisational process map. This theme is interesting in nature in that it not only emerged dominantly in the data collection, but also has not, per se, been incorporated into an organisation’s corporate identity. It can be said that this component shows links to stakeholders (Suvatjis et al., 2012), corporate culture (Melewar, 2003), and behaviour (Balmer & Soenen, 1999), in terms of being a key influencer on these strands.

To briefly repeat previous points made in Chapter 5: the findings highlighted that the O/Ms actively engage with the local community by providing internship and work experience opportunities, thereby strengthening their position in their local areas. Moreover, data indicated that these micro-organisations attend networking events and tradeshows, as well as facilitate workshops. With the latter events the O/Ms seek to inform their stakeholders about how to create and revive their wardrobe without having to purchase new products. Although it could be argued that providing these workshops may be damaging to the individual micro-companies' own business as the fashion industry is living from consumerism and customers' urges to purchase new garments (Dielemans & Zanni, 2012; Dickson et al., 2013), the findings have indicated that the contrary is the case: these events lead to an increase in sales. They act as opportunities to enhance creativity and passion for products, by providing details about the brand's fashion items and accessories, as well as provide new ideas for both the O/Ms and participants on how to transform their own wardrobe. At the same time demonstrations act as product placement, which leads ideally to participants aspiring to purchase the brand's creations. In a broader sense this can be linked to marketing, in terms of acting as an effective product placement strategy (Karniouchina et al., 2011). As opposed to traditional research areas of product placement in TV shows or films, the medium in this case is the micro-organisation's workshops that present their ideas to the wider community. In the same vein, one can identify a strong link with value co-creation in that the 'community' provides feedback and suggestions on the brand's products (Lusch & Vargo, 2006a). These suggestions than can either be accepted and amended in new collections or rejected.

The community/resource theme is also linked to leadership, which indicates that an individual needs to be able to make an educated choice in terms of who would be suitable to work for a micro-organisation and what resources are available to them (e.g. skills; working talent) (Katz, 1955). In this sense it also influences managerial behaviour and the organisation's culture as a whole. Data in Chapter 5 indicated that the O/Ms seek to not only implement a freelance approach, which in this case implies only employing the amount of workers they can afford and have work for, but also in terms of incorporating stakeholders in their brand. Thus, it could be said that community/resources are part of a micro-organisation's corporate strategy, by acting as points of differentiation.

In summary, community/resources focus on human resources, talent, and physical resources, such as factories, mills, or suppliers. It is strongly linked to value co-creation in that community is a pre-requisite of being able to recruit stakeholders that can and want to be part of the co-creation process. This theme bridges the gap between an organisation and the local community, and thus confirming past research that suggests that there is no longer a divide between the consumer/employees and the organisation (Vermette & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013).

### **6.5.3 The role of networks**

Networks play a key important role for a micro-organisation's identity, as they enable these companies to create a unique structure based on mutual support. Although it could be argued that networks are a part of community/resources and thus have been mentioned in the Six-Station model (Suvatjis et al., 2012), this research suggests that they differ dramatically from these themes. Whilst 'stakeholder' in Suvatjis et al.'s (2012) model predominantly focuses on members of the supply chain, consumers, and distributors, networks take into account clusters of micro-organisations that share information about customers and suppliers, as well as networking events and business memberships, such as for example Ethical Fashion Forum or Council memberships.

To reiterate this point further, although some existing models mention stakeholder, as previously highlighted, their role within the corporate identity models is seen as almost derivative. Stakeholders and the industry identity are mentioned as the key external influencers on previous models (Melewar, 2003; Suvatjis et al., 2012), however compared to for example visual identity and corporate culture, they seem to take a backseat. This research however has highlighted that building networks with other like-minded brands is a key part in their differentiation strategy, the corporate culture, and image creation process. Chapter 5 has highlighted that fellow sustainable brands are not seen as competition but rather as allies that help spread the word of sustainable fashion. Moreover, it was emphasised that various organisations 'team up' and create a cluster that allows these brands to collectively showcase at events, which might otherwise be too expensive. Their corporate structure is based on knowledge exchange and transfer, which is demonstrated through working together towards a common goal.

Furthermore, Chapter 2 indicated that micro-organisations only have a limited budget (EC, 2013a), which needs to be spent wisely in order to survive in a highly competitive environment (Easey, 2009; Europa, 2013). Chapter 5 highlighted that for these micro-business it is essential for survival that their consumers and customers pay on time, which links back to the issues surrounding financing. Especially since the credit crisis, which left various of the participating organisations in a vulnerable position, networks have gained importance. Building these networks implies that organisations can exchange information about and discuss various suppliers and clients in a confidential manner and, in the future, avoid issues relating to bad credit scores. Linking this back to the existing models, a clear link can be seen between networks and culture, as well as behaviour: building relationships has an influence on corporate culture, as it shapes an organisation's guidelines and overall principles. In the same vein, the theme of networks influences corporate and management behaviour in that these micro-organisations form a bond with like-minded companies, which could also be seen as competition.

Similarly to value co-creation and community/resources the theme of networks is established over a period of time: Chapter 5 highlighted that the O/Ms established long-term relationships with like-minded creative and local businesses throughout their existence. It was highlighted that a majority of these relationships were created as early as the initial idea for the business. Over time trust was build between the micro-organisations and the network partners, before incorporating them into the individual supply chains.

In summary, it can be said that networks create a unique advantage for the individual micro-organisation: by joining forces they can not only overcome financial constraints, but also work together towards spreading the word of sustainable fashion. It has been highlighted that network creation is time consuming and cannot happen suddenly, but rather over a long period of time. Research indicated that these networks are carefully nurtured and incorporated into the company's organisational processes as a competitive advantage.

## **6.6 Summary of discussion**

This chapter focused predominantly on the discussion of the newly developed Micro-Identity Model, thereby using the existing models as points of reference. Whilst there

are similarities between the various frameworks, there are also key distinctions: the key contributions and amendments made to existing models are summarised and re-emphasised in this section:

- In accordance with existing models, all components are equally important.
- The Micro-Identity Model indicates that the O/M plays a significant role within micro-organisations and their identity creation. Rather than simply being a sub-category of a component, the O/M is placed in a central position, as the research findings have indicated he/she creates the Micro-Identity Model from the inside out.
- The Micro-Identity Model identifies three levels: personal, organisational, and community. Although the individual components are not weighted there are key aspects associated with these levels. On the one hand, the closer the level is to the O/M the more influence and control he/she has on them and on the other hand, the further away the level is, the longer it takes to build up.
- Communication itself has an enhanced meaning in the Micro-Identity Model: it is not simply a component, but rather an all-inclusive element that connects all components with one another. Due to its nature, it is illustrated in dotted lines, which signifies open communication.
- The individual elements within the levels are not 'boxed in', which differs from the existing models (Melewar, 2003; Balmer & Soenen, 1999). This was done purposefully, as it highlights that the individual elements within the levels can strongly overlap.
- The model acknowledges that stakeholders (employees, consumers, members of the supply chain, the general public, and competitors) are key influencers of a micro-identity.
- VVC has been incorporated as a key component within the Micro-Identity Model creation process.
- The Micro-Identity Model is based on and strongly interlinked with a company's organisational processes and cannot be seen as a standalone concept.

In summary it can be said that the Micro-Identity Model not only links the production process to an organisation's identity, but also acknowledges characteristics that are solely associated with micro-organisations. This implies that rather than simply focusing on business and management elements, such as marketing, symbols, and behaviour, it incorporates aspects that are found in humans, including passion and creativity. The implications this may have for future research, as well as on practical, theoretical, and policy contributions are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7: Contributions and conclusion

This Chapter is split into three main sections: it firstly looks back at the objectives set for this PhD research and how they were met. Secondly, the key contributions (practical, theoretical, methodological, and policy) are highlighted. And lastly, this section concentrates on the limitations of this thesis and areas of future research.

### 7.1 Review of objectives

**Objective 1:** To explore the question ‘What does sustainable fashion mean?’ from the perspectives of the O/Ms, their employees, and their consumers and how their individual characteristics and meanings of the term overlap.

Objective 1 was explored in Chapter 4, by asking members of the focal organisations, consumers visiting Organisations 3 and 4’s physical store, experts in the field, which included business owners, the manager of a leading trendsetting agency, and by consulting secondary data to define and elaborate on the term *sustainable fashion*, thereby highlighting what it means to them. The responses provided by these three groups (focal organisations, experts, consumers) were compared and contrasted with findings from the literature review and the pilot study, which was conducted in the first year of this PhD research. There are various noteworthy findings: firstly, none of the definitions provided by the individual participants were the same. Secondly, the word clouds have highlighted that each individual group put a different focus on the term *sustainable fashion* (Table 80):

Table 80: Review of word cloud terms

	Focal organisations	Experts in the field	Consumers
Key words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable</li> <li>• Fashion</li> <li>• Imposed</li> <li>• Limitations</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Interesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Fashion</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Sustainable</li> <li>• Sourced</li> <li>• Produced</li> </ul>

Thirdly, when looking back at Table 27 (p. 185), which provides an ‘overview of various aspects of sustainable fashion according to participating groups’, it becomes apparent that the only aspect commonly highlighted is the incorporation and the use of renewable and environmentally friendly material in the production process.

The conclusion that was drawn is that *sustainable fashion* is difficult to define. However, rather than providing a one-fits-all definition, it is more inclusive and easier to provide an interpretation of the term, which includes, but is not limited to the following aspects:

- Forward thinking, in terms of design and material use, and fashion with conscience
- Innovative
- Utilising ethical/sustainable design, which implies timelessness
- Producing meaningful and interesting fashion items, in terms of heritage
- Produce locally (where possible), utilise renewable energy, and lower carbon emission
- Incorporating sustainable production techniques (e.g. upcycling, recycling)
- Versatility
- Fair trade (e.g. raw materials) and renewable materials
- Transparency in supply chain
- Utilising less harmful substances
- Adhere to environmental standards
- Human rights as top priority (e.g. working conditions, environment, wages)

As was highlighted throughout this research, sustainable fashion means different things to different groups. Thus, an interpretation of this term allows for flexibility in the meaning.

**Objective 2:** To identify the key components of corporate identity within the context of the green slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations.

Objective 2 was explored in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. The data highlighted that a micro-organisation's identity shows both similarities with and distinctions from existing models. It is similar to existing models in terms of sharing various influences, such as culture, behaviour, strategy, communication, and corporate design. However, the newly proposed Micro-Identity Model also is distinctive and thus differs dramatically from the existing models:

- This PhD research highlighted that the Micro-Identity Model is not a standalone concept, but rather is strongly linked to a company's organisational processes.
- The Micro-Identity Model is created from the inside out, with the O/M playing a central role in the creation process.
- The Micro-Identity Model, although not weighting any of its elements, identifies three levels: personal, organisational, and community. The closer the level is to the O/M the more influence and control the O/M has over it, the further away it is the longer it takes to establish.
- Communication within the Micro-Identity Model is seen as a linking element that is of great importance. It is not simply a standalone component, but rather the essence of the Micro-Identity Model



- Micro-Identity Model acknowledges a time element: it cannot be created and implemented at once, but rather is continuously re-developed and re-shaped over a period of time.
- Value co-creation is seen as a component that leads to the creation of a USP.

In summary, it can be said that rather than ‘simply’ creating a new corporate identity model that illustrates a micro-organisation’s identity, this research mapped the organisational processes of these companies, and thus went beyond what Objective 2 originally intended.

**Objective 3:** To analyse how sustainability is incorporated into the elements of corporate identity.

Objective 3 was covered in both Chapters 4 and 5. The data highlighted that sustainability is incorporated in the Micro-Identity Model in that ethical practices are a major part of the new model. In other words, sustainability as an element did not only feature prominently within the ethical practice component, but also emerges across a company’s organisational processes. Moreover, similarly to what has been mentioned in Chapter 2 about corporate ethical identity, sustainability is engrained deeply within these micro-organisations: in their values, mission, vision, production processes, and design. The context of this PhD research may be one of the reasons for this finding: producing garments in the green slow-fashion industry implies that the O/Ms not only utilise environmentally friendly techniques within the production process, but also source their materials carefully ensuring that they are eco-conscious and contain no harmful substances. A further explanation for sustainability playing a vital role within the various components derives from the O/Ms themselves, who are dedicated to sustainable (social, environmental, and economic) practices.

Thus, it can be said that sustainability plays a key role within these micro-organisations. Although various issues within these companies remain in terms of actually producing sustainable fashion and being ‘fully’ sustainable, they show great potential for future development. Whilst this research does not intend to generalise its findings, as it is context specific, there are various aspects and implications that can be brought forward as learning points for micro-organisations: Firstly, specifically within the fashion industry, but also across various other sectors, sustainability emerges as a top priority and incorporating sustainability practice into daily business processes could be seen as a necessity. Chapter 2 emphasised on a challenge

organisations may phase, in that sustainability strategies implemented could simply be seen as add-on strategies (Stuart, 2011), rather than measurements that encourage a change in behaviour. Parallels between the corporate identity of these micro-organisations and those who currently have not any sustainable measures implemented could be drawn and may provide guidelines on how to incorporate sustainability into the business without simply ‘adding-on a strategy’. Secondly, this research has repeatedly highlighted that micro-organisations contribute significantly to the UK’s economy. Due to their nature these companies can adapt to changes in the environment quickly and incorporate, depending on their financial situation, new technologies and innovations into their daily processes within a short period of time. Their knowledge and expertise could be utilised by large organisations, which could enhance collaborations such as Tesco (UK) and *From Somewhere’s* partnership. These collaborative partnerships are not industry specific and can be investigated across various sectors, which is also an area for future research.

In summary, this research highlighted that sustainability, especially within the fashion industry, emerged as a top priority. Understanding the challenges and opportunities of incorporating sustainability measures into the daily operations and corporate identity of a micro-organisation can help facilitate governmental initiatives, such as the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) and the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP). Micro-organisations across industries can learn from the behaviour of these four case companies and reflect on their own processes and procedures in place. Moreover, understanding how micro-businesses implement sustainable practices and what these practices are could enable collaborations and partnership with small, medium, and large companies.

**Objective 4:** To compare and contrast different practices utilised across the four focal companies in terms of communicating their corporate identity.

Similarly to previous research it was found that there are two main audiences the individual companies are communicating with: internal and external stakeholders. The data highlighted that strategies focus predominantly on face-to-face, digital, and/or print communication. Moreover, the Micro-Identity Model emphasises very strongly on two-way communication, which implies that the micro-organisations are not only advertising and informing stakeholders about their brand, but actively seek feedback and guidance. Overall the research has highlighted that the four case

organisations use similar methods of communication (print, digital, face-to-face). Organisation 4 differs slightly in that it does not use its SNS to promote and inform people about the brand, but rather to remind their consumer base of regular events that are happening.

**Objective 5:** To map the relationship between eco-labels, sustainable fashion, and the green slow-fashion organisations.

Objective 5 was looked at in both findings chapters. Chapter 4 highlighted that there are hardly any commonalities between the various interpretations of sustainable fashion and eco-labels (Figure 37, p. 172), which reconfirms what was highlighted in the literature review about eco-labels:

- They are complex in nature, with over 100 labels currently in use in the fashion industry alone;
- They are not inclusive enough in terms of covering all aspects of sustainable fashion;
- They are expensive and often not affordable for micro-organisations;
- They are not always the most instructive signs available.

This research has indicated that micro-organisations are less inclined to purchase eco-labels, as they feel their efforts exceed what is covered by these standardisations.

## 7.2 Contributions of this PhD research

### 7.2.1 Theoretical contributions

The first general theoretical contribution this PhD research has brought forward is the mapping of a micro-organisation's processes that operates within the green slow-fashion industry (Figure 59, p. 285). The second contribution is the actual design of the newly developed Micro-Identity Model (Figure 62, p. 290), which highlights new perspectives and thought provoking insights to the understanding of corporate identity:

- The role of the O/M as the centre of a micro-organisation's identity, who creates what the company stands for from the inside out.
- Communication moves from being simply a component to being a vital theme and connecting strand that links all aspects of the Micro-Identity Model.
- The Micro-Identity Model identifies three levels: personal, organisational, and community. The closer the level is to the O/M the more influence and control he/she has on them and the further way the level is, the longer it takes to build up.

- The individual elements within the levels can not only change positions, but also may overlap strongly.
- The model acknowledges that stakeholders (employees, consumers, members of the supply chain, the general public, and competitors) are key influencers of a micro-identity
- Value co-creation has been incorporated as a key component within the Micro-Identity Model creation process
- The Micro-Identity Model is based on and strongly interlinked with a company's organisational processes and cannot be seen as a standalone concept.

Thus, this research has contributed to knowledge by investigating under researched contexts (micro-organisations and the green slow-fashion industry), whilst furthermore engaged in an on going debate of corporate identity. This links to Chapter 1, as this section demonstrated that this PhD research has fulfilled the first potential outcome: the creation of the Micro-Identity Model.

### **7.2.2 Practical contributions**

This PhD research saw the review of communication tools as its main practical contribution that would enable owner-managers to gain feedback on how to improve their current promotional material. This was not only achieved, but also exceeded, as demonstrated in the following. It has to be highlighted that due to keeping this PhD research anonymous the detailed report that was provided to the individual participants is not enclosed in this thesis.

### **End-of-life management**

The first practical contribution is concerned with end-of-life management. The research has highlighted that the micro-organisations are concerned with producing clothes that are more environmentally friendly than their counterparts. Figure 59 (p. 285) highlighted that the end-of-life station has various options, which include, but are not limited to products being handed down to family/friends, thrown into landfill, recycled, or donated to a charity shop. An idea that will be proposed to the O/Ms is that they could shift their focus from the initial stages of their supply chain to focus more on the end-of-life extension of their garments. This could be achieved by, for example, incorporating similar initiatives that can already be observed in large organisations such as H&M and M&S: incentivising their consumers to bring back

unwanted garments (H&M, 2013; M&S, 2013). The key idea behind this suggestion is to create fashion that is truly sustainable. Whilst the four micro-organisations are conscious about their materials and working conditions they have not reached a full cycle of sustainability, as their clothes might potentially be discarded in landfill, and thus contribute to a growing problem (EFF, 2008; WRAP, 2012a).

The useful life extension can be achieved by educating their consumers not only about the initial consumption choices, but also inform them where to dispose of their garments after use. Whilst the idea of a lifelong aftercare may not be feasible in the long-run, as the company would not make money, they could use their old clothes to either make new garments or show people how to 're-vamp' them. Moreover, in the case of Organisation 2, they could extend their community involvement with the Hope Agency and bring it to a new level: rather than simply asking their social media fans to donate unwanted clothes, they could also encourage their consumers to return their company's products to them after use and send these garments (if still wearable) to Cambodia. This behaviour could be encouraged by incentivising their consumers with, for example, a money off voucher, a gift aid certificate, or a gift with their next order.

### **Social media policy and integrated communication**

Social media has gained popularity not only within academic research, but also as a tool that enhances an organisation's overall communication strategy (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Postman, 2009; Kaplan & Hänlein, 2010). Challenges that organisations may face are those relating to privacy and ethical issues surrounding these social networking sites (SNS) (Dwyer et al., 2007; Mislove et al., 2007). To reiterate this point further, various members, especially in Organisations 3 and 4, have access to the companies' social media accounts and can post updates. According to the participants there are no company wide directives on what is deemed suitable to tweet or blog. This lack of social media directives and policies also includes the individual workers and their private social media accounts. Theoretically speaking an employee could post negative feedback and comments on social media platforms and would not face charges, as it was not specified in their contracts that they could not share their 'opinions' on these forums. Thus, it is proposed that these organisations implement not only a social media clause into the employee's contracts, which

highlights that they cannot speak ill of the organisation, but also implement a company wide social media policy.

Aside from social media policies, a further observation that emerged was that a majority of the micro-companies did not link their accounts back to their website. Whilst some tweets had links to images, these were mainly posted on Facebook, where these pictures could be viewed without having to like the pages. This emphasises the need to incorporate an integrated marketing strategy that links all communication back to one central point. In the same vein, it is suggested that the case organisations review their print material and ensure that messages provided are more focused on their products and the actual target audience. This implies that apart from the logo printed flyers should also include the address and contact details, digital links (website, SNS), relevant pictures that are associated with the brand, and information about the brand.

### **(Eco)-labels**

All four micro-organisations highlighted that they are producing *sustainable fashion*. Thus, theoretically speaking eco-labels could be used to support their claims of using organic fabrics, less harming materials, and fairly traded resources. In this manner, this research identifies three main areas that could benefit from the introduction of an eco-label: 1) the material stage, 2) the sourcing and production stage, and 3) the end-of-life stage. Chapter 2 highlighted that eco-labels are designed to mark products that are more environmentally friendly than their counter parts in the same product category (Morris, 1997; GEN, 2004). However, concerns were raised that these certifications cannot always be trusted, as some experts had bad experiences in the past with third party companies acquired a standardisation, but did not act according to its guidelines. Furthermore, other O/MS stated that even if they wanted a certification, they believe that there are no standardisations specific to their line of work.

In order to overcome these challenges, this PhD research brings forward four suggestions that cater for various different needs: Firstly, for micro-organisations that distrust eco-labels and feel they are too expensive, but nevertheless want to communicate their sustainable production aspects to stakeholders, this PhD research suggests to introduce QR (quick response) codes into the in- or on-garment tags. These codes can be part of an overall integrated marketing communication strategy,

as these can on the one hand present consumers with facts about the garment manufacturing processes, and on the other hand guide them to the brand's website, where they can learn more about the organisation itself. Thus, consumers buying fashion products equipped with a QR code, who want to find out more about the garments can do so by simply scanning the tag, whilst others that are only buying the item due to its fashionable style do not have to investigate the tags any further. While it could be argued that organisations such as Timberland previously introduced these QR codes, where they have been classified as unsuccessful, as the traffic on the website has not increased, this research presents a contrary view. Rapanui, for example, also has a traceability scheme, which was highlighted in the Literature Review, in which consumers can track the garments' journey from planting the seeds to purchasing the finished goods. According to Rapanui their stakeholders' feedback on this website function has been very positive, which suggests that their consumers are looking at this 'gimmick'.

Therefore, QR codes should not be seen as tools that increase website traffic, but rather as added benefit for the organisations' stakeholders, by providing them with an opportunity to investigate their brand further. Moreover, while previously smartphones may have lacked the ability to scan QR codes, most current models have this function, which allows anyone interested in the brand to investigate their values further. While it can still hold true that stakeholders may consciously decide not to scan this code, they do have the option to do so, if they wanted to, which is often enough for some people.

Secondly, Chapter 2 highlighted that there are over 100 different eco-labels currently used in the fashion industry (EFF, n.d.; Koehler & Park, 2011; Ecolabel Index, 2012, 2014a). In the same vein, the data emphasised that there is no one-fits-all label. A noteworthy finding is that thus far, none of the O/Ms have made contact with the actual labelling body or an agency that could advise the individual micro-organisations which standards are available to them. To reiterate this point further, O/M2 emphasises that there are no standardisations that cater for her needs, whilst at the same time she states that she has her products tested at an independent laboratory, which certifies that they do not use any harmful substances in their raw materials. However, these aspects and even more are covered by the Oeko-Tex 100 Standard and would allow Organisation 2 to display the Oeko-Tex logo on all their products

and their website, which not only provides further exposure, as it is an internationally recognised standard, but also exceeds their clients' requirements.

The eco-labelling environment is rather complex in nature and with over 425 standardisations existing (Ecolabel Index, 2012, 2014a) it may be impossible for an individual, who also has to run their own business, to investigate all options. Thus, a suggestion that this PhD research will provide to micro-organisations is to contact either labelling bodies directly or get in touch with agents to discuss whether there are standardisations available for them.

Thirdly, various participants have highlighted that even if they wanted to acquire an eco-label the cost factor is a major determinant that hinders them to apply for a standardisation. However, Chapter 4 indicated that this challenge could be overcome by creating a win-win situation (Pederson & Neergaard, 2006). This implies that micro-organisations, who would like to get certified at some point in their existence, can actively seek for suppliers that have already acquired an eco-label. The micro-organisation then could advertise that their suppliers are certified and thus prove that their raw materials are less harmful to the environment. A drawback however is that the individual micro-companies are not allowed to put the official certification on their products or advertising materials.

Lastly, this PhD research suggests a matrix system for micro-organisations that feel eco-labels are not all-inclusive enough for their purposes, distrust official eco-labels, and/or see certifications as too expensive. Table 81 was briefly introduced in Chapter 4 on page 167 and repeated below and is now explained in-depth: the left hand side summarises the key themes found in connection with sustainable fashion. The ✓ highlights the categories that were mentioned by either all or most of the groups (experts, consumers, micro-organisations, pilot study, and literature review), and thus could be classified as the 'basic' components of sustainable fashion. The matrix is designed to cater for various needs in that it allows each micro-organisation to set their own targets and goals, by indicating which elements of sustainable fashion are on their 'low', 'medium', or 'high' priority list. For example, Organisation 2 could mark *local production* as 'high priority', whilst *versatile* might be a 'low' priority item. The 'organisational evidence' column then provides the micro-organisations with the opportunity to communicate to their stakeholders how they aim to achieve their targets, or how they have achieved these goals. To reiterate this point further using Organisation 2 as an example, they could highlight that stakeholders are able to



visit the premises and experience the *local production* first hand. The last column, ‘3<sup>rd</sup> party evidence’, can include, but is not limited to actual eco-labels, partnerships with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, and industry specific awards or prizes the organisation has won or was nominated for. Stated alternatively, an outsider certifies that the organisation’s claims made about specific aspects have been independently evaluated and found to hold true. For example, Organisation 2 went into cooperation with the Hope Agency, thus their logo (Hope Agency) could be incorporated in the ‘community support’ – ‘3<sup>rd</sup> party evidence’ box. As stated in Chapter 4 this matrix is only a prototype in its making and needs to be researched further and potentially extended, in terms of its different elements.

Table 81: Example of sustainable fashion matrix

	Basic	Low Priority	Medium Priority	High Priority	Organisational Evidence	3 <sup>rd</sup> party evidence
Forward thinking						
Innovation						
Ethical/sustainable design	✓					
Meaningful, interesting						
Local production						
Production techniques						
Versatile						
Fair trade	✓					
Transparency						
Harmful substances	✓					
Environmental standards	✓					
Human rights	✓					
Community support						
Financial sustainability						
Renewable materials						
Renewable energy						
Carbon emission	✓					
Conscience						

Looking back at Figure 62 (p. 316), the circle on the left hand side (label) indicates that the previous suggestions could help to overcome the raw material challenge not only at the material stage, but also in the sourcing process, and at the end-of-life stage of the product life-cycle. Various O/Ms highlighted that they are using an upcycling technique, which makes it difficult to establish the origin of pre-loved garment. However, introducing one of these suggestions, allows the upcyclists to highlight that although the origin of the raw material may be unclear, they are still

producing fashion that has a lower impact on the environment due to the manufacturing techniques used.

In summary, this PhD research has highlighted that although there are various challenges associated with eco-labels, they can be overcome. Moreover, within a micro-organisation's supply chain there are various opportunities to demonstrate that their overall production and sourcing methods are sustainable. Being able to emphasise that raw materials used in the production process are 'certified' can provide the micro-organisations with a USP. Although the ethical question remains whether companies using materials such as leather and polyester can be classified as producing sustainable fashion, certifications and/or engagement with 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations that vouch for these raw materials to be established in a humane and less polluting manner, could overcome this challenge.

### **7.2.3 Policy contributions**

The policy contributions of this PhD research are strongly linked to practical contributions, in that they focus on the area of eco-labels and micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry, which was also seen as a potential research outcome (Chapter 1, p. 16). The findings have brought forward on the one hand that the majority of eco-labels are designed and created without input from practitioners and on the other hand that these specific micro-organisations, as far as the researcher is aware, do not have a point of contact in a governmental or non-governmental institution that could facilitate and enhance knowledge of sustainably and sustainable practices in more general terms.

To reiterate these points further, this PhD research suggests firstly that labelling bodies incorporate practitioners more into the creation and development process of individual standards. The findings have indicated that the four participating micro-organisations and the majority of experts in the field distrust certifications and feel that if they would want to purchase an eco-label, they are not affordable for them. By actively including micro-organisations into the development process, currently existing standards could be amended to incorporate the needs of micro-businesses or new certification specific to the size of the companies and/or industry sector could be developed. Whilst it could be argued that the latter suggestion contradicts what has been highlighted previously in that there are already too many certifications in

existence, the contrary is argued. Establishing an eco-label that is industry specific and inclusive could act as an umbrella standard and thus, provide consumers with confidence that they are purchasing a piece of sustainable fashion, and micro-organisations with credibility that they are producing environmentally friendly garments. It has to be highlighted that this suggestions stresses the collaboration between organisations that could benefit from these labels and labelling bodies. A standardisation that meets the needs of these micro-organisations and the industry in more general terms can only be developed if both micro-organisations and labelling bodies are communicating with one another and collaborate on the development of such an eco-label.

Secondly, the findings highlighted that micro-organisations have a significant impact on the economy and the natural environment. Throughout this project the researcher has engaged with various experts in the field, the manager of the UK's leading trendsetting agency, and the four micro-organisations. A noteworthy observation that was made is that neither of the participants mentioned their involvement with local authorities nor NGOs nor certification bodies. Although governmental institutions such as, for example, the Chamber of Commerce provide support and memberships for micro-organisations (BCC, 2014) the majority of activities offered do not seem to be geared towards the creative and cultural industry. Moreover, institutions such as the Ethical Fashion Forum (EFF), which are dedicated to sustainable fashion, charge high membership fees that according to various participants are unaffordable for them. Furthermore, thus far, the O/Ms of the individual micro-organisations did not contact any of the labelling bodies or any NGOs that are concerned with the fashion industry (e.g. Labour Behind the Label, Fairtrade) directly. Only one out of the four participating companies highlighted that they are part of an informal network in which the member organisations discuss current issues in the industry and share information about their experiences with suppliers and customers.

The researcher believes that the micro-organisations could benefit from memberships with governmental and non-governmental institutions, as they could gain information on issues concerning their business and get advice from experts in the field of sustainability. Thus, in order to enhance collaborations and relationships between the various institutions it is suggested to create a forum for the creative and cultural industry that allows for networking opportunities and advice and guidance for

these micro-organisations. The aim of the platforms should be to support creative and cultural industry organisations in learning about sustainability and guiding them towards programmes that could enhance their sustainable practices. This could further counteract a challenge that was identified in this research: the fact that the O/Ms of this research project are currently selecting which aspects of sustainability they seek to follow up on, whilst potentially neglecting other opportunities as they are not aware on how to gain further information on what is available to them.

Lastly, it was highlighted that thus far there are over 100 different standardisations within the fashion industry alone, which leads to confusion amongst both consumers and micro-organisations. From this research's findings it became apparent that no one person describes the term *sustainable fashion* in the same manner. This implies that due to the lack of a common interpretation or definition of the term sustainable fashion, eco-labels currently existing in the market do not cover all aspects that make up a garment that is classified as sustainable fashion. Thus, in order to be able to tackle issues concerning sustainable fashion it is vital to create, for example, a similar matrix as suggested in Table 81 (p. 333) that provides consistent parameters on what constitutes sustainable fashion.

In summary, it can be said that the policy contributions provided in this PhD research predominantly focus on aspects of eco-labelling and in more general terms the support and guidance for micro-organisations. Due to the importance of the creative and cultural industries it is suggested to actively promote and establish support within existing institutions, such as, for example, the Chamber of Commerce, to help the companies to succeed and strive in their quest towards sustainability and implementing sustainable practices.

#### **7.2.4 Methodological contributions**

Appendix 1 highlights that previous research used a combination of either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. This research followed a multi-methods methodology and thus slightly differs from past research. Key contributions in the subject area of corporate identity are made in that this PhD research incorporated not only employee shadowing, but also social media analysis into its methodology. The researcher feels that both tools were invaluable in gaining this project's results for various reasons:

### **Employee shadowing**

Chapter 3 emphasised that employee shadowing has predominantly been used with management research and, as far as the researcher is aware, has not been utilised within corporate identity research. The employee shadowing has been invaluable for this research for various reasons:

Firstly, it allowed the researcher to closely observe and document the daily routines of various members of staff and the O/Ms, which enabled the researcher to better understand the companies' internal environment. Although employee shadowing is associated with various challenges, in terms of gaining access to organisations, within this specific research the access was unrestricted. Spending approximately three months with each individual company meant developing close relationships with the participants, which helped to not only record their working days, but also enabled the researcher to provide the individuals with a transcript, to reconfirm that their daily routines were portrayed correctly. Moreover, the willingness of employees to participate in interviews rose the more familiar they got with the researcher. Although it is challenging to bear the research distance in mind, the familiarity with the workers enabled the researcher to filter key words and terminologies from their respective interviews and was able to put them in context. In this manner, the researcher believes that employee shadowing is a valuable methodological tool that has enabled her to understand what the individual case organisations stand for, due to gaining an insider's perspective.

Secondly, the earlier described proximity led to gaining an insight into the employees' and O/Ms' routines, inside jokes, and jargon, which might have been lost otherwise. Moreover, the researcher was able to take pictures of the premises and surrounding areas, which enhanced the semiotic analysis of this project. Thus, in accordance with McDonald (2005), it was found that employee shadowing provides not only richness to data sets, but also a "multidimensional picture of the role, approach, philosophy and tasks of the person being studied" (McDonald, 2005: 457).

In summary, it can be said that employee shadowing provided the researcher with a unique insight into the individual organisations and enhanced not only the findings of this PhD research, but also the established model. Through the close relationships and close proximity with the individual participants the researcher was able to make sense of the micro-organisations' identity. Stated alternatively, the employee shadowing provided background information on the individual micro-

companies, which helped to guide the researcher in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the semiology.

### **Social media analysis**

Social media analysis has increased in importance and is seen as a vital tool to analyse brands and monitor partnerships (Stelzner, 2013; Netbase, 2014). As was highlighted in Chapter 3, the researcher closely monitored the various social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook) for a period of approximately three months. The analysis of the individual tweets enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of what is communicated through these channels, how the individual organisations converse with fans and other users, and how integrated their communication strategy is.

To reiterate these points further, social media analysis was firstly utilised to gain more information on the individual organisations' communication strategy. Monitoring tweets and following posts on Facebook highlighted what parts of their mission, vision, and values the individual organisations push and communicate to their followers. In other words, it emphasises which aspects of their business are most important to them. Moreover, the pictures and links to blog posts were recorded and, where appropriate and relevant, analysed. The researcher believes that this method enabled her to gain a better understanding of the communication strategies used in the individual companies, whilst furthermore helped to identify shortcomings in their current communication processes: for example, the majority of tweets and Facebook posts only linked to one another, but did not guide the user to the organisation's official website. This is a further suggestion that is provided to the O/Ms: in order to utilise their social media strategies to the full potential links need to be created between their website and their social media accounts.

Secondly, this methodological tool allowed the researcher to explore the use of hashtags and @-signs. Hashtags are utilised to link ones tweets with specific topic lists, such as #sustfash (sustainable fashion) or #BuyBritishBrands. In this manner, they highlighted what the organisations associated themselves with and how others perceived them by comparing the use of these hashtags. Utilising hashtags effectively implies getting greater exposure to an audience interested in a specific topic or issue. Thus far, these micro-organisations are not using these tags to their maximum potential, or not at all. Therefore, a suggestion that is brought forward is considering which hashtags may be most appropriate for their brand and could be used on a

regular basis. Moreover, the @-signs allowed exploring the creation of networks and their meaning. The majority of tweets were discussions between like-minded brands and the micro-organisations, or with consumers. This reinforced the claims made by the companies that they are constantly talking to their stakeholders and create relationships, which are kept alive through these accounts. Thus, the social media analysis provided an in-depth understanding of this Micro-Identity Model component.

Although it could be argued that utilising multi-methods methodological tools and especially those that create rich data sets, such as employee shadowing and social media analysis bears various challenges, as they may be hard to control and at times feel overwhelming. However, the contrary is argued for this PhD research: whilst the data sets indeed were rich in nature and thus, took a long time to code and make sense of the findings, both social media analysis and employee shadowing added extra value. These methodological tools provided insight into the organisations' routines and communication strategies that would have been disclosed to the researcher, if she had 'only' used semiotics, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Therefore, in order to be able to create a model of corporate identity it is vital to understand what the organisation stands for from both an insider's and an outsider's perspective, which was achieved by including these methodological tools.

### **7.3 Limitations and areas of further research**

This research was set within two very specific contexts: the green slow-fashion industry and micro-organisations. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the participating companies were selected to fit within specific criteria: located and producing in the UK, operating within the segment of the green slow-fashion industry, and classified as micro-companies. In this manner, this PhD research enhanced the knowledge within two under studied areas: the creative and cultural industries and micro-companies. Due to the setting of the research, participants can best be described as people who already engage with environmentally friendly products and independent retailers. Thus, in terms of providing an interpretation of sustainable fashion they might already have a better knowledge about the term sustainable fashion. In this case, this has acted as an advantage, as the researcher was able to create a matrix and compare and contrast associations of the term *sustainable fashion* with characteristics

of eco-labels. In order to enhance and further this knowledge and create an even broader understanding of sustainable fashion, future research could extend on this PhD research and focus on a wider sample of participants, who not necessarily have an affiliation with sustainable fashion.

The introduction highlighted that approximately 71.6% of people working in the fashion industry are female and dominated by a young workforce (BFC, 2010). Moreover, it was pointed out that the self-employment rate of women increased between 2008 and 2011 (ONS, 2013), with overall only 17% of businesses being owned by females. Within this project out of the thirty-six interviews conducted with experts, consumers, and organisations, only three participants were male. This ratio reflects the fashion industry's environment and can be seen as representative. Whilst the researcher attempted to recruit male managed micro-organisations, due to time and financial constraints, as well as the unwillingness of companies to participate in the research project, these could not be recruited. It has to be re-emphasised that this research did not take into account any aspects relating to gender specific characteristics, thus the researcher believes that the Micro-Identity Model and the organisational process map are also applicable for male led micro-organisations. However, as the last statement made cannot be validated within this research, as the O/Ms were all female, future research could involve conducting a similar study that incorporates male managed micro-businesses.

Participation in this research project was on a voluntary basis. Chapter 3 emphasised that the case companies were selected using a combination of judgement and convenience sampling. This resulted in recruiting for micro-organisations that although similar in nature, as they fulfilled the selection criteria set of this PhD research, differ dramatically in terms of their years of operation and actual size (number of employees). Whilst the data collected and analysed reached a natural saturation point, the researcher was unable to collect the exact same information from each of the companies. However, it is suggested that this is a challenge that is faced within any case study research and not a sole trade-off of researching micro-organisations, as even with in companies that employ the same amount of workers, not necessarily all of them are willing to be part of a project. Moreover, every company puts a different focus on advertising and promotional materials: some might favour print, whilst others might feel more strongly about online marketing. What could however influence the communication tools used and the communication



strategy developed are the years of operation. In this sense, the longer a company has been in existence, the more aware the O/Ms are aware of communication tools that work best for their company. Although this research was able to provide some suggestions on how to improve current communication strategies in place within the four micro-organisations, namely introducing a social media policy and following an integrated marketing communication approach, the various strategies implemented could not be compared and contrasted. Moreover, within this research, the main aim was to develop a corporate identity framework for micro-organisations, rather than creating a full communication strategy. From the research findings however it becomes apparent that communication plays a key role within Micro-Identity Model, therefore, future research could put a stronger focus comparing and contrasting communication strategies.

As previously stated, this research was set in specific contexts, which implies that the findings of this thesis are specific to micro-organisations operating in the green slow-fashion industry. In order to establish whether the Micro-Identity Model holds true, similar studies could be conducted within different industry setting such as the manufacturing, the chemical, and/or the service sector.

This research concentrated on micro-organisations and designers that have worked in the industry for at least five years, employing a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 10 workers. Whilst the co-operations were only established in 2012, the actual designers behind the co-operatives have created fashion items and accessories for a longer period of time. Thus, this research looked at companies that were already established in the market. The introduction mentioned that especially since the recession in 2008 start-ups and self-employment rose (ONS, 2013). In a similar manner, the findings in this PhD research have indicated that the O/Ms play a key role within the micro-organisations. Thus, future research could involve investigating start-up companies that have not been in operation for more than three years and investigate whether the Micro-Identity Model applies in their context. Moreover, with trends in the slow-fashion industry moving rapidly forward and new start-ups emerging such as the Pikkpack's Flat-Pack Shoes that reduce the amount of raw material used (Zimmer, 2014) a further aspect that could be investigated in connection with the Micro-Identity Model is aspects of entrepreneurship.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Corporate identity summary and milestones

Author	Date	Title	Details	Key Findings	Research Methods
Kennedy	1977	Nurturing corporate images: total communication or ego trip?	European Journal of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus of article is on the company's image and its creation</li> <li>- The result of the study highlights that an image can be manipulated</li> <li>- Distinction between visual identity and corporate image</li> <li>- Indirectly highlights that <b>communication</b> plays key role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Case research (2 cases chosen of different size)</li> <li>- Interviews conducted with managing directors and sales force</li> <li>- Questionnaire to follow up on findings</li> <li>- <b>Qualitative</b> research methods</li> </ul>
Bernstein	1984	Company image and reality: a critique of corporate communications	Holt, Rinehart & Winston Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Every organisation has an identity whether it is intentional or unintentional</li> <li>- Identity is fundamental to a company's <b>communication</b>, as it helps portray the firm</li> <li>- Corporate identity is made of visual cues, which needs to align with organisation's <b>philosophy</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus groups discussions with top management, communication management and department representation</li> <li>- <b>Qualitative</b> research methods</li> </ul>
Birkigt & Stadler	1986	Corporate Identity, Grundlagen, Funktionen, Fallbeispiele (Corporate Identity: The foundation, functions, and case descriptions)	Moderne Industrie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed a corporate identity, corporate image model</li> <li>- See identity and image as to separate entities that are strongly interlinked</li> <li>- Key constructs in their model: <b>behaviour</b>, <b>symbolism</b>, and <b>communication</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Qualitative</b> research methods</li> </ul>
Dowling	1986	Managing your corporate image	Industrial Marketing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Builds on Kennedy's (1977) model</li> <li>- <b>Communication</b> is key component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceptual Framework</li> </ul>
Abratt	1989	A new approach to the corporate image management process	Journal of Marketing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduces corporate <b>philosophy</b> as new concept</li> <li>- Emphasises that, although previously used interchangeably, corporate identity and corporate image are separate concepts</li> <li>- Mentions that corporate identity is cluster of visual cues, which need to be managed according to organisation's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceptual paper</li> </ul>












				wishes to be portrayed (as highlighted in Bernstein 1984)	
Balmer	1995	Corporate branding and connoisseurship	Journal of General Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifies four schools of thought in corporate identity literature</li> <li>- Strategic focus</li> <li>- Cultural focus</li> <li>- Communication focus</li> <li>- Fashionability focus</li> </ul>	
Olins	1995	The new guide to identity	Gower Publishing Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate identity answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who you are;</li> <li>- What you do;</li> <li>- How you do it;</li> <li>- Where you see yourself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Identity as USP influences all aspects of organisation</li> <li>- Identity is a USP (part of <b>strategy</b>)</li> </ul>	
Van Riel	1995	Principle of corporate communication	Prentice-Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides insight into challenges faced when corporate identity and image are incoherent</li> <li>- Highlights that corporate identity mix is the method a firm can represent itself to its audience (<b>behaviour, symbolism, and communication</b>)</li> </ul>	
Markwick & Fill	1997	Towards a framework for managing corporate identity	European Journal of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate identity linked with corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One case</li> <li>- <b>Quantitative</b> survey with 3 stakeholder groups</li> <li>- <b>Quantitative</b> research methods</li> </ul>
Van Rekom	1997	Deriving an operational measure of corporate identity	European Journal of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides an in-depth outline of criteria for corporate identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empirical research: means-end measurement</li> <li>- Open-ended interview technique</li> <li>- <b>Quantitative</b> and <b>qualitative</b> research methods</li> </ul>
Balmer & Wilson	1998	There is more to it than meets the eye	International Studies of Management & Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Divides corporate identity literature into its two literature strands: marketing and organisational behaviour</li> <li>- Develops three schools of thought each</li> <li>- Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Graphic design perspective</li> <li>o Integrated-communication</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

				<p>perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Interdisciplinary and 'cultural' perspective</li> <li>- Organisational behaviour</li> <li>o Integrated perspective</li> <li>o Differentiated perspective</li> <li>o Fragmented perspective</li> </ul>	
Stuart	1998	Exploring the corporate identity/corporate image interface: An empirical study of accountancy firms	Journal of Communication Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stuart revised Abratt's model in 1994 and 1998, incorporating cultural elements and corporate symbols into the corporate identity construct</li> <li>- Key components in her model: corporate culture, communication and corporate symbols</li> </ul>	- Quantitative research methods
Balmer & Soenen	1999	The AC <sup>2</sup> ID Test of corporate identity management	Journal of Marketing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple identities: actual, conceived, communicated, ideal, and desired</li> <li>- Acknowledges multiple images held within/about organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empirical study</li> <li>- Document analysis focusing on material produced by the top 20 corporate identity consultancies</li> <li>- Qualitative element: in-depth interviews, desk research and content analysis</li> <li>- Qualitative research methods</li> </ul>
Westcott Alessandri	2001	Modelling corporate identity: a concept explication and theoretical explanation	Corporate Communications: An International Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The review literature provided Alessandri enunciates that most models of corporate identity are conceptual frameworks</li> <li>- It is highlighted that there is no common definition of corporate identity</li> <li>- Author sees corporate identity as an approach that is formed from the bottom-up</li> </ul>	- Conceptual
Melewar	2003	Determinants of the corporate identity construct: a review of the literature	Journal of Marketing Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides six components: corporate culture, behaviour, corporate strategy, corporate structure, corporate design, and corporate communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceptual</li> <li>- Analysis of various existing literature to find common grounds in the definition of corporate identity</li> </ul>
Topalian	2003	Experienced reality: the development of corporate identity in the digital era	European Journal of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate identity needs to be 'experienced asset'</li> </ul>	
Balmer	2008	Identity-based views on the corporation: insights from	European Journal of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifies five schools of thoughts</li> <li>o Identity of a corporation</li> <li>o Identification from a</li> </ul>	

		corporate identity, organisational identity, social identity, visual identity, corporate brand identity and corporate image		corporation o Stakeholder/s identification with the corporation o Stakeholder/s identification to a corporate culture o Envisioned identities and identifications	
Suvatjis et al.	2012	Assessing the six-station model: a polymorphic model	Journal of Product & Brand Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overarching meta-framework</li> <li>- Communication links individual elements and is key component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purposeful sampling</li> <li>- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 28 corporate identity consultants</li> <li>- Quantitative and qualitative research methods</li> </ul>


## Appendix 2: Overview of labels utilised in this PhD research

Labels	Background	Key signifiers	Companies
<p><b>Bluesign</b> (Bluesign, 2013b)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Founded in 2000 in Switzerland by group of textile and chemical experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bluesign system looks at reducing the environmental impact on the entire supply chain</li> <li>- Encourage to eliminate harmful substances used in the textile industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jack Wolfskin</li> <li>- Prana</li> <li>- Mammut</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOTS</b> (GOTS, 2013d)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 2002</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textiles are produced from a minimum of 70% organic fibres</li> <li>- All dyestuffs and auxiliaries used must meet certain environmental and toxicological criteria</li> <li>- Functional waste water treatment plant is mandatory</li> <li>- Quality assurance system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People Tree</li> <li>- Albatross Clothing Ltd</li> <li>- Piccalliliy</li> <li>- Earth Couture</li> </ul>
<p><b>iVN Zertifiziert Naturtextil</b> (iVN, 2011)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 2000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality standards much higher than currently legal mandates within EU</li> <li>- Quality seal with strictest requirements for ecological textile production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vincente</li> <li>- Maravilla</li> <li>- Fairies Ecofashion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Oeko-Tex Standard</b> (Oeko-Tex, n.d. a)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Founded in 1992, association of 15 renowned institutions for textile research and testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tests textiles at all stages of their production cycle for the use of harmful substances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Legally banned and controlled substances</li> <li>· Chemicals known to be harmful to the health</li> <li>· Parameters for health protection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C&amp;A</li> <li>- Rapanui</li> <li>- Estrada Costa Socks (producing socks for Fila, Levis and others)</li> <li>- Etrala London</li> </ul>
<p><b>SA 8000</b> (SAI, 2012)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one of world's first auditable social certification standards for decent workplaces across all industry sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looks at following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Child Labour</li> <li>· Forced 6 Compulsory Labour</li> <li>· Health and Safety</li> <li>· Freedom of Association</li> <li>· Discrimination</li> <li>· Disciplinary Practices</li> <li>· Working hours</li> <li>· Remuneration</li> <li>· Management Systems</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jackpot</li> <li>- Dart International Garment Ltd</li> </ul>

<p><b>Fairtrade Sign</b> (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011a)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Founded in late 1980s in Netherlands, Max Havelaar Foundation launched first Fairtrade consumer label in 1988</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairtrade minimum price</li> <li>- Provide additional Fairtrade premium, which is reinvested</li> <li>- Ensures disadvantaged farmers and workers in developing countries get a better deal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Epona Clothing</li> <li>- People Tree</li> <li>- Gossypium</li> <li>- Monsoon</li> </ul>
<p><b>EU Flower</b> (DEFRA, 2013b)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 1992 to be recognisable environmental label across the EU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To promote the design, production, marketing and use of products which have a reduced environmental impact during their entire lifecycle</li> <li>- To provide consumers with better information on environmental impact of products</li> <li>- Consultation with the EU Ecolabelling Board (EUEB), the Commission, Member States, Competent Bodies and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Earth Collection</li> <li>- Naturals Fashion</li> <li>- Chopper Couture</li> <li>- Dunque</li> </ul>
<p><b>FSC</b> (FSC, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 1993</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When you see the FSC logo on a label you can buy timber and other wood products, such as paper, with the confidence that you are not contributing to the destruction of the world's forests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethletic</li> <li>- Rapanui</li> <li>- Patagonia</li> <li>- Waschbär</li> </ul>
<p><b>Made-By</b> (Made-By, n.d.)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not-for-profit organisation, established in 2004</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To improve environmental and social conditions in the fashion industry and make sustainability common practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Komodo</li> <li>- Ted Baker</li> <li>- Falcon</li> <li>- Haikure</li> <li>- G-Star</li> </ul>

<p><b>Fair Wear Foundation</b> (Fair Wear Foundation, 2009)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Founded in 1999, and has currently over 50 member companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standards that need to be complied to are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Employment freely chosen</li> <li>· No discrimination in employment</li> <li>· No exploitation of child labour</li> <li>· Payment of living wage</li> <li>· No excessive working hours</li> <li>· Safe and healthy working conditions</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Legally-binding employment relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rapanui</li> <li>- Deuter</li> <li>- Jack Wolfskin</li> <li>- Monkee</li> <li>- Schöffel</li> </ul>
<p><b>World Fair Trade Organisation</b> (WFTO, 2013b)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Created in 1989</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a vision of a world in which trade structures and practices have been transformed to work in favour of the poor and promote sustainable development and justice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ella Georgia</li> <li>- Think Boutique</li> </ul>
<p><b>Soil Association Organic Standard</b> (Soil Association, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 1973</li> <li>- Certifies so GOTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textiles are certified as organic it means that both the production of the fibre on the farm, and the processing of this fibre into textiles has met organic standards and been checked at every step of the processing supply chain for social and environmental responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Albatross Clothing Ltd.</li> <li>- Animal Tails</li> <li>- Organic Baby</li> <li>- Do you speak green?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Carbon Trust</b> (Carbon Trust, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 2001</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly communicates carbon reduction commitment and achievements</li> <li>- Must meet requirements for Footprint Expert</li> <li>- Looking at greenhouse gas emissions of lifecycle (raw material, manufacturing, packaging, distribution &amp; retail, use &amp; disposal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Albatross Clothing Ltd.</li> <li>- Continental Clothing</li> </ul>

<p><b>WWF</b> (WWF Global, 2009; WWF, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 1961</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New WWF standard for low carbon clothing manufacturing developed by WWF HK</li> <li>- Help buyers identify clothes that create fewer emissions in the Pearl River Delta region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Animal Tails</li> <li>- H&amp;M (cotton for conscious line)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Labour Behind the Label</b> (LBL, n.d.)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labour Behind the Label is a campaign that supports garment workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aims to improve working conditions and support the empowerment of workers in global garment and sport shoe industry</li> <li>- Raise Public Awareness</li> <li>- Pressure companies</li> <li>- Support workers</li> <li>- Campaign for government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Footlocker</li> </ul>
Suggest Label			
<p><b>Made in Britain</b> (HM Government, 2013; Stoves, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established in 2011, not yet an official logo</li> <li>- Born out of a petition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goal of this label is to mark products that are Made in Britain</li> <li>- Helping consumers to identify home-grown products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not yet applicable in Fashion industry</li> </ul>
Fashion Events	Background	Key signifiers	Country
<p><b>The Green Showroom</b> (Green Showroom, 2013)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Green Showroom is an unconventional trade-fair/showroom with a new refreshing concept, conceived to enrich the fashion world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants need to fulfil following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certified organic material or</li> <li>- Recycled materials</li> <li>- Standards such as Cradle to Cradle</li> <li>- According to Fairtrade or similar standards</li> <li>- Support of social projects and traditional textile skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Berlin, Germany</li> </ul>

<p><b>Estethica</b> (BFC, 2012c)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Founded in 2006 by the British Fashion Council, to showcase the growing movement of cutting edge designers committed to working eco sustainability</li> <li>- In cooperation with Monsoon and Accessorize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Estethica designers adhere to at least one of the three Estethica principles of fair-trade and ethical practices, organic and recycled materials and are selected for both their ethical credentials and design excellence.</li> </ul>	<p>London, UK</p>
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(Please note that all bullet points within this table are direct quotes taken from the sources indicated in the label row, unless otherwise stated.)



### Appendix 3: Entrepreneurship summary and milestones

Author		Key contributions	Associations	Criticism
Cantillon	Coined the term 'entrepreneur' (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defines three economic agents (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Landowners</li> <li>o Entrepreneurs</li> <li>o Hirelings</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Highlights that entrepreneurs are essential economic actors (Stevenson &amp; Jarillo, 1990; Lowe &amp; Marriotte, 2007)</li> <li>- Social standing of individual is irrelevant in Cantillon's definition (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uncertainty (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989)</li> <li>- Risk-taking (Stevenson &amp; Jarillo, 1990)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excludes various groups of people from uncertainty (e.g. prince, landlords) (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989)</li> </ul>
Schumpeter	German Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assigns entrepreneur as <i>Persons Causa</i> and thus, gives him a central role within economy (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989)</li> <li>- Believes that without entrepreneur economy does not move forward (Audretsch, 2012)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Innovation (Schumpeter, 1928)</li> <li>- Growth (Audretsch, 2012)</li> <li>- Reduces his theory to three elements (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989: 44):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Circular flow versus change in economic routine</li> <li>o Statics versus dynamics</li> <li>o Entrepreneurship versus management</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concept of entrepreneurship not taken far enough (Schultz, 1980)</li> </ul>
Schultz	Chicago Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theory of entrepreneurship embedded in human capital (Schultz, 1980)</li> <li>- Criticises previous work on entrepreneurship on four grounds (Schultz, 1975: 832):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The concept is restricted to businessmen</li> <li>o It does not take into account the differences in allocative abilities among entrepreneurs</li> <li>o The supply of entrepreneurship is not treated as a scarce resource</li> <li>o No need for entrepreneurship in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defines entrepreneurship as ability to deal with disequilibria (Schultz, 1975)</li> <li>- Extends entrepreneurship to include both market and non-market activities (Schultz, 1975)</li> <li>- Demonstrates that education has an effect on people's ability to react to disequilibrium in marketplace (Schultz, 1975)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Questionable if aspects introduced by Schultz (1975, 1980) are novel ideas (Peneder, 2009)</li> </ul>

		general equilibrium theory		
Kirzner	Austrian Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attributes the spontaneous discovery of an opportunity to characteristics of entrepreneur (Kirzner, 1985)</li> <li>- “Human alertness at all times furnishes agents with the prosperity to discover information that be useful to them” (Kirzner, 1985:12)</li> <li>- Acknowledges that uncertainty play a vital role in entrepreneurship, but argues that it is more subtle than previously thought (Hérbert &amp; Link, 1989)</li> </ul>	- Alertness (Kirzner, 1985)	- Criticised by von Mises (2008), who points out that “There is a simple rule of thumb to tell entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs are those on whom the incidence of losses on the capital employed falls” (p.13).

## Appendix 4: Data collection overview

	Type	Duration	Role	Pic	Leaflets	Additional Info
<b>Case 1</b>  - Single person venture - Established in 2006 - 1 FT employee - 4 PT employees	I2	53:52 min	O/M			All interviews were conducted face to face
	I4	57:22 min	E			
	I6	13:33 min	E			
	I8	17:54 min	E			
	I10	26:59 min	E			
	Semiotics			✓	✓	Pictures of physical workspace and two company leaflets
	TF1	7/9/12-25/10/12				
	TF2	2/11/12-6/1/13				
	ES1	6h				Shadowing took place at organisation's premises
	ES2	6h				
ES3	6h					
ES4	6h					
ES5	6h					
<b>Case 2</b>  - 'Family run' business - Established 2002 - 10 FT employees	I21 + I23	10 min	E			Due to work environment all interviews were informal; researcher took detailed notes. I37 only recorded interview
	I25 + I27	20 min	O/M			
	I29	15 min	E			
	I31	20 min	O/M			
	I33	15 min	E			
	I35	60 min	O/M			
	I37	53:25	O/M			
	I39	35min	O/M			
	Semiotics			✓	✓	Pictures were taken of products and workspace, one company flyer
	TF5	18/12/12-22/3/13				Shadowing took place on organisation's premises
ES1	8h					
ES2	8h					
ES3	8h					
ES4	8h					
ES5	8h					
<b>Case 3</b>  - Co-op - Established 2012 - Mary Portas Fund and governmental support	I1	45:35	D			Interviews were fact to face, I7 and I9 were not recorded, but detailed notes were taken
	I3	21:43	D			
	I5	7:51	D			
	I7	30 min	O/M			
	I9	25 min	E			
	I11	31:29	D			Pictures were taken of shop, one company flyer
	Semiotics			✓	✓	
	TF3	6/12/12-11/2/13				Shadowing in shop
	ES1	6h				
ES2	6h					
ES3	2h					

	ES4	6h				
	Questionnaire	200				Handed out in person, over 2 week period on different dates to get a more accurate sample of population
<b>Case 4</b> - Co-op - Established 2012	I20	34:10	O/M			Interviews were all fact to face
	I22	10:52	D			
	I24	12:37	D			
	I26	30 min	D			
	Semiotics				✓	Pictures taken of physical store
	TF4	01/05/13-30/06/13				
	ES1	5h				Shadowing on shop premises
	ES2	5h				
	ES3	5h				
	ES4	5h				
Questionnaire	100				Handed out in person, over 2 week period on different dates to get a more accurate sample of population	
<b>Consumer Interviews</b>	C1	30:41				Interviews were conducted face to face in a public space at the participants convenience
	C2	23:39				
	C3	15:07				
	C4	32:02				
	C5	14:32				
	C6	25:11				
<b>Experts in Field</b> (Primary Data Collection)	I(M)	25:26	O/M			Single person company; interview was face-to-face; established in 2010
	I(S)	43:42	O/M			Single person company; interview was face to face; established in 2008
	I(N)	52:16	O/M			Micro-firm, 1 FT employee; Interview was fact to face; established in 2006
	I(N) Semiotics				✓	
	I(N)TF	18/10/12-24/1/13				
	I(E)	27:59	O/M			Phone interview; micro-company, eight FT employees; established in

						2005; has Fair Trade eco-label
	I(F)	35:00	O/M			Micro-firm; 1FT and four PT employees; established in 2000
	I(C)	32:14	O/M			Single person company; face to face interview; established in 2011
	I(P)	45:35	M			Trend setting organisation in UK fashion industry
<b>Experts in Field</b> (Secondary Data Collection)	I(BBC)	1:02:08	Various			Interview with representatives of the House of Lords; Interview broadcasted on BBC Democracy (BBC Democracy, 2013)
	I(Z)	2:14				Interview with book other conducted by the New York Times
	I(Guardian)	4:41	Various			Round Table discussion facilitated by the Guardian (Guardian, 2013)

## Appendix 5: Excerpt of interview analysis

I2Org2FP

- 1 C: Ok, my first question is  
 2 when did you establish  
 3 your brand?  
 4 I2: Ok. So I uhm... I had been  
 5 upcycling and recycling all  
 6 the way through my BA  
 7 degree<sup>17</sup> and.. uhm.. I do  
 8 you mean the name?<sup>1</sup>  
 9 Right... let me start go  
 10 back... but I started uhm...  
 11 I started upcycling and  
 12 recycling all through my  
 13 BA<sup>17</sup> and uhhh... it  
 14 wasn't branded at that point  
 15 it was just  
 16 experimentation.<sup>1</sup> And then  
 17 I did another whole year of  
 18 kind of experimenting after  
 19 I've graduated... with  
 20 different materials and  
 21 uhm... different machinery  
 22 and that kind of stuff.  
 23 <sup>7</sup>Uhm... and at that point I  
 24 kind of had the first very  
 25 formations of the idea of  
 26 what I was gonna do.  
 27 <sup>7</sup>Uhm.. and uhm... I decide  
 28 to do a Master at London  
 29 College of fashion for two  
 30 years. So I... I kind of  
 31 incubated the brand, in  
 32 research for two years<sup>17</sup>.  
 33 And then we became a  
 34 business in January 2010<sup>1</sup>,  
 35 but by that point a lot of  
 36 the brand development,  
 37 initial brand development  
 38 had been done. Ah.. and  
 39 then over the last two  
 40 years it's been at.. so  
 41 much brand development  
 42 really, compared to were  
 43 we were two years ago..  
 44 it's amazing.  
 45 C: So when you say 'we' do  
 46 you have any employees?  
 47 Leading into answer... should  
 48 have just asked: Who is 'we'?

Had been upcycling  
and recycling all  
through BA degree

**Founding History**  
(Upcycling and recycling seem to  
play a vital part of organisation, as  
founder has an interest in it.)

All through BA  
degree  
Wasn't branded but  
more of an  
experiment

**Education**<sup>17</sup> (initial idea of  
brand developed through BA  
program, but at that point more of an  
experiment rather than a full  
development. Education seems to  
play a vital role, opens up  
possibilities. Education helps to gain  
vital knowledge to develop brand)

Experimented with  
different materials  
and machinery

At that point had  
first very formation  
of idea of what I  
was gonna do

**Education**<sup>17</sup> (Brand as research  
project. Brand development through  
higher education. Education seems to  
be playing a key part of brand  
development)

Decided to do a  
masters, incubated  
the bran in research  
for two years

**Founding History**<sup>1</sup> (Brand  
officially registered in 2010)

Became a brand in  
January 2010  
By that point a lot  
of brand  
development had  
been done  
Over the last 2 years  
much brand  
development

**Brand development**  
(constant brand development, going  
with the time and flow. Also with  
experience brand grows. Education  
and experience key part of brand  
development. It seems to be  
important to reflect on brand and re-  
evaluate goals and aims)

## Appendix 6: Excerpt of semiotic analysis

### Picture Analysis Organisation 4 Flyer 1

#### 1 **Stage 1: Identify and Describe Text**

#### 2 Front of postcard

3 The flyer is printed in DIN A6 (postcard size). It has a  
4 double-sided print. The first side shows a picture of the  
5 **brand's products: children's shoes in the shape of dog**  
6 **heads**. The shoe on the left hand side is cut off, only one  
7 ear and the face is visible. The shoe on the right hand  
8 side has the right ear slightly cut off. **The Organisation 2**  
9 **logo, orange writing on a green background is visible on**  
10 **the right side of the shoe**. The material of the shoes gives  
11 the impression to be very soft and fluffy, through the way  
12 the material is photographed. There are small creases  
13 showing on the top part of the shoes, where the foot is  
14 supposed to go in.

15 In the left corner of the postcard is a logo about the size  
16 of a 1 pence piece. The middle of the logo is a round  
17 Union Jack; around the flag it reads 'Handmade in the  
18 United Kingdom'. **On the right hand side is the**  
19 **Organisation 2 logo. It is made up of two circles. The**  
20 **outer circle is green, the inner circle is orange with a,**  
21 **what looks like a tiger paw print in white with**  
22 **written above it in a semi-circle.**

23 On the outer boarder of the right hand side, written  
24 vertically along the short side of the postcard is the  
25 companies website spelled out in orange colour.  
26 Underneath it, in about half the font size of the website it  
27 reads '**children's footwear, clothing and much, much,**  
28 **more...**'. The latter is written in black ink.

#### 29 Back of postcard

30 The back of the postcard is roughly divided into thirds.  
31 The first 1/3 is dominated by writing, with the top part of  
32 this being in bold. The other 2/3, (the top parts of it) are  
33 dominated by four pictures. The first picture shows  
34 scenery from (assuming) the Shropshire area. **The**  
35 **second image shows the foot of a sewing machine and**  
36 **part of a doggy shoe being made**. The third image,  
37 underneath the scenery shows batches of sewn Union  
38 Jacks. The last image, underneath the first sewing image,  
39 shows a foot of a sewing machine again, sewing a  
40 cowboys head onto a piece of fabric.

41 Underneath the images it reads the company's name and  
42 address and contact details. It furthermore provides the  
43 Facebook social media address.

44

**Product** shows product on flyer  
– introducing the product to the  
consumer – brand advertising

**Visual Identity** brand  
recognition, printing the logo on  
the flyer, helps customers to  
identify the brand

**Heritage** the Union Jack logo  
highlights that the products are  
made in the UK, which is further  
highlighted through the written  
word – shows importance of  
country of origin

**Visual Identity** little paw  
should signal what the designs are  
mainly about (animals) – green and  
orange very visible colours and  
vibrant – fun to look at, make it  
child friendly

**Branding** implies that the  
brand is more than just something  
to wear it is a unique creation:  
invites the consumer to read up on  
brand

**Heritage** although made in the  
UK the localised aspect is  
important

**Production** handmade –  
implies **creativity**, talent and  
**passion**

**Heritage** focusing on **Made in**  
**the UK**

**Visual Identity** making sure  
the company name is always  
represented – **Communication**  
**Strategy**

# Appendix 7: Research questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed as part of a wider research project, 'the role of sustainability on corporate identity in the UK green slow-fashion industry'. This survey seeks to investigate the attitude towards sustainable fashion. Participation is on a voluntary basis. Responses will be used within this research project and may further be utilised for publications in academic journals. The responses may be viewed by the researcher and her supervisory team only. Any queries you may have can be directed to myself, Claudia Henninger (CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk).

## I. General Question Section

Which aspects are important to you when shopping for clothes?

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither	Important	Very Important
Quality of Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Price of Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comfort of Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design & Style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colour of Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainably Produced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locally Made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethically Sourced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made in the UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Fair Trade Sign	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a Fun Product Brand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Convenience of Store Location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding Brand on Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I prefer shopping at independent shops rather than High Street Shops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to support local designers by purchasing their products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I associate sustainable fashion with higher quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher prices on organic/ethical clothing discourages me from buying them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is no difference in price between an organic and non-organic product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think sustainably produced products are less expensive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If sustainable fashion items have the same price and appearance as non-sustainable fashion items, I would choose the ethical option	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am satisfied with the availability of sustainable fashion garments in High Street shops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I distrust fashion retailers that claim to have ethical collections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confused about what ethical fashion is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confused about what sustainable fashion is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consider myself an ethical consumer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



What does the term 'Sustainable Fashion' mean to you?

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as sustainable?

Yes  No  Not on purpose  I don't know

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as organic?

Yes  No  Not on purpose  I don't know

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as eco-friendly?

Yes  No  Not on purpose  I don't know

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as ethical?

Yes  No  Not on purpose  I don't know

**2. Brand Specific Question**

Did you look at a specific brand at (store name) today?

Yes  No

If YES, please specify

---

Which 3 words best describe the brands showcasing at (brand name)?

- |               |                          |             |                          |                        |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sustainable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Versatile   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forward Thinking       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fashionable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vintage                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Colourful     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Affordable  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Natural                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stylish       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Expensive   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organic                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trendy        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Exclusive   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ethical                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Organic       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unique      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Locally Made           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eco-Friendly  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Creative    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (Please specify) | _____                    |
| Inspirational | <input type="checkbox"/> | Made in UK  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |

How did shopping at (brand name) make you feel?

Do you agree with the following statements made about the shopping experience in (brand name)?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The products are good value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would recommend the products to friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products are all made locally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products are as fashionable as High Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will recommend the store to my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The music in store encourages me to stay in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The store layout is well arranged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The window display is appealing to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The interior fits well with the products sold in store	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you hear about (brand name)?

Word of Mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<input type="checkbox"/>	brand website	<input type="checkbox"/>
Magazine Ad	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poster	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please Specify)	
Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leaflet	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### 3. Data Protection Question

What is your gender?

Female  Male  Prefer not to say

What is your age bracket?

18-21  30-40  56-65   
 22-29  41-55  66+

What is your current work status?

Student  Full-time employed  Self-employed   
 Retired  Part-time employed  Unemployed

Other (Please specify):

I am happy to be contacted for follow-up questions:

Name:

Email Address:

## Appendix 8: Annotated questionnaire

<p><b>1. General Question Section</b></p> <p>Which aspects are important to you when shopping for clothes?</p> <p>Quality of Product</p> <p>( Grönroos, 1994 - 4Ps; Levell, 2010 - EFF questionnaire; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Linking to Strategy Station; IISD, 2013 - Marketing green products)</p>	<p>I prefer shopping at independent shops rather than High Street Shops</p> <p>(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)</p>
<p>Price of Product</p> <p>( Grönroos, 1994 - 4Ps; Levell, 2010 - EFF questionnaire; Azevedo et al., 2009; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Linking to Strategy Station; IISD, 2013 - Marketing green products)</p>	<p>I try to support local designers by purchasing their products</p> <p>(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)</p>
<p>Comifort of Product</p> <p>( Grönroos, 1994 - 4Ps; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Linking to Strategy Station)</p>	<p>I associate sustainable fashion with higher quality</p> <p>(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)</p>
<p>Design &amp; Style</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Design; Azevedo et al., 2009)</p>	<p>Higher prices on organic/ethical clothing discourages me from buying them</p> <p>(Mintel, 2009 - Ethical Clothing) Internal Validity</p>
<p>Colour of Product</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Design; Azevedo et al., 2009)</p>	<p>There is no difference in price between an organic and non-organic product</p> <p>(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)</p>
<p>Organic</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Behaviour; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Strategy)</p>	<p>I think sustainably produced products are less expensive</p> <p>(Mintel, 2009 - Ethical Clothing)</p>
<p>Sustainably Produced</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Behaviour; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Strategy; Levell, 2010 - EFF questionnaire)</p>	<p>If sustainable fashion items have the same price and appearance as non-sustainable fashion items, I would choose the ethical option</p> <p>(Mintel, 2009 - Ethical Clothing; Levell, 2010 - EFF questionnaire)</p>
<p>Locally Made</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Behaviour; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Strategy)</p>	<p>I am satisfied with the availability of sustainable fashion garments in High Street shops</p> <p>(One Green Score, 2012; IISD, 2013 - Marketing green products)</p>
<p>Ethically Sourced</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Behaviour; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Strategy)</p>	<p>I distrust fashion retailers that claim to have ethical collections</p> <p>(CSF, 2008; EFF, 2011)</p>
<p>Made in the UK</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Corporate Culture; Country of Origin; Azevedo et al., 2009)</p>	<p>I am confused about what ethical fashion is</p> <p>(Mintel, 2009 - Ethical Clothing) Internal Validity</p>
<p>Has a Fair Trade Sign</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Behaviour; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Strategy)</p>	<p>I am confused about what sustainable fashion is</p> <p>(Mintel, 2009 - Ethical Clothing)</p>
<p>Is a Fun Product Brand</p> <p>(Azevedo et al., 2009; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Critical Triplet Station)</p>	<p>I consider myself an ethical consumer</p> <p>(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)</p>
<p>Convenience of Store Location</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003; Melewar &amp; Karaosmanoglu, 2006 - Corporate Design; IISD, 2013 - Marketing green products)</p>	<p>What does the term 'Sustainable Fashion' mean to you?</p> <p>(Liggett, 2010 - No common Definition of sustainable fashion)</p>
<p>Finding Brand on Social Media</p> <p>(Melewar, 2003 - Corporate Communication; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Communication Station)</p>	

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as sustainable?

(adapted from **One Green Score, 2012**)

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as organic?

(adapted from **One Green Score, 2012**)

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as eco-friendly?

(adapted from **One Green Score, 2012**)

Have you ever purchased an item of clothing that was described as ethical?

(adapted from **One Green Score, 2012**)

**2. Brand Specific Question**

Did you look at a specific brand at \*\*\*\*\* today?

(Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)

Which **3 words** best describe the brands showcasing at \*\*\*\*\*?

(Azevedo et al., 2009; Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews; Twitter analysis, company philosophy, leaflet analysis)

- |               |                          |             |                          |                        |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sustainable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Versatile   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forward Thinking       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fashionable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vintage                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Colourful     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Affordable  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Natural                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stylish       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Expensive   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organic                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trendy        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Exclusive   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ethical                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Organic       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unique      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Locally Made           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eco-Friendly  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Creative    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (Please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inspirational | <input type="checkbox"/> | Made in UK  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |

How did shopping at Bird's Yard Sheffield make you feel?

(Balmer & Soenen, 1999 - AC2ID test: conceived identity; Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Critical Triplet Station)

Do you agree with the following statements made about the shopping experience in \*\*\*\*\*?

The products are good value for money (Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)

I would recommend the products to friends (Interview with practitioners in the field and expert interviews)

The products are all made locally (Melewar, 2003 - Corporate Culture)

The products are as fashionable as High Street Products (One Green Score, 2012)

I will recommend the store to my friends (Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Creativity Station)

The music in store encourages me to stay in store (Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Creativity Station)

The store layout is well arranged (Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Creativity Station)

The window display is appealing to me (Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Creativity Station)

The interior fits well with the products sold in store (Suvatjits et al., 2012 - Creativity Station)

How did you hear about \*\*\*\*\* (One Green Score, 2012)

- |               |                          |         |                          |                        |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Word of Mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> | Google  | <input type="checkbox"/> | ***** website          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Magazine Ad   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poster  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (Please Specify) |                          |
| Social Media  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |

### 3. Data Protection Question

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

What is your age bracket?

18-21

30-40

56-65

22-29

41-55

66+

What is your current work status?

Student

Full-time employed

Self-employed

Retired

Part-time employed

Unemployed

Other (Please specify):

I am happy to be contacted for follow-up questions:

Name:

Email Address:

(Age brackets and work status was chosen according to the observations made whilst conducting employee shadowing)

# Appendix 9: University of Sheffield ethical approval form

## University Research Ethics Application Form

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue', as shown on the University's research ethics website at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)

### Part A

**A1. Title of Research Project: The Role of Corporate Identity in the Sustainable Fashion Industry**

**A2. Contact person** (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised-postgraduate researcher projects):

Title: Miss First Name/Initials: CE Last Name: Henninger  
 Post: PhD Student Department: Management School  
 Email: CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 07872445470

**A2.1. Is this a postgraduate researcher project?**  
 If yes, please provide the Supervisor's contact details:  
 Dr Caroline Oates, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, c.j.oates@sheffield.ac.uk, 0114 22 23348

**A2.2. Other key investigators/co-applicants** (within/outside University), where applicable:  
 Please list all (add more rows if necessary)

Title	Full Name	Post	Responsibility in project	Organisation	Department

**A3. Proposed Project Duration:**  
 Start date: September 2011 End date: September 2014

**A4. Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves children or young people aged under 18 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves testing a medicinal product *
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *
<input type="checkbox"/>	involves investigating a medical device *

\* If you have marked boxes marked \* then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate

## University Research Ethics Application Form

### For Staff and Postgraduate Researchers

This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Tick as appropriate

**Complete this form** if you are a **member of staff or a postgraduate research student** who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure.

**or**

**Complete this form** if you plan to submit a **'generic' research ethics application** (i.e. an application that will cover several sufficiently similar research projects). Information on the 'generic' route is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/generic-research-projects](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/generic-research-projects)

**\*PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM: PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT\***

**This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets / Covering Letters / Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.**

Further guidance on how to apply is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure)

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval)

**Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page and email it to the Ethics Administrator of your academic department. Please note that the original signed and dated version of 'Part B' of the application form should also be provided to the Ethics Administrator in hard copy.**

Ethics Administrators are listed at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.991051/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.991051/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf)

**Date:** 20/05/2013  
**Name of applicant:** Claudia Elisabeth Henninger  
**Research project title: The role corporate identity in the sustainable fashion industry**



University insurance is in place. The procedure for doing so is entirely by email. Please send an email addressed to [insurance@shef.ac.uk](mailto:insurance@shef.ac.uk) and request a copy of the 'Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form'.

## University Research Ethics Application Form

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University's Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

### A5. Briefly summarise:

- i. **The project's aims and objectives:**  
(this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

#### Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the corporate identity of micro companies in the sustainable fashion industry, and to understand the driving factors behind establishing a company based on sustainable and ethical values. Furthermore it looks at how the company's desired identity compares to the identity perceived by stakeholders involved. This research tries to challenge the way the fashion industry is currently working and operating (i.e. fast fashion), by examining the potential (dis)advantages of moving towards a more environmentally friendly organisational behaviour. As a practical contribution, this research will investigate how to transfer the current operations of sustainable micro companies within the wider fashion industry.

#### Research Questions

- What is the rationale behind producing, promoting and acting in a sustainable manner?
- How does a micro company's desired identity compare to the identity perceived by their stakeholders?
- What relationship do corporate identity and eco-labels have from an organisational and consumer perspective?

#### Objectives

1. To investigate the components of corporate identity in sustainable fashion organisations.
2. To analyse how corporate communication is utilised to support the desired corporate identity.
3. To compare in how far the organisations' desired identity is reflected in the stakeholders' perceived identity of the individual organisations.
4. To understand the relationship between corporate identity and eco-labels in the sustainable fashion industry.
5. To investigate the influence of eco-labels on the consumer's perception of a sustainable fashion organisation.

### ii. The project's methodology:

- (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)
- Qualitative Research Methods
    - o Case study approach (investigating 4 companies within the UK in more depth), to gain more in-depth understanding of the organisation
    - o Semi-structured interviews (Conducted within the 4 case organisation, as well as 20 interviews with practitioners in the field of sustainable fashion)
    - o Employee Shadowing (which will happen during the interview and as part of a workplace shadowing, to which organisations have to agree in advance)
    - o Visual analysis of promotional material (semiology)
    - o Photographs of studio, location of shop and work space may be taken (Pictures of people will NOT be included)
  - Quantitative Research Methods

3

- o Questionnaire, to explore the relationship between corporate brand identity, internal branding and eco-label
- The survey will be distributed to organisations and is aimed towards consumers

- Participation is on a voluntary basis
- The researcher will hand the questionnaire out personally (The two owner-managers of the two organisations have agreed for the researcher to hand out the questionnaire personally on their premises. They both have looked at the questionnaire – copy attached to this form – and agreed that it is more than acceptable and are happy for the researcher to conduct the research. It has to be highlighted that the researcher explains the research project to every participant, no one under 18 is filling out the questionnaire, the participation is voluntary, and the participants can take a leaflet with them, explaining giving a brief overview of the research and providing contact details of the researcher.)
- The questionnaire does not ask for any sensitive information and participants can withdraw from participation at any time

### A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

- there is a low risk of physical and/or psychological harm, as the research is based on voluntary participation
- furthermore the interviewees will remain anonymous within this research
- only participants that have agreed for their name to be published, may be mentioned within this PhD (this will only happen, if the name/position of the participating person may have an influence on the data, otherwise all participants will remain anonymous)

### A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

- potential issues could arise, as the research will meet with participants at the company they are working at
- potential safety issues could further arise due to using public transportation and getting to and from the interviews

#### If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

- the researcher will ensure that at least one person knows where she is at all time
- she will ensure to report back once the interview is over
- the researcher furthermore will have a phone on her at all times, to ensure she can be contacted

### A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

- i. **Identified?**
  - companies will be researched via google, social media websites such as facebook, twitter and linkedin
- ii. **Approached?**
  - companies will be approached via email or called

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iii. **Recruited?**

- recruitment will be on a voluntary basis
- for questionnaires a random sampling approach is used – all participation in filling in the questionnaire is voluntary.

**A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?** YES  NO

**If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why.**  
Further guidance is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent)

**A9.1.** This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:  
**How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):**

- The research will explain the research to the participant
- He/she will be made aware that participation is on a voluntary basis only
- The participants will be asked to sign a form saying:

Please see the consent form attached. (A)

- The owner-manager of the micro organisations investigated will receive a separate form of consent, which will be signed before the research is undertaken
- The research is voluntary
- All employees participating will sign a form of consent as seen in (A)

The micro company's form of consent is attached under (B)

**A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?**

- within the verbatim transcribed interviews the names will either be marked XXXX or changed for another name
- the interviews will be numbered 11, 12 etc. and therefore be made anonymous
- the interviews furthermore may not be numbered in the order they were conducted, this implies that Interview 2 could have taken place before Interview 1. This helps to keep the employees anonymous with the research project

**A11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)**

no

**A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?** YES  NO

**A12.1.** This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:  
**How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?**

5

- the participants will be asked in advance if the conversation can be recorded
- the recordings will only be stored on the researchers hard drive, which is password protected and only the researcher herself has access to
- once the PhD has been completed the recordings will be destroyed
- it should furthermore be stated that the data collected is commercially not sensitive

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at:  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes)

6



# University Research Ethics Application Form

## Part B – The Signed Declaration

**Title of Research Project:** **The Role of Corporate Identity in the Sustainable Fashion Industry**

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield's policies and procedures, which include the University's 'Financial Regulations', 'Good Research Practice Standards' and the 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue' (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

**In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:**

- The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
- I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting my academic department's Ethics Administrator in the first instance).
- I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CICS).
- I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- If this is an application for a 'generic' project, all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.

- **I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.**

**Name of the Principal Investigator (or the name of the Supervisor if this is a postgraduate researcher project):**

**Dr Caroline Oates**

**If this is a postgraduate researcher project insert the student's name here:**

**Claudia Elisabeth Henninger**

**Signature of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor):**

**Date: 20-05-2013**

Email the completed application form and provide a signed, hard copy of 'Part B' to the

## Ethics Administrator (also enclose, if relevant, other documents). Form of consent (A)

The interview given on \_\_\_\_\_ will be used as part of the research carried out by Claudia Elisabeth Henninger, for the PhD at the University of Sheffield Management School. The topic of the PhD research is: 'The role corporate identity in the fashion industry'.

Please tick box

1	I confirm that I understand the purpose of this research and had the opportunity to ask questions	Yes	No
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons		
3	I agree to take part in the above study		
4	I consent to being audio recorded		
5	I understand that the audio record will be transferred to the researcher's hard drive, which is password protected, and not stored on any other device. My personal details will not be stored alongside the audio record.		
6	Please choose <b>one</b> of the following options		
	I consent to the use of attributable quotes/information		
	I consent to use of anonymised quotes/information		
	I consent to the use of background information being used in the research but not to quotations		
7	I consent for photographs being taken		

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Claudia Elisabeth Henninger \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

**Form of consent (B)**

I \_\_\_\_\_, hereby allow Claudia Elisabeth Hemminger, PhD student at the University of Sheffield Management School, to use my organisation as a case study for her research project. The topic of the PhD, in which this information will be used, is: 'The role of corporate identity in the fashion industry'.

**Please tick box**

1	I confirm that I understand the purpose of this research and had the opportunity to ask questions
2	I understand that employee shadowing incorporates the below mentioned details. I am happy for Claudia E. Hemminger to undertake employee shadowing on the dates agreed upon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employees will be shadowed in their work setting</li> <li>- The researcher will probe the employees in order to be able to write down a coherent flow of information and establish what their work incorporates</li> <li>- The information noted down will remain anonymous and confidential</li> <li>- The information noted down during the shadowing process is about their <i>working day</i>, rather than the actual content of what the employee is doing</li> </ul>
3	I understand that the participation within this research project is voluntary, and that all employees have the chance to opt out of the process at any time.
4	I understand that employees may be interviewed (if their consent has been given) and may be asked to describe print marketing material that is used within the organisation
5	I understand that this is a longitudinal study, therefore general research findings may not be provided immediately
6	I understand that a survey will be distributed to my external stakeholders (consumers, suppliers etc.) to investigate their perception of the brand
7	I understand that by participating in this research, I will receive the following benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An anonymous presentation of the research findings of my organisation</li> <li>- A general report of the overall research findings</li> </ul>

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Claudia Elisabeth Hemminger  
 Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is designed as part of a wider research project. The role of corporate identity in the fashion industry is the primary focus of the research. The survey seeks to understand what this information may be used for and how it is perceived by participants in the fashion industry. Your responses will be used to inform the research project. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation.

**1. General Questions Section**

What aspects are important to you when shopping for clothing?

Quality of Product	Price of Product	Design & Style	Colour of Product	Origin	Sustainability/Produced Locally/Make	Brand/Label	Material/UK	Fit or the Risk/Sign	How the Product/Brand is Perceived/Brand	Convenience of Store Location	Feeling/Brand associated with	Other (Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following aspects are important to you when shopping for clothing?

Quality of Product	Price of Product	Design & Style	Colour of Product	Origin	Sustainability/Produced Locally/Make	Brand/Label	Material/UK	Fit or the Risk/Sign	How the Product/Brand is Perceived/Brand	Convenience of Store Location	Feeling/Brand associated with	Other (Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How do you perceive the quality of clothing that you own?

Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following aspects are important to you when shopping for clothing?

Sustainable	Variable	Forward Thinking	Comfortable	Stylish	Quality	Price	Brand	Origin	Material	Fit	Other (Please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Claudia Elisabeth Hemminger  
 Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Do you agree with the following statements made about the shopping experience in Binz's Yard Sheffield?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The products are good value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would recommend the products to friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products are all made locally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products are as fashionable as High Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will recommend the store to my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The music in store encourages me to stay in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The store layout is well arranged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The window display is appealing to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The interior fits well with the products sold in store	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you hear about Binz's Yard Sheffield?

Word of Mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Google	<input type="checkbox"/>	Binz's Yard website	<input type="checkbox"/>
Magazine Ad	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poster	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leaflet	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### 3. Data Protection Question

What is your gender?

Female  Male  Prefer not to say

What is your age bracket?

18-21  30-40  56-65   
 22-29  41-55  66+

What is your current work status?

Student  Full-time employed  Self-employed   
 Retired  Part-time employed  Unemployed

Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

I am happy to be contacted for follow-up questions:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questionnaire Participant Information

### Participant Information

Thank you for participating in my research project titled 'The role of corporate identity in the UK sustainable fashion industry'. This questionnaire is a part of a wider research project at the University of Sheffield that seeks to investigate the attitude towards sustainable fashion. **Participation is on a voluntary basis.** Responses will be used within this research project and may further be utilised for publications in academic journals. The researcher and her supervisory team may view the responses. In instances where respondents have provided an email address, this information will be strictly confidential and only viewed by the researcher herself. The questionnaire is safely stored in a lockable box at the researcher's home. The questionnaire and any responses given will be destroyed once the research project has been completed.

Any queries you may have with regards to participating **voluntarily** with this questionnaire can be directed to the researcher:

Claudia Henninger  
[CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Further contact details can be found on the researcher's business card.

**Thank you for your participation!**



### Ethics Review

Research project title:	The role of corporate identity in the sustainable fashion industry (ref/2014/27)
Principal investigator:	Claudia Henninger (Caroline Oates)
Other investigators:	
Date received for review:	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2013

Lead reviewer:	Andrew Brint
Other reviewers:	Colin Williams, Malcolm Patterson

Our judgement is that the application should			
Proceed	Proceed with the suggested amendments in "A" below	Proceed providing the requirements specified in "B" below are met	NOT be approved for the reason(s) given in "C" below
X			

A) Approved with the following suggested, optional amendments (i.e. it is left to the discretion of the applicant whether or not to accept the amendments and, if accepted, the ethics reviewers do not need to see the amendments):
B) Approved providing the following, compulsory requirements are met (i.e. the ethics reviewers need to see the required changes):
C) Not approved for the following reason(s):

Date of decision: 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	
	Andrew Brint

## Appendix 10: Form of consent

### Form of consent (A)

The interview given on \_\_\_\_\_ will be used as part of the research carried out by Claudia Elisabeth Henninger, for the PhD at the University of Sheffield Management School. The topic of the PhD research is: ‘The role corporate identity in the fashion industry’.

Please tick box

1	I confirm that I understand the purpose of this research and had the opportunity to ask questions	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I agree to take part in the above study	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes
4	I consent to being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No
5	I understand that the audio record will be transferred to the researcher’s hard drive, which is password protected, and not stored on any other device. My personal details will not be stored alongside the audio record.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Please choose <b>one</b> of the following options	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I consent to the use of attributable quotes/information	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I consent to use of anonymised quotes/information	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I consent to the use of background information being used in the research but not to quotations	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I consent for photographs being taken	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Claudia Elisabeth Henninger  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix 11: Participant consent

### Participant Information

Thank you for participating in my research project titled ‘The role of corporate identity in the UK sustainable fashion industry’. This questionnaire is a part of a wider research project at the University of Sheffield that seeks to investigate the attitude towards sustainable fashion. **Participation is on a voluntary basis.** Responses will be used within this research project and may further be utilised for publications in academic journals. The researcher and her supervisory team may view the responses. In instances where respondents have provided an email address, this information will be strictly confidential and only viewed by the researcher herself. The questionnaire is safely stored in a lockable box at the researcher’s home. The questionnaire and any responses given will be destroyed once the research project has been completed.

Any queries you may have with regards to participating **voluntarily** with this questionnaire can be directed to the researcher:

Claudia Henninger

[CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:CEHenninger1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Further contact details can be found on the researcher’s business card.

**Thank you for your participation!**

## Appendix 12: Research quotes

All ‘utterances’ have been removed in the following quote excerpts and replaced by [...]. Moreover, findings have been colour co-ordinated according to Chapter 5’s section headings to make it easier to find the quotes emphasised in the text.

### **Sustainable Fashion Quotes – Methodology**

#### **Experts in Field**

##### **1 Expert Interview (E)**

Yeah definitely [...] I would say that [...] yeah we’re... I think we’re a quite pioneering brand in the world of ethical fashion. We are one of the first companies to get the Fair Trade mark for clothing and [...] because the transfer improve on [...] like you know on [...] the ethics on the verification of the clothing and it’s essential to [...] the decisions that we make [*break to a different part of interview*]

My particular interest was in [...] the effects of... on the people [...] that that were [...] growing the cotton and make the products and was... the more I looked into [...] initially when I sort started to think about ethical clothing I [...] was interested in [...] sweatshops and people who make the products, but when I looked into it more I realised that the people who are actually poorest in the supply chain were the farmers, who grew the cotton and so that’s why I was particularly interested in the Fair Trade mark because [...] it ensures that the cotton farmers get a better deal.

##### **2 Expert Interview (M)**

To be completely sustainable, as much as possibly viable [...] using all natural and [...] kind to skin fabrics, so I use a lot of bamboo [...] a lot of [...] organic cottons [...] but also to keep the actual brand identity really [...] quite slick and contemporary.. so people aren’t bogged down with this kind of green... not green washing, but you know... not bogged down with the fact that it is sustainable, it is meant to be... it is aimed at everyone ... so anyone can kind of look at it and want to find out more

##### **3 Expert Interview (S)**

I would say it’s based on [...] sustainable design principles. So [...] designing for end of life management... So using waste as a source material and diverting it from landfill... cos I am using post consumer waste. So post consumer waste is most likely destined for landfill [...] especially stuff that I use, which is a lot of denim. Which can’t be resold in charity shops, because it’s got a rip or a tear or a stain on it [...] if it wasn’t upcycled it would either be broken down and used as rag or it would be thrown into landfill where it would rotten and give off methane and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions ... so it is an environmentalist an eco [...] business really... those are the principles [*break to a different part of interview*]

All-over [...] clothes swaps... I am part of a sustainable fashion collective and we put on clothes swaps. So [...] I often collect the denim that is left at the end that has been discarded and nobody wants to take it from the swap [*break to a different part of interview*]

People seem to *like* the clothes that I make ... and I don’t think people have such a problem with wearing clothes that are second hand in this country, especially in XXXX where vintage is really popular [*break to a different part of interview*]

I guess...people do view it as hippie fashion or they think it’s going to be hempy and brown.. but I think within the fashion industry people are starting to .. realise that it isn’t more quickly then the general consumers.

##### **4 Organisation 1 Interview 2**

I think our absolute number one principle is ... is using resources whether they are materials, people skills, suppliers, whatever in this area that are currently kind of being underused, neglected, unwanted, considered waste whatever [...] and at the same time... I guess our second principle is to... is to produce something that is fashionable and that can compete in the fashion market so ... one is about using what we’ve got and the other one is about producing something that is really good. [*break to a different part of interview*]

The only requirement is it's (Region) and [...] most of it comes within 20 miles from here [...] and it comes half of it is old clothing and about half of it is mill waste, factory waste [...] some of it is produced locally and fabrics... like this cotton (points at her sweatshirt) is made in the mill... this is [...] just test strips that they don't want so *[break to a different part of interview]*

I don't know it's so ... I don't think anyone's like 100% perfect and I've got my big old banger car which probably isn't that economic ... but you know I do definitely.. I guess I live my life as I live the brand.

#### 5 **Organisation 1 Interview 4**

We always thinking about environmental impact and everything is upcycled... for that reason... so, but... but it makes us more creative, I think *[break to a different part of interview]*

Showing that sustainable fashion can be affordable, can be fashion forward [...] can be versatile and... that sustainable fashion is.. is ... is interesting.. is that sustainable design is, that sustainable fashion have become some of the most innovative out there, because we have those limitations imposed on us that we... self imposed limitations and that makes us more innovative, because we have to find ways around this and that shows in the clothing I think.

### Sustainable Fashion Quotes

#### Focal Organisations:

#### 6 **Organisation 1 Interview 2**

Well I worked for a brand when I was 16 to 17 during the holidays and then I worked there for a year when I was 18 in London, and they were a really kind of... I guess an ethical fashion pioneer they still don't even market themselves as an ethical brand, but they.. nearly all their products were manufactured in London and the once that weren't were manufactured in sort of small little factories... I think in Spain that's as far away as we produced...and [...] we ... they did a lot of kind of [...] work with social enterprise like you know cooperative makers groups in Africa and stuff, so they were really kind of pioneering and I worked for them and I just thought that's how fashion should be done, [...] cos you know I was at such a young and impressionable age and *[break to a different part of interview]*

But it think it's just looking at things in a different way to me.. that's what I .. thinking about things looking at things differently.. and using things.. again

#### 7 **Organisation 1 Interview 6**

It's sustainability obviously so... it's looking at things that maybe people have considered as disposable as no good anymore, you know maybe not fashionable anymore and it's kind of saving those things from being just waste products and so it's... it's upcycling because it's using old products, but it's creating them, changing them into a new kind of form or a... changing them into something completely different

#### 8 **Organisation 2 Interview 21+23**

She mentions she's been with the company and coming in everyday for the past 5 years. She, too, enjoys the social aspect and also the fact that she can do more handicrafts in the form of sewing. She also enjoys the new space a lot.

#### 9 **Organisation 2 Interview 25 + 27**

However, she feels very strongly about the location of the business, outsourcing it is not a question, and she says if they did, the business would not be the same again. She doesn't see anything appealing in outsourcing, as she would only get packages of products back that she would need to double check for quality assurance, but all the fun parts of seeing how a design is growing and evolving would be missed out on. It is about seeing people making the products, hearing their thoughts about them there and then, hearing them talking and laughing whilst they are producing them, which for her is a key part. Knowing that people are happy when they produce the shoes. She said although, for an outside, it might look as if they are working on an assembly line, they are not. *[break to a different part of interview]*

#### 10 **Organisation 2 Interview 29**



She really enjoys working there. She said it is a great place to work at, as people are really friendly and everyone is getting on well. It would always be a great laugh, just catching up with people, hearing what's going on in their life and listening to gossip, which makes the whole experience.

**11 Organisation 2 Interview 31**

What I like about our brand is that it is something fairly unique ... nobody else is making this type of shoe... Yeah... That's what I like about our brand... yeah it is quite unique. There is a lot of other shoe brands out there, but I think ours do stand out ... And they are all leather, all of these ones are leather ... They are completely different ... but I don't know if that is what I like most about my brand.

**12 Organisation 2 Interview 35**

She mentioned that their old box packaging used to be sourced in the UK. They had a middleman that they had to deal with, which made a lot of things more expensive and also more difficult. Also a lot of the consumers didn't like the boxes. They had to look for alternatives and came across plastics bags. She also says that they are made in China, they would be the only thing produced in China, however they take great care that the plastic is 100% recyclable and the PVC used in the bags is non toxic. She says that the bags should have a 100% recyclable sign on them, but are currently also missing that one, which will be changed for the net order.

**13 Organisation 2 Interview 39**

OM mentions it was interesting to read the term sustainable fashion in my research project. She mentions it would have been something that she had come across before, but never really thought off, in terms of the company itself. She believes they fit into the image, as they are conscious about what they are doing and how they are producing. In terms of knowing where their material comes from, how it is sourced and knowing their workforce. She sees her workers everyday, knows how they feel, knows the conditions they are working under and getting feedback from them on a day-to-day basis and within their monthly meeting. She feels they are also a sustainable business in terms of being viable and able to run their business without relying on anyone else. This is done by being able to be self sufficient in their business and having managed to build up their organisation, which can also afford to employ people.

**14 Organisation 3 Interview 1**

I don't know... it's something... when I got your email I did think ... you know I don't think I have actually ever considered any of that ... and I should have thought more about it and I haven't... it is sort of.. when I think of sustainability I think about things that come to mind initially are renewable energy and things like that ... and that's what I automatically think

**15 Organisation 3 Interview 3**

Eco awareness... so I may not be doing everything organic ... at the moment, you know... but I'm looking to sort of heading into that direction, but because it's only really a year old I don't have mountains of money to do everything I would like to do to start with... so it's you know... that's kind of where I'm trying to go with it.. so yeah, eco-awareness [...] and I want basically the whole ethos to be about good, fun designs a... good... and exclusive design, an inclusive price , so it's a good design for everybody. *[break to a different part of interview]*

All the footwear is made in China... which I am not ashamed off at all, because I've been working with the Chinese for the last 10... 15 years. Originally it started off with all the footwear, but I did Portugal, Spain and Italy than eventually everything moved over to China ... and there is hardly any sort of soft sole factories left in the UK, there is hardly any footwear factory left in the UK [...] and the one that I knew off I approached them, and they basically said to me... they want this much, this much. Which would have made the retail price £40 a pair. And at the moment they are £16 a pair, and nobody would buy them at £40 a pair... so I would have made a completely unsustainable business ... that's why it's done through China.

**16 Organisation 3 Interview 7**

The O/M mentions that sustainable fashion is a tough term to describe. For her it is all about the community, the people. That's why she has set up the store. She is hoping that people will be able to form collaborations and work on different projects with one another. She says its about providing opportunities and giving people a chance to sell their things in small quantities.

17 **Organisation 4 Interview 20**  
Everything has to be made in (Region) that is the one thing that we said (emphasises by tapping her fingers on table). And by the maker... by the individual makers ... we don't want things that are bought in.... and than they just put a bit of profit on them... It's got to be made by each.. so there is ... somebody does gals

18 **Organisation 4 Interview 24**  
Some of the organic stuff is just too expensive and you know, well it's just not possible to buy it so yeah, I try and get some stuff on the cheap side

### **Secondary Data**

#### **Experts in the Field**

19 **Guardian (2013): Doug Miller** (Retired Professor in Ethical Fashion)  
Sustainability in Fashion like all other sectors is about the development that meets the needs of people now, but without compromising the position of future generations.

20 **Guardian (2013): Fillipo Ricci** (Estethica)  
It's probably very difficult for [...] brands that are.. have a big share of the market to [...] become... over night sustainable... so because those are the brands that are driving the change those brands are making sure that they can get a share of the market [...] still big and consistent by [...] slowing down [...] this this.. this route... this kind of big change that is needed and... and being completely in control so at the end of the day, I think it's very much the responsibility is on the driving force and the driving force in this case are the corporate and the big brands. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Sustainability, sustainability is innovative and sustainable we have not forget, sustainability is a word that we have ... are kind of adopting from the economy ... sustainable business, is a business that can really make margin and profit sustainable for their development so... so we [...] strongly believe that sustainability is on the long term [...] a valid business alternative ... a valid business model... a model that will bring profit [...] back to the company that are engaging it.

21 **Guardian (2013): Charty Durrant** (Fable Foundation: writer, Consultant and Film Maker)  
I moved from mainstream fashion to sustainability, because I started to feel very uncomfortable with what I was seeing as a fashion editor within the industry [...] I was already an ecology and [...] but it was my secret thing, I was very aware I couldn't bring it up within the industry [...] a guilty secret in a way ... and the more I saw in the industry, the more uncomfortable I became and [...] also as a mother of three I'm aware that this isn't an emotional thing, this is a survival issue [...] There is no point for us looking good if we have no clean water to drink.

22 **Guardian (2013): Anabel Drese** (Timberland CSR European Senior Manager)  
In Timberland we really care about responsibility and where we should go [...] we know we have full responsibility on the value chain, but I think it is our responsibility to inform the consumer to show them that our product is made in an ethical way, from a sustainability point of view, from an environmental point of view. Initiatives that Timberland is doing regarding sustainability, we have created a collection that is called Earth keepers, this Earth keepers collection is sustainable from the social and environmental point of view, we are working hard with the factories and ensure that from the social and environmental point of view again [...] they are up to our standards. I think that what is so exciting about the fashion and ethics is that we.. we are... we are asked to innovate constantly for new materials, processes and new efficiencies in the factory and also to work together with the ... with the consumer perspective. Understand what is interesting for the consumer and what the consumer wants. Sales needs to be involved, marketing needs to be involved, value chain everybody in the company needs to be involved ... it's more a way of thinking than a way of doing business that is involving everybody in the brand

### **Primary Data**

#### **Experts in the Field**

23 **Expert Interview (D)**

Sustainable fashion? [...] it's not gonna fall apart, no can you say that? [...] yeah it's not gonna fall apart, it's sustainable, it's ethically made [...] it's been sourced wisely ... yeah I think so yeah [*break to a different part of interview*]

No, it isn't... and also people have this image that sustainable fashion is really uncool, and like like horrible looking, which is not true at all.. you can get ... especially with independent brands you can get ... you can get some really good independent sustainable fashion. It's out there but, but maybe people need to shout about it a bit more. I think.. but I think... no. I mean I went in and bought a T-shirt the other day and I don't think... well I can't buy this because I don't know if it's in the same factory from what happened... but you see... is the real everyday person really that bothered? You see I don't know. They are just not, because I don't think they are really... Some are, but some don't look, or they don't notice or.. it doesn't effect them because it is not in the UK... so... it's a real shame, I think they need to shout about it a bit more I think

## 24 Expert Interview (P)

I think, consumers are slowly trying to [...] understand that actually it's not that important to actually own all this of, you know logos and designers and they're making a lot more considered choices in what they are making and [...] and one example that is obviously the luxury industry [...] which actually saw a rise over the recession, showed that actually the people, not just the rich, but were making actually a lot more investment purchases and this actually also stems into what you might call sustainable fashion or sustainable practices. Where obviously a brand has to be completely open now, you know with twitter and everything so you know you cannot hide all this information is out there and I think people are starting to realise that it is not just a matter of 'Oh I am gonna buy this organic T-shirt' you know it's cool it's green, it actually, you know why ... the product needs to be sustainable from its core, and in fact even the word sustainable, should we even use it, because technically everything should be sustainable in itself ... but obviously there is a long way to go and I'm sort of gonna discuss that a little bit later on.

## 25 Expert Interview (S)

Well. I actually say that I'm 'Made in [city]'. So... yes.. I think 'Made in the UK' something that I would definitely promote myself as [...] because all the fabrics all the old clothes I use are sourced in the UK. I am designing and making it in [city] and [...] it has... less transportation because of that... And you know... It's just so important [...] now people actually look for Made in the UK, especially now that they are not having that much money to spend, you see..

## Questionnaires

### Organisation 3

- 26 • Q1: Long lasting clothes
- 27 • Q4: Sustainably sourced clothing, fair trade
- 28 • Q5: Being ethically sourced and made from quality products by people, who are paid a decent wage for producing the items
- 29 • Q6: Using materials that are easily reproduced and infinite supply
- 30 • Q11: Materials sourced from sustainable sources, e.g.. Wool, cotton, etc. produced preferably organically or at least in an environmentally friendly way. Or using goods/materials which otherwise would be discarded
- 31 • Q12: An oxymoron
- 32 • Q20: Long lasting, durable products, to minimize throw away culture, often making a statement, but can't back it up with sustainable credentials
- 33 • Q22: Products made with consideration of materials, transport cost, waste and other environmental concerns
- 34 • Q35: Sourced from sustainable resources and manufactured in a similar fashion
- 35 • Q37: Using products that will last and not affect the environment
- 36 • Q43: Well made and long lasting
- 37 • Q46: Fashion, which doesn't have a negative impact on the environment
- 38 • Q53: That it has been designed, made and sold in a way that minimises (or has no) impact on the environment, or even has a positive impact, e.g.. On resources, communities and individuals
- 39 • Q54: UK sourced materials, paying workers a fair price, environmentally friendly
- 40 • Q59: Long lasting
- 41

- 42 • **Q89:** Something that has little impact on environment
- 43 • **Q100:** Lasts a long time, doesn't go out of fashion, washes well
- 44 • **Q112:** Clothes produced by resources that are easily and readily available without damaging the environment or depleting resources
- 45 • **Q114:** Long lasting, materials are sourced sustainably
- 46 • **Q188:** Produced in ways that minimize harm to natural resources - encourages replanting of indigenous plants - incorporates recycled elements - made in a low-tech way - long-lasting items
- 47 • **Q192:** Contradictory term: fashion has high turnover and sustainable products would last and be created in a sustainable way. Classic items could be sustainable, but is it than fashionable?

#### Organisation 4

- 48 • **Q208:** Fashion which the purchase of does not harm the environment or these involved in it's production
- 49
- 50 • **Q218:** Long wearing, long lasting
- 51 • **Q220:** Products that can be produced from an easily renewable resource
- 52 • **Q240:** Eco-friendly material production, recycled items/shopping
- 53 • **Q243:** Fashion produced using materials from a sustainable source
- 54 • **Q290:** Produced from sustainable materials/ materials which are made from sustainable sources

#### Green Carpet Challenge

##### 55 **Organisation 1 Interview 2**

I read a lot of it on twitter a bit... you know it's great news stories it gets good media out of it... they get up and coming, established designers involved and... you know... it is interesting because it is a really big award ceremonies... people like the Times and the Guardian are gonna follow it... So I think in terms of getting the press [...] for sustainable fashion it is really, it is really good. It's a good thing. I mean it doesn't effect us hugely, because it's not.. it's so far from the fashion that we produce. [*break to a different part of interview*]

I don't think any brand is ... is beyond help and I don't believe that the only future is for lots of tiny brands like me. If I'm a 100% ethical and I have 5000 customers and ASDA is like .05% ethical and has 5million customers they are actually reaching more and doing more good and making m... better change even though what they do in entirety isn't great .. so why I think it's good that there are little business like me as a kind of example of what could be done or as a kind of think tank or a .. I guess a point of innovation ... I do really think that the big companies need to drive change...

##### 56 **Expert Interview (S)**

I think it's trickling through very gradually, but I think... sustainable clothing on the red carpet isn't immediately identifiable for everyday people who may read 'heat magazine' or 'look' magazine, they can't go and buy these clothes. They can't go and ask Garry Harvey to make them a couture gown out of scraps of... you know ... couture waste that's not... it's not immediately accessible... I think if it was on somebody who was a more everyday person, but in the public eye and the clothes were affordable [...] and people were educated to know that instead of buying 12 [high street brand] t-shirts you can buy one or two decent ones...and you know... you... you'd look better, they'd last for longer and you wouldn't be... you know... you wouldn't be putting your money in tonnes of unsustainable fashion and unethical fashion

#### Label Quotes

##### Focal Organisations

##### 57 **Organisation 1 Interview 2**

Well.. my guess would be.. it would be some kind of standardized [...] certified labelling system... I know there's quite a lot of them out there... [...] I know there's one in development, which was kind of like food packaging you know... kind of different contents you know where your material is from and whether... what the different processes that go in [...] I know it's something I kind of looked into ... because you know... we ... this factory hasn't been certified by.. by anyone and we don't have a... any system [...] I've approached by 'Made by..' a few times [...] but it's a... it... I.. you know... it's expensive, it's too expensive for us to get involved in and also they don't have anyone in the UK ...

well at the time they didn't have anyone in the UK on it [...] you know... if some kind of recognized 'Made in the UK', in a responsible way labelling was to come out I think that's what I would be interested in. [...] because [...] just because it has been made in England doesn't mean it has been done very well [...] so you know I think that could be a really nice kind of stance. [*break to a different part of interview*]

I know... about 'Made by...', I know that you can get [...] obviously I know you can get your fabrics fair [...] get a Fairtrade certification... I don't know if it is still going.. but there is the [...] 'no sweat' certification, which was the no sweatshops [...] I know..... that a lot of big companies have their own internal schemes now... [...] were you can kind of like track and trace your garment with bar codes and things like that ... so ... I guess that's not really an eco-label, because they're only doing it themselves [...] I know there's quite a lot flying around, but those are the three that are stuck in my head. [*break to a different part of interview*]

I think any kind of accredited, certified, organised mark, like [...] like that... [...] does... you know...it protects the consumer because they know... what they are buying and.. you know.. it makes it easier for us... having to explain what we are doing... [...] I think it's really good practice and I think... [...] for a small brand like us it would put us kind of on a palm...I was just think how the fair trade labelling has been used, but you know... it would be the kind of stamp of yeah they're doing.. they're doing it properly they're doing it right [...] And I also think that it joins up all the little bits of work that we've been busy doing [...] you know you hear so much like 'ohhhh, nothing has been made in England anymore', well you know... I know TTTT closed recently, but if all TTTT clothes and Burberry stuff and Barber and you know all these companies that are making here all had a shared stamp, and we then had that stamp some... for someone like us that would be amazing you know...that would... that would be a real recognition... so ... I think it would be a really positive thing

## 58 Organisation 1 Interview 4

Like Fair Trade and that kind of thing? [...] let me think ... I guess that's something we've never really looked into which is interesting actually. I'm sure XXXX would probably know more than I would about it, because she's obviously studied fashion and sustainable fashion in particular. But I can't say that on top of my head I can think of any, which is quite bad [*break to a different part of interview*]

I guess it's [...] how viable it is internationally, cos something that is made in England would be ... you know... you need... you'd need flexibility there for, for the variation in the ... the.... In the countries the clothing is being made. So it's a little difficult to have something across the board [...] especially, like with us like... we produce sustainable fashion, but like it's ... I mean, you've sort of get people using sustainable fashion and [...] and sort of other terms interchangeably as well... and.. we just... and our stuff is made in England, so of course people get paid [...] paid a fair wage and... and all of our like... and we...we don't have any sort of like under handed kind of goings ons so it's sort of like... yeah. Sort of what would... what would it... what would wrap up everything that we do in one little package ... it may not work across the board, especially as sustainable brands in themselves are kind of varied in what they do, but they still come under the umbrella of sustainable brands so... but one .. one brand could be [...] describing themselves as a sustainable brand and doing things very differently to how we do it. So it's...it's tricky to ... it's sort of enforce it across the board. Yeah... that's what I would think would be the main sort of issues with that kind of labelling.

## 59 Organisation 2 Interview 37

Marks of standardisation? For our shoes.... There aren't any, are there? We don't have to .. it's not like... These are... I've just been looking into it... It's not like in the clothing industry [...] why that is, I don't know... So as far as children's soft shoes go.. there aren't any... There are no regulations ... Which is bizarre really, isn't it? [...] you don't have to have... you now like in your clothing ... having all your... what the product is made out of.... Have labels in our clothing, haven't we... Yeah I'm just saying, unlike the clothing the shoes don't need that... [*break to a different part of interview*]

Maybe it's because it is imports... making it difficult on imports so [...] So our guy in China has the tests done, but than he has customers in I think it is Malaysia and they don't trust the lab results in China, so I have had to have the tests done in the UK ... I did really struggle to find a lab that not only has it's offices here and don't send there stuff off for lab reports in China... so it was a bit to find... I

found a lab, which tests jewellery... and they knew all the chemicals, and they did it... it was quite hard really. It is quite funny that they didn't trust the results from China... - because some of them did not test for droids or reso-dyes, led...

## 60 Expert Interview (C)

Yeah, yeah that's really important all the T-shirts that we are going to be stocking are made of ... have a low carbon footprint, also I have researched as well that the cotton that has been used ... has not been used with pesticides and things... so those are normally labelled on the T-shirts and yeah that's... and some of the T-shirts that I'll be stocking are made in the UK ... obviously the cotton is going to be important but it is going to be made in the UK, but even with the cotton I need to know that... it's been ethically produced and not used harmful pesticides etc. so yeah... and the same with all the home ware and those sort of things and ink ... to be water based ink... so

## 61 Expert Interview (E)

No, the Fair Trade Mark was launched in November 2005 when we set up we were using Fair Trade cotton, but there wasn't a mark available for [...] clothing, so [...] when the mark was launched we were the first company to get it in [...] November 2005. *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think so, I think it gave us a lot more credibility ... I mean I think the problem without before there was any kind of mark you just... you've got a lot of people making ethical claims, which don't really back up to very much so I mean I was giving once a presentation. I was asked to speak at the London College of Fashion about [...] Fair Trade and another guy was speaking about his views of Fair Trade and what he was saying was pretty much that you know, I'm a fair bloke the people that I buy from are fair trade and that kind of you know that's not really what it's about so.. I ... I think own a mark [...] is good because it... it adds up to have a ... to sort of set a standard behind it, which is [...] consumers can [...] look up if they want to... I think that reality is that most consumers don't actually want to dig in too much [...] into what's going on behind the label, they just want to sort of [...] security that it is actually ok... so [...] you know... I actually think that [...] I do think it is definitely good for us to have a mark. *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think that there is a fair bit of confusion. I think in particular with clothing, because I think that [...] you know.. I think people are just looking at it and think that it's more considered the way a garment is produced, whereas the Fair Trade mark for cotton is really about [...] the cotton that goes into a garment, however there are standards that you have to deal with [...] have to pass for [...] to set the Fair Trade mark, you have to show that all the way through the supply chain [...] that you know the workers are ... you have to... that you are complying with certain standards... so the mark does [...] have standards that follow the supply chain, but the Fair Trade mark itself is really more about the cotton and I don't think that is preliminary known by consumers. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Well there is other bra... there is other marks Fair Wear for example [...] which is something called... and put on their clothing and there is obviously the organic brands *[break to a different part of interview]*

Fair Trade is enough ... so I don't think there is much advantage in getting Fair Wear certification or... I also think that you can overburden [...] your supply chain with [...] like you know too many checks the whole time And otherwise I think, you know really what's important is, you know the sort of note... how much people are getting paid and ... or that kind of thing... so I ... I think [...] there is actually... I don't think we get extra sales for example, by having further certifications. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yeah, I do. I think it gives you a lot more credibility particularly when you are small firm, because [...] you know... I think people [...] especially when you go for contracts like say, for example university, so you know or public bodies.. if.. if you, you know you need something to back up your claims... you've got [...] and if you've got a Fair Trade standard or a well recognised standard, is definitely a big advantage, you know for a contract.

## 62 Expert Interview (F)

I mean.. that would be something that would be fabulous for us.. I am not sure about the Fair Trade Brand... because I just had a conversation this morning, with the UK department of Trade and Investment about this ... I have mixed views about it.. I think it's a really positive thing [...] for people to want the values of fair trade ... but I am ... I've actually seen ... time were companies have been awarded a fair trade status and behind the scenes you know ... you know I am talking about companies in Nepal that have been branded as being fair trade and yet behind the scenes I have not considered them as very fair at all ... I think the way we work is ... is grass roots level, but we are ... we know the people we are working with .. we can see... with our own eyes the conditions they are working in ... we know how much they are being paid, I can communicate with them in their own language ... you know I'm really passionate about this and sometimes I think it's all too easy to pay the money and get a stamp .... But really you know.. we spend a heck of a lot of money and invest a lot of money and making sure that the products we sell are in every way fairly produced ... so if there was some kind of stamp that could [...] that could show that that would be fantastic ... you know the.. fair trade or the BAF or things like that they ... we attend events that are ... classified as being fair trade where only fair trade people can attend ... and because we have the evidence to back up what we are doing we are allowed to attend those and we find that these events are very successful.

### 63 Expert Interview (M)

For me... and eco-label is a brand that is thinking about the planet so everything from production, manufacture to initial design to [...] to where it's been sold... even like small thing like in the studio ... working on it... how much wastage is being monitored.. [...] scraps of fabric, where it's going [...] lighting electric [...] even your stationary... is it recycled... so everything where it is... obviously where your fabric is made... who's produced the fabric... everything has to be thought about so... not just like... my top is made out of cotton... it's actually like who's made it? Who's produced the fabric? Where is the material from? How did it get transported? It's actually.. it's a huge ... it's a huge concept and it can be quite daunting ... but when you kind of get to learn all about it... it's actually really exciting and it is a challenge and I think that's a ... that's a good thing [*break to a different part of interview*]

I definitely like... some of my ... the fabrics I buy are fair trade certified ... [...] but it's quite hard obviously as a very small brand to .. to go to kind of ... get these kind of certified stuff when ... at the minute I am such a tiny kind of thing.. that I kind of I can't really... I don't really have auth... not really authority, I don't really have the ability to actually go out and get these certified garments, but like obviously my stuff is all made in my studio and in XXX as well, so it's it's quite different from were'd be manufactured in India.. or wherever else... but a lot of the fabric I buy are all certified [*break to a different part of interview*]

So different certificates and stuff. So yeah, you got fair trade .. you've also got the [...]. is it the organic cotton [...] there is a society for what is it... it's ... it's ... well if you search for organic cotton ... it's all about the water usage and stuff.. there's a company that deals with that... I can't remember what's it called... but other than that it's just making sure that you are getting from the right places, so for me I'd... I'd I do not always look for certificates... like ...searching out the company that you buy from and ... and understanding the components of the fabric and how it's made [*break to a different part of interview*]

Is.. it is some sort of advantage, obviously people understand the [...] I can't even talk... the certification and they know about it... but then ... I think... even if you, you know working with other companies that as.. you know they are doing the same thing as you and they are doing it well you can bring that across in the promotion of your materials so...it's always an advantage to have a fair trade logo or like a rainforest alliance logo or whatever else... but [...] you know... it's not always possible for such a small brand so just... it's just sort of that you can communicate that you are doing all these things the right way ... and you do that for your promotional material. [*break to a different part of interview*]

My material are... a lot.. I actually source from Brighton [...] all over really. I use a lot of wool in mine, so I use a lot of Yorkshire wool [...] fr... from all over Yorkshire... and there are a couple of places where... where.. the fabrics are coming from different places from the UK... but they are mostly from the UK, but there is a couple that've come from different places around India as well... which where they kind of [...] fabrics that are made in conjunction with different communities so it is benefiting communities and the lives of those people [*break to a different part of interview*]

All the fabrics are 100% natural, organic, sustainable and the design is quite organic.

**64 Expert Interview (N)**

Is there an organic certification? I'm sure there probably is, is there? Well it sort of is, well you know Fair Trade is, you know... the whole thing about Fair Trade is, is it Fair Trade? [*break to a different part of interview*]

It's not really, you know when I looked into all this, it's all ... I don't want to use these for marketing if they're not appropriate. And they are not researched properly, because organic cotton is produced in appalling standards in poor countries, where there is no water and you know how much water you need to grow cotton – it ... there's... well you know, so there's a lot of... if you really deeply look into it, which I did over a period of time. Instead of using organic cotton, I decided to use bamboo. Bamboo grows much faster and you need much less water, there is... you know I think it's a .. you know probably if, in your college there's students doing org, you know textile research, they're the ones to talk to, because I've only concentrated on that for a little bit, and totally got put off, because you know, Fair Trade ... what is fair Trade? Instead of 50p you pay them 54p and you're Fair Trade [...] doesn't really make a lot sense to me. So I'm... and I don't really like being labelled anyway, whether it's good or bad... you know what I mean by that? [*break to a different part of interview*]

I did it, the thing we did... I did the [Organisation Name], the thing, the thing involved is for any... it's not that some comes in and actually tests our garment and says, yes you are great. It's all to do with money. So if you want your ethical thing... you have to pay a membership of about £250 a year and than you get your thing. So there's no really, no real guideline, it's got nothing to do with the clothes. So at the end I though. I don't give a shit to have that little thing on top, because I don't want to give you 2.50 a year. [...] to have that little mark on my website. [*break to a different part of interview*]

And I think you know it's easily said that we are sustainable, but who's there to check them? Who's there to make sure you're really sustainable ... or tell my way you produce... because there is no information. They just give you the tag oh we are sustainable. Why, actually if you would come here and check us, we are sustainable, but because we can't afford the stamp because we don't want to

**65 Expert Interview (P):**

Now in terms of the official trademarks on garments [...] a fair trade sign and their role in the fashion industry... I think they are important, but I think you know as we said as they kind of times eco—and all of this come cliché, I don't think consumers are just wanting a product to be sustainable full stop. I don't think... whilst it is important continued to educate consumers, I think there will hopefully you know a time in the industry where you don't actually have the need to labelling ... it should just be sustainable ... it shouldn't even be the word sustainable ... it's just... that should just be what the product is [...] so I think that's... that's where I see it in the future. [...] I do agree that it is.. that it can be a bit of a paradox [...] you know as I said in reality ... to be sustainable would not buy products, or at least create products that can be recycled and are on going [...] and the fashion industry has a long way to go ... an interesting statistic actually [...] the UN estimates that by 2050 the global consumption of natural resources will triple to 140 billion tonnes a year [...] from it's current rate of 59 million tonnes and so if we think about that [...] you know where as retailers and designers might start conserving resources and you know designers are starting to implement sustainable designs ... innovation production practices is that right.. you know if we are heading towards that.. than all of this work, is all just completely undone... and you know all the work that has been done in the industry will be cancelled out, so I think there's a long way to go for both the retailer and consumer point of view.. and what they need to do.. and I think you know people like Vivienne Westwood you know you know who look at the paradox [...] and how the industry struggles with it.. how do you make seasonal products to lure and get customers to update their wardrobe but at the same time not stuffing the planet with stuff..

**66 Expert Interview (S)**

I'd like to see my brand next to XXX's as well. [...] but nobody is doing anything exactly the same as me [...] maybe the new labels at [...] that is just starting having concessions in TopShop flagship stores 'Ragged Priest' [...] they do not really build themselves as an eco-label [*break to a different part of interview*]



I think it's really difficult because there's... as far as I've seen [...] there aren't any official eco-labels for clothes, so you couldn't say definitely this is been recycled [...] or this is definitely [...] completely ethical, because it might have organic cotton but is it fairly traded? And it might be fair trade, but what fabric is it made out of? If it is a poly-cotton blend that's not very environmentally friendly [...] it might be supporting a community of workers in a disadvantaged area, but [...] then there is other things to think about, about you know... what happens to this piece of clothing once you are finished with it. Will it break down and I think it's really difficult. I think there needs to be something official and something easily recognizable [...] and this is what other people I have spoken to have said as well, consumers, other ... other labels. It's real... very difficult. I think when it comes to shopping for clothes [...] the best thing is just to know the brand and to know what they are about and if you know that brand well... and you've... you've had... you've put some research in, than you know that it is fair trade and it is ethical and [...] you know, it is environmentally friendly. Cos otherwise you could go to [high street brand name] you could buy an organic cotton t-shirt and you could find out that the cotton has been picked by children... and you'd never know [...] so I think it's really difficult and ah... I just try and mainly buy second hand clothes really. *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think it's difficult... I think the product labelling is... can be misleading, like I said you don't know [...] who's made it if it's organic. That just tells you about the crop really. And... if it's fair trade sometimes you don't fully know about what it's made out of [...] so I think there needs to be more clarity.

### Consumer Interviews

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#### **Consumer Interview 1**

I think there's... I mean I know standards can be overdone... but I think there is something to the fact that ... you can say a standardised symbol and you know what it represents, and you know the supply chain that it represents, you know that it's not just something that you can slap on a product without it complying ... to certain standards... it... sometimes it matters more with things like electronics, and safety... but as far as like coffee, chocolate, fair trade you know... where fair trade is often, often seen [...] or textiles, it is an important thing that gives you just some marker, because ... no one... I shouldn't say no one ... most people don't have the time or energy to spend sourcing every product that they are gonna buy and making sure that they can sort of sleep easy on it, that's just sort of a way ... saving you those steps. [...] [...] The second one I have seen (EFTA: European Fair Trade Association), and I know what it stands for, fair trade in general, [...] 3<sup>rd</sup> one I've seen as well (Öko-Tex 100 Standard), and I know what it stands for, [...] The 5<sup>th</sup> one, obviously the Fair Trade sign, I've seen... I've seen the number 7 (EU-Flower), but I think it's only because I went to a presentation, by the consumer people of the EU parliament ... [...] so... no I don't think 8 (Global Organic Textile Standard GOTS), 9 (Made-By), 10 (IVN Zertifikat: Naturtextile), 11 (SA 8000), I have seen ... I've seen FSC number 12, WWF number 13 I've seen ... I've seen number 18 (Carbon Trust), ah, I've seen 16 (World Fair Trade Organization) I've seen. So I have seen a lot of them, but not all. *[break to a different part of interview]*

It's fairly important I think as ... as someone who's travelled ... I've always tried to ... and lived in a lot of different countries, I've always tried to put the money back into the country that I'm living in, otherwise it's ... it's as globalised as we are it doesn't make sense to me.. at the same time local can be overstated... so... just because it is locally it doesn't mean it is the best... I mean locally made pencils may not be the greatest pencils, locally made fruit or locally grown fruit I should say maybe you know... bruised and wormy... so it has to hit both, if it is local and quality, I grab a take towards it. *[break to a different part of interview]*

It's tough ... it.. it will always come down to quality, because I don't like re-buying clothes ... so if... it's fair trade and if that also means it will last and it is good quality and also those things, but they are not always hand in hand... and I mean.. you need some balance in between and I am not sure that any one label now a days hits all of these marks, if there was one ... and if it doesn't cost an arm and a leg .. it would be something that would draw me in... you know if I knew that looking for the ... the ABC label would mean I am looking for the best thing I'll go look for it.. but now,... if I stumble across it and if it is the right price that's what I tend towards. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Well I guess, you kind of lean on the label, if it doesn't have some indicator that it is locally made ... I don't go searching for it... so it has to be a little bit obvious. You know if you are buying apples ... it will say right on it New Zealand or say Great Britain... and ... yeah... and sometimes you choose from

afar and even still, because of quality, but if it doesn't say anything I .. I probably won't push too far [...] if that makes sense.. Like if I am looking for local ... I find it... If I am just looking for something quality and I don't see that it is a locally made or I don't see the locally made alternative than I don't go investigating. *[break to a different part of interview]*

The ones that people know what they mean, so fair trade , WWF [...] which still stands for wrestling in my mind [...] or like Carbon Trust.. or [...] well things that have enough brand recognition ... at this point, are beneficial, because of that brand recognition ... the.. the down side is that it doesn't always stand for the ... the necessarily best standard so... if you're... working for the carbon trust for instance ... you can put what the CO2 output per product is... that may not be the most instructive label ... in ... it may be useful in a city, because you can have a really small ... number... it doesn't really communicate as broadly ... so it depends [...] and that's where it comes, if you had something like a Made in [city] logo it might be useful... for people who like to think that they are funding the community they live in.. but it doesn't carry with the same gravitas *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yes, I like the idea... I probably prefer the idea more than I actually do it. I like the idea of supporting smaller organisations and having something that is unique, compared to whatever everyone else is wearing from [high street retailer] or any of the other big retailers ... at the same time... that cost factor is usually more expensive. So you know you are getting quality for cost, but it doesn't always mean that you can hit that price point... so it's the mix between wanting to support someone who's small, and local and unique... and actually being able to.

## 68 Consumer Interview 2

The thing is.. there are so many different kinds of labels and I don't know enough about all of them for one particular sign to be more important than another and also because ... you know although I would prefer to buy things that are fair trade for example... in my experience it is often more expensive ... so... so.. yeah...No. no. I don't [...] probably I don't know so much how to recognizes it, because I really don't know much about the actual eco-labels, like when I said tags before I meant if there is an actual tag on it saying 'this product is locally made', you know... they have to spell it out for me... and I think I don't go looking for it because ... I don't think I'm going to find if that makes sense...like I'm not really sure where to go, unless I was in a shop like the BY and than I know everything is, so than I don't have to look for it, because every item is [...] whereas in other shops *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yeah it would change... because even though I haven't seen them before, looking at it I can see for the majority of them you can tell what they stand for so.. if a piece of clothing was the same price... if a a clothing had the same price and had label in it and looks the same like a high street one which didn't have one of these, I would definitely buy the one with the label. Yeah *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think it's similar to the ethical aspect in that [...] you know... from a preference perspective it is really preferable... and I would prefer to buy everything ... I prefer to buy locally sourced food and clothes and everything.. but the finances I think finances and availability get in the way.. although I prefer to. *[break to a different part of interview]*

You mean how would I know if a piece of clothing is locally made? If there was a tag on it that said it was locally made, I trust ... if somebody told me it was locally made [...] I might trust it... but I trust it more if there was a tag on it. if a piece of clothing was the same price... if a a clothing had the same price and had label in it and looks the same like a high street one which didn't have one of these, I would definitely buy the one with the label.

## 69 Consumer Interview 4

I know about the fair trade sign... that is on coffee when you go... go to Starbucks and other ... cafes you know, cafes like that. But for fashion? No idea... I am guessing that... that there is a label, uh? I did not know there was a label that is specific to the fashion industry... and the fair trade sign, as I said... for me that ... that's more coffee... not clothes, so yeah.

## 70 Consumer Interview 5

Well, you know... it is important, but I mean, what do they actually mean? Yeah fair trade is about wages and treating people good, but you know [...] I mean... that's .. that is what I think they are... I

find them rather confusing if I am honest... so for me they are not important... I rather have something that is stylish and I can wear. If it has a fair trade label on it or not.... That sounds really bad... but yeah... for me the label doesn't do a thing. Plus, you know... that stuff normally costs a lot more

## 71 **Consumer Interview 6**

Yeah, I know the Fairtrade Sign, the WWF, the Carbon Trust and of course the Oeko-Tex 100 Standard. I wouldn't have thought... well... I guess I have never seen them in Tees... I mean.. well the one that I look out for is the Oeko-Tex Standard. That's quite a big one... We have a lot of clothes that has that one in [...] so yeah, that's one I look out for. I think I have heard of Made-by before.... But ... I feel that's is a UK... well more for UK fashion... we .. I don't think... we don't have that one [*break to a different part of interview*]

Good question... does it? [...] Well, I mean... the Oeko-Tex is really popular, so you find that one quite often, you know.... In ... in Tees and stuff. SO yeah... I do like to buy Tees like that... but than... I mean I like shopping... and as much... I like to think I am looking out for that ... well, I don't think I would not not buy a Tee just cos it doesn't have that label in it... you know what I mean? I mean [...] how to say? I man it's something I would love to have in my clothes... but than... you know.. not all the hip clothes have it... So yes and no I guess [...] that's not a good answer now is it?

## **Chapter 5**

### Expert Interviews

## 72 **Expert Interview (E)**

Well I mean.. to your employees... again because we are a small company it's very easy... we sit down quite regularly and discuss you know like the choices that we are making, and tell them what we are doing. [...] to your customers [...] well.. with clothes to... we basically tweet and facebook, we sort of like... quite a lot of things [...] updates that we are doing on there. [...] and we just started a blog which we give a little bit more in-depth like you know [...] you know... sort of things like projects that we are going for and [...] so yeah, I mean that are the main outlets. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Yeah we use facebook and twitter ... so yeah we use that... we've got an internal thing called Yama but [...] that's just the internal thing ... Well we were looking for something quite college-y, because [...] our.. a lot [...]of our clothing we sell is into university shops ... so [...] we were looking for the sort of college-y feel ... and [...] yeah we gave our designers a few different thoughts on what we wanted and [...] and they came up with about 10 different opportunities and that was the one we thought best fits [...] wit hour brand so [*break to a different part of interview*]

I [...]. really what we wanna do is to make clothing, which [...] treats everyone in the supply chain decently really. That's... that's what we wanna do [*break to a different part of interview*]

We have done in the past [...] we used to do [...] there is quite a few industry magazines we [...] we used to write in, but to be honest with you we had [...] they were mostly get to the screen print press and people like that and we weren't selling that much in those markets ... so we sort of were pulling back from that kind of stuff and I think we will start to do a bit more in the print media in the next six months or so

## 73 **Expert Interview (F)**

Yes, yes... everybody... I mean, when I got to Nepal it's like .... I work with companies, but within the companies I know the individuals that are making the products, so I speak to every... a lot of the businesses are very small sort of cotton industries so I go into the business and I take my designs and we create prototypes and I... I know Nepalese, because obviously it's been 15 years now that I've been going to Nepal so... I've... I've managed to learn the Nepalese language so I can communicate with the people in their own language. And talk about.. you know... their concerns about any of the designs or you know or their own ideas... and get their input into things ... yeah they are much like friends really. As.. and... suppliers... you know we work on a very mutual sort of level and ... have a very close connection to the people. [*break to a different part of interview*]

With Bali, it's a slightly different situation ... because I have a very, very good friend who's Balinese and [...] he actually, he came from the island he actually lived in England for about 8 years... so when

he moved home, he actually became... might sort of... he's been working himself in a very similar vein to me so... he's been and ... sort of sourcing products from Bali [...] for years.. and when he moved to Bali... he very kindly offered to help me [...] by ... because he's based in Bali ... he helps to source and supply the products for me ... I go out there usually once a year and so that I can just check in... all the designs and meet people... but the way things are in Bali [...] they work in very small family orientated sort of cottage industry really [...] but... very, very nice conditions in which to work, fair pay [...] as I say working with these very natural materials and so on so

#### 74 **Expert Interview (M)**

Price is such an important thing especially with a sustainable brand, because everything has to be done the right way... you can't cut corners you can't get stuff manufactured cheaply, you can't ... you know.. you have think about everyone involved in the whole chain of production ... like from the initial idea right to the end... so like [...] my stuff is off a higher price range and I try to add more value to it, by giving a lifelong aftercare service that the customer could... knows that they gonna be able to get things fixed and mended even if they ripped garments themselves or damage it... like... they'll send it back free of charge, and they can get it fixed [*break to a different part of interview*]

Just because I am really passionate about [...] about ethical fashion, about the planet and I wanted to put my passion into design... to forward thinking brands. For the like contemporary western market. [*break to a different part of interview*]

What we... what we did at the start of the... they (School interns) both came in every Monday and what we did at the start is.. we both... all of us just kind of sat down and had a meeting before the day began and we used... we just talked about what's going on... what's happening. And then I'd... I take each of them individually, cos one did more design, manufacturing domain... and one did more the PR, press side... so then I do individual kind of... briefings if you will... at the start as well. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Well as obviously thing [...] I'm informing people about things like events and stuff going on via the... ah mail chimp, your weekly news letter and stuff [*break to a different part of interview*]

All sorts of ways [...] So obviously I use my website... I do a lot of [...] different events, different fashion shows, ah.. different stalls [...] I also [...] obviously use all sorts of social media [...] so Facebook, Twitter, [...] LinkedIn [...] sells on different like ah other websites so on [*break to a different part of interview*]

Yeah for me emails.. emails are the most important things, because I can check it every day... I can send files over and then... we skype as well every few weeks to see how it's going so... yeah...and also social media... we... we keep in touch [*break to a different part of interview*]

I do yeah. [...] it's just the Brand Name. Ah which I developed with a graphic designer.

#### 75 **Expert Interview (S)**

Only through facebook [...] so they keep up with it, but I don't want to hassle them with it. And ram it down their throats. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Competitors [...] I'm no... I'm not really keen on the word competitor, because the people who I guess would be my main competitors are also allies [...] they are people who are in the same line of work as me. Who [...] I would ask for advice or I would also help out with them if they had a deadline that they needed to meet, with some sewing

#### Organisations

#### 76 **Organisation 1 Interview 2**

Really important because they can share that and pass it on to the customer [...] they know how it's been made cos they're in the.. it's all one shared office, so they can see how it gets made [...] and in terms of the sourcing... again .. I mean.. they come on sourcing trips with me ... they see it come in ...like all the bin bags that have arrived in today... that get split tomorrow and all the machinists that are in sewing will see that and know therefore what've got come in for winter... so [...] they do .. you know... yeah... it's very integrated in the whole kind of business, it's not like everyone has one little role and doesn't know what the next person is doing. [*break to a different part of interview*]

We get our ink from our.. the local cartridge world, which is a family run business, we'll always we chose where we spend our money and it won't necessarily be the cheapest... I am sure I could get cheap ink ca... cheaper ink cartridges on the internet, but we.. I don't know we pay 20p per cartridge, you now they are down the road they are local business, I can go have a chat to them about .. you know whatever and so ... we ... we have got a really, really good network of local businesses, we work with, and we're always try and [...] buy from the most kind of the best source for what we want to do with the brand. [*break to a different part of interview*]

It's really important [...]. I mean ... I think it's as important as your designs really, because you it's so locked up in whether the design is going ... I mean it has everything to do with it really, is a brand, because [...] everything has to follow through once you have your price point, design has to be up to with your costing... your have to be able to pro... to actually source all your materials and obviously you put into place a kind of structure of.. of... you know... making money for the business [...] it also defines I guess your customer base in a way [...] it is... it defines your stockists you know... because yeah you might be a cheap brand but... high end boutique won't take a cheap brand and you know... and I... and vice versa so.. I think it's as important as what... as what you design you kind of have to design your price points, you know you have to be creative and decide how you gonna do that [...] how you bring cheaper pieces onto the market, which we've done through accessories, because I didn't want to [...]. Sort of devalue the clothing that we've got so [*break to a different part of interview*]

I guess because of the market the.... the prices points we decided to go to [...] a lot of the work I'd really like to do we can't do in XXX... a lot of the kind of tailoring and stuff [...] which is quite frustrating in a way, because I'm a good pattern cutter and I don't get to do it often, but [...] that's one of the things you have to learn [*break to a different part of interview*]

I always get asked this and I'm terrible with things like this. I think heritage is a word that we use quite a lot here. In terms of [...] provenance with the fabric.. I guess provenance could be another word [...] and I think collective, cos it's such a .. a kind of group effort [*break to a different part of interview*]

Ok. So I [...] I had been upcycling and recycling all the way through my BA degree and... I do you mean the name? Right... let me start go back... but I started [...] I started upcycling and recycling all through my BA and [...] it wasn't branded at that point it was just experimentation. And then I did another whole year of kind of experimenting after I've graduated... with different materials and [...] different machinery and that kind of stuff. [...] and at that point I kind of had the first very formations of the idea of what I was gonna do. [...] I decide to do a Master at London College of fashion for two years. So I... I kind of incubated the brand, in research for two years. [*break to a different part of interview*]

But... we want to be a kind of go to brand for not only you know buying clothes, but also for information, ideas and also because we [*break to a different part of interview*]

We have looked at various cooperative [...] models, but just the nature of the business, it does need someone managing it.. so.. it's something that ... you know our management style is quite... it is quite.. is as collective as it can be. It's not really top-down, it's not really like I say how it goes and that's it. [*break to a different part of interview*]

We [...] we talk... we all have lunch together [...]. which I think is really important and we normally talk about things like that over lunch! [...] So. I really encourage people to bring ideas forward for the business, although I am kind of like... because I am in charge of the finance of the business, I am always a bit like the big bad wolf that is like ... 'This is a really good idea ... But'.. so I really kind of try and get people bring ideas forward and I think the more you can kind of [...] I guess the more that people work for you they feel like they're .. you know ... they're shared ownership of the business they're better and we have looked at various cooperative [...] models, but just the nature of the business, it does need someone managing it [*break to a different part of interview*]

I really try and [...] I do look to the people that work here I guess for advi... they are kind of like a constant focus group, in terms of like, if we are doing the new website [...] when we did do the new website everyone kind of pitched in at what they did and didn't like. [...] because you know they are

fairly representative of our potential customers you know... ah.. all girls, we are nearly all female... [...] with interest in sustainable fashion, interest in fashion so *[break to a different part of interview]*

I try to get people on their first day to shadow as many different people as possible to kind of see... the different aspects of what goes on in here, because I guess we're all a little bit like worker bees now like... everyone looks like there ... there is like madness, but everyone knows what they are doing. So I think on your first that that can be a bit overwhelming, it's like 'do these people know what they are doing?' in terms of [...] core brand image, it's something I would ask an intern to look or an employee to look at in to... before they come and work for us, because it's so integrative brand [...] we not.. we have taken interns and employees who.. and.. and.. freelancers who ... maybe didn't quite understand the philosophies of sustainable fashion while they have been here. You know we have *[break to a different part of interview]*

Locally our main competitor is the high street because of the price points that we've gone for we're saying ... don't buy this ... don't buy two crap dresses from [high street brand] or [high street brand], buy one from us ... you know... it's not gonna break the bank...you know I think most people expect me to say competitors are... I don't know other recycled brands, but not really... I think we share customers with other cool ethical brands [...] I mean I wear lots of other ethical brand's clothes [...] and I see myself as much as a consumer as a designer, but [...] I do think that the high street is competition... really and truly... you know.. it... we need that [high street brand]... I don't wanna take money from the other ethical brands, I wanna take money from [high street brand] and the other.. you know the kind of just mass high street consumption *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think the kind of 18-25 year olds [...] who do make a fair bit of our customers, maybe more 18 to 30, but they... I think they're, they're just used to cheap and I think that , that is the only real hurdle our stuff looks great, it fits well it's fun *[break to a different part of interview]*

We do a lot online. [...] we are... we do ... social media and that kind of thing *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yeah, although you know they're here and willing to learn and I'm not... you know... there is only so much I can do... I can present them with the facts and .. and hope that they come to the right conclusion ... but you know, they still come in and say they've bought, got something new from [high street brand], and you know, it's really difficult! [...] one... the position to be in, I don't wanna be kind of too preachy [...] you know.. as long as they come to the clothes swap as well.... And don't just buy [high street brand] *[break to a different part of interview]*

Originally [...] I went and did a lot of workshops in community centres and [...] women's centres [...] and a couple of ladies that I meet through that are still make for us three years on [...] and that was really about kind of exploring what skills were out there and finding, finding people [...] sometimes we knew we needed someone *[break to a different part of interview]*

Well like I say... we talk ... we talk about it quite a lot and because it is so integrated into everything we do... that they are part of that process *[break to a different part of interview]*

We've got a rubber stamp made, so we stamp all our bags ourselves so we don't have to get loads and loads of branded bags ... you have to order like 10,000 of them minimum or something crazy. And I was like I do not want to be turned down with half of these left over for whatever reason, so [...] when we designed the logo ... one of the stipulations was that the .. that the logo could be easily transferable into a lo-fi DIY techniques like stamping, because [...] I wanted to make sure that I had lots of options, when it came to printing *[break to a different part of interview]*

Under pressure, because I needed to ... a name for it for an event (laughs) ... and [...]... I was like 'uhhhh I don't know what to choose'... and we've been backwards and forwards... and upside down with it... it means... it's a fine art term which means to make art with an unusual material. [...] and I kind of felt that's slightly sums up what we were doing at the time [...] it wasn't a conscious decision not to... not to sustainable like you've got 'From Somewhere' or 'Worn Again' or 'Love Me Again' and things like that [...] but in hindsight I think it has defined our brand! Because... ok... anti... every now and again people say oh I love... you know... you know people who've done a lot of art theory .. oh I really... clever.. clever use of the name... but it's not on our website you know the dictionary

definition of what it means... it's not .. it's... we don't say what it means.. it's there in the dictionary if you wanna go look it up.. [...] so... I guess that may have I know whether that's defined our branding or whether subconsciously I've made that decision so when we chose the name we were already on that route, path.. I don't know ... I don't know, but [...] you know lot of sustainable brands do... make it very clear in the name [...] what you are buying... [...]... where as XXX doesn't say much... I just go and get some water [*break to a different part of interview*]

We worked with a local graphics company and [...] we did work you know... say we took the same principle basically as how we design clothes and just took it to branding which's freaked everybody out, as in like 'what do you mean I have to sit down with a typographer and a you know this, this, this and this' and I was like we gonna do it together [*break to a different part of interview*]

That's all the printed material we have... I've been really... probably a bit stingy on printed material because [...] I used to work for a company giving out leaflets years ago and.. there is just so much waste... you know when you print for a specific event ... so we've never ... very rarely... ever printed anything or for a specific... like the clothes swaps. We don't we just have a flyer that says we do have clothes swaps and on the website [*break to a different part of interview*]

We pack in biodegradable bags and they get send down but they get unpacked and sold [...] when we sell from here [...] we put them in [...] tissue paper and then [...] into a... into a paper carrier, a recycled paper carrier [*break to a different part of interview*]

Is made in the mill... this is [...] just test strips ... the by-product that they don't want so [...] it's.. it's paper cuts that might not... it's waste but it might nev... it might not been used ... if that makes sense. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Currently there is me, and I have [...] lots of different people that work freelance for me. I have had employees [...] it's just [...] different reasons people... we... people .. a lot of people kinda come and go and come back and we've just decided that a freelance model works really well for us.. We have our studio assistants [...] at the moment XXX and [...] XXX is about to start.. then we have a couple of university interns ... who've give the opportunity to come and see how it's going, how wit works and then our machinists and makers as well [...]and then for XXX we have [...] freelance sewing tutors and then we have a team of volunteers who run some of the community events [...] and then XXX, who is our events coordinator so.. it's quite spread out... lots of different people doing little bits. [...] it probably should be a bit more structured then it is [...] the way the universities like to work here, they all seem to have set times so the last month we had about four in (laughs) ... all coming in for different weeks. [*break to a different part of interview*]

We just do a lot of events, pop up shops, that kind of stuff, to kind of get out, just take the product out for people to see [...] cos online is great, but at the end of the day, you are talking about something tactile and it's nice for people to actually feel and [...]... and then we do our look collection launches in our various different stores around and about, mainly in XXX that does really well [*break to a different part of interview*]

We all get together about 4 times a year. We all go away for a long weekend together... we have a Christmas party and there's a cou... a couple ... and we have the collection launches and things so... there's a couple of times a year... when we all get together [...] but it's not... it's not like we have a weekly staff meeting or anything. [*break to a different part of interview*]

It... without me .. it would just be a collection of people making ... things and selling them on market stalls and so I think... what my role really is to take handicrafts, hand made and hand knitted and everything.. and take it away from ... a village hall craft aesthetic.. so my job really... I guess it's kind of like a ... it's ju.. I guess, I feel a bit like it's just a massive jigsaw puzzle and I'm in the middle slotting the bits together. [...] without me doing that it would just be lots of different bits all pottering along.. doing their thing... I mean XXXX (grabbing bag with crochet collars) does these for us, and she loves it, because it is really good [...] outlet for her creativity. She just sits in front of the telly and doing it... she absolutely loves crochet .. [...] but before she was... she was doing crocheting for us she was sort of just doing these sort of craft fairs and as much as she like crocheting, she doesn't really like sitting in village halls on a Saturday because she got ranked and stuff .. so it works really well ... I think that my.... You know ... it's kind of hard because my job is to constantly kind of ... I guess I

have got a very clear aesthetic of what I want, but then I got all these other influences around me... so my job is to include them in that decision, but ultimately lead it into a commercial product, cos that's what's keeping us... that's what turns the money over... so [...] it's kind of like a curator of ideas or a facilitator it's ... it's different to being a straight forward designer. *[break to a different part of interview]*

See we debate this quite a lot [...] I would like to think that we're quite a good entry-level sustainable brand... I.. as in if you weren't into sustainable fashion ... I think the price points that we are selling at and the places that we started selling ... I think we might be ... I think quite a lot of our customers might buy their first piece of ethical fashion without knowing. Which I quite like, because there's a lot in the market place if you want to spend £200 on a piece of clothing [...] there's beautiful stuff [...] but I mean I can't afford it ..on... on my salary that I earn her...and so... I think because of our price point we have the opportunity to kind of... I guess preach to the young converted a little bit, which is why the website you.. wouldn't... you could go on our website and not know that you are on a sustainable brand website... you might just you are on a brand website...so ...you know that is something we always discuss and we go backwards and forwards and how much do we wanna say we're an ethical brand and how much do we want people to just to buy into the brand and then find out that it's sustainably produced. *[break to a different part of interview]*

## 77 Organisation 1 Interview 4

Worn it even then [...] but yeah ... it's... it is a really amazing project and it shows how much you can do with a... with a... I think the dress was actually specifically made by her to be extra versatile [...] and that's [...] it was very considered in how you could [...] change it for different outfits. Which is something that we do at xxx as well [...] we design to [...] not only to make our clothing wearable but to make it versatile. Because we are very conscious of the fact that we've... that we've all come from different style backgrounds like... I've been more like gothy and [...] xxx has been more punky... and [...]punk and rave culture ... so [...] we are very conscious of the fact that we want people who have different styles and... or... who want to say something about their [...] About themselves... can wear our clothing [...] incorporate it in their own style ... and have that versatility with, with the clothing that they buy from xxx, so that they don't have to buy as much clothing... because they can dress up in a hundred different ways or 365 different ways *[break to a different part of interview]*

Communicate through email, phone, which ever we feel like at the moment, there's not really ... there's not so much a system to it... we use.. we use a lot of online resources like Dropbox, Google calendar and stuff like that to... keep ourselves organised [...] and we update each other about.. like ..it's,... It's constant communication really. Once... about once every three months or so. Sometimes more, sometimes less, it depends how much we've got going on really. *[break to a different part of interview]*

But because of our location it is very studenty and during the... during like the summer months for example, it's a lot quieter so we focus more on... online presence [...] and we've been trying to streamline that a lot more and get people involved through the blog and through... so we've not, we've not just been updating about XXXX, but like updating about [...] inter... things we find interesting ... thing's we've been doing in the studio, things we *[break to a different part of interview]*

It's sort of like a weird combination of ... of professional and friendship it's... which is, which is nice because you can have quite an open conv... an open communication with people... I think it's beneficial to have it that way, because you.. you ... you need to be in a position where you can be honest with each other about stuff *[break to a different part of interview]*

It would usually be... about ... twice a day or so... when I'm working [...] which is usually 4-5 days a week. So... yeah I'm trying to keep it fresh as well, so like ... keep, keep yourself in people's consciousness, but updating regularly. *[break to a different part of interview]*

More of is more [...] is getting people online more involved in us and what we do and how [...] and all the all the interesting really different people that work in the studio are part of what's what's going on there. [...] because people are interested in that sort of thing ... people like to know that ... that what they're... what they're buying is... has that personality to it... perhaps a certain type of person... likes.. likes that sort of thing. But that's that's the sort of person that we like *[break to a different part of interview]*



It's massive!! Yeah, just because it's a great way to get in touch with your... with people who are interested in your brand and to get people who haven't hear of you to hear about you, cos [...] through people sharing your stuff and liking your stuff, and getting people involved so, which is great because ... I think it's great because people have connections to their brands that they are interested in and... people from all works of live and all different grounds can sort of share ideas, inspirations, style, tips, ideas and ... and I think that, that's really great. A lot of different people involved together and it's ... it gives... it gives that variety, which is ... which is really nice. *[break to a different part of interview]*

xxx has always had the goal of being affordable... if we're, if we're offering ourselves as uppers and alternative to the High Street we can't be three times as expensive as the high street so ... so that's really important to us [...] because we... yeah just because we... you can't offer yourself as upper... if you are like... like a great alternative if people are having to spend to price ... it wouldn't make sense *[break to a different part of interview]*

Someone who is interested in reducing the impact of their.. off their clothing... off their clothing purchases... but that's not the end of all of it [...] it would be someone who's... (pause).. like... hmm.. someone who is open to new things [...]who wants to have fun with their style... and you know... I say that... or not.. I mean you could literally just buy one of our dresses and wear it with tights and some flats and .... That's the versatility of our clothing [...] but I mean.. I ... that's probably form a personal point of view... I am probably bias, because I just love what to see what people do with... with.. with ... our pieces... that's one of my favourite things to [...] see how people wear them... how different people style them [...] but the kind of person... yeah... I mean the main thing is though.. we love to show people that that sustainable fashion is... is.. fashion.. like... its.. it's fashionable like interesting... makes you think about what you are wearing ... and how you wear it... and I guess.. the ideal customer is just someone who likes to learn about stuff *[break to a different part of interview]*

Re-construction of the website and the re-design of the website and [...] and all that kind of stuff, which has brought a lot of changes on how we go about stuff as well ... so yes [...] I say yeah. [...] there was a little bit more a locally orientated with [Organisation 1] and it's become, it has become a little bit more [...] international I suppose, [...] before ... I guess yeah... before there was more of a focus on the local and there was a little bit less distinction between what [XXX] did and what [Organisation 1] did and now there is bit more of a distinction. And now [XXX] is very much localised and [Organisation 1] is very much, moving more [...] National and international *[break to a different part of interview]*

Heritage, we use a lot of heritage fabrics, we're in [city], we get a lot of tweeds, a lot of wools and that gives us a real heritage edge, like especially in autumn winter when that's... that's when we use most of those really iconic fabrics *[break to a different part of interview]*

Irregular is just kind of a word that XXX and I have used to kind of describe the fact that we wanna be fashion forward and we ... we wanan be un... like we wanna have our own...I think [Organisation 1] is really, has really succeeded in having it's own, like quite unique style. That makes us stand out from other brands. And it's kind of the mix of... of modern and heritage and the shapes being quite flexible in their fit and... and that kind of thing. And sustainable is quite self-explanatory I think.

## 78 **Organisation 1 Interview 6**

O/Ms brand combines kind of the old textures, colours and things that are really unique but than kind of in contemporary shapes and styles... the garments are kind of updated a little bit... so I'd say that's kind of it's youthful... sort of vintage style but... contemporary at the same time *[break to a different part of interview]*

It's sustainability obviously so... it's looking at things that maybe people have considered as disposable as no good anymore, you know maybe not fashionable anymore and it's kind of saving those things form being just waste products and so it's... it's upcycling because it's using old products, but it's creating them, changing them into a new kind of form or a... changing them into something completely different [...] yeah I guess that's it really, kind of ecological, you know no... less waste and recycling [...] yeah just kind of passing on .. I think it's about kind of the way we should treasure belongings and [...]... products and not just throw them away when we think we are done with them

you know it's ... about them being long lasting and us keeping them long lasting [*break to a different part of interview*]

I would say it's really friendly and quite relaxed [...] I don't feel like there's any pressure it's very... you know everyone is working together and you know we just doing the best as we can... it's not ... it's not certain deadlines or anything as such... maybe there are in O/M head, but she's not inflicting them on the rest of us.. you know... whereas in previous placements I have done you are very aware of the timeframes to finish things, but maybe that's because it's for shows and events and things [...] but yeah it's really friendly and really relaxed environment and atmosphere around here I think... O/M is in touch with a lot of people around the country and.... I don't know possibly around the world I guess... I'm not really sure how far it stretches really but [...] I feel like from being here I've learned that you know you've got to ... if you want to succeed in an industry you've got to speak out ... to different areas of the creative industry ... and kind of combine together and work together and that's quite nice [*break to a different part of interview*]

Yeah I do, yeah already and I have not been here for that long... so yeah it's really nice ...it is very relaxed and it's more about ... collaborating... like... I feel like O/M is in touch with a lot of people around the country and.... I don't know possibly around the world I guess... I'm not really sure how far it stretches really but [...] I feel like from being here I've learned that you know you've got to ... if you want to succeed in an industry you've got to speak out ... to different areas of the creative industry ... and kind of combine together and work together and that's quite nice [*break to a different part of interview*]

Oh definitely [...] yeah... yeah I was making jumpers the other week and there were 5 that I wanted [...] but one of them just sold online ... so I can't have that one ... but yeah, definitely if I'd ... yeah if I had more money I would probably buy little bits and pieces as we went along

## 79 **Organisation 1 Interview 8**

She sources all of her textiles within a 20mile radius to the shop. So it's like low on carbon and that kind of jazz [*break to a different part of interview*]

It's quite nice it's more like a friend... friendship circle of creative people like a little network .. where everyone supports each other [*break to a different part of interview*]

I like what O/M does, because it's... It encourages people ... it's almost like a social melting pot, because you get lots of creative types calling in every day and so many come in with an idea like... XXX just did. 'Oh, I've got an idea for a ball gown' and [...] yeah, it's almost ... it's cool. I really enjoy it, because it's not... I hate this role where... kind of society and thinking that people have ... and it's just.. anything to do to encourage people. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Whereas here it's enjoyable, because you get to mix and mingle with a lot of people and you always get suggestions from somebody about the project you are working on or queue up with somebody from the print house ... so it's good. [*break to a different part of interview*]

It's really nice and she employs everyone that she can do... like she's got a little local hat maker, she sells her hats here and she gets a little, a little lady xxx... to crochet the collars for her dresses so she just really encourages like... you know local makers and doers to kind of keep ... keep... keep it up you know and makes use of their skills rather than... because there are so many talented people knocking around and ... I'm not calling myself talented, but [...] like I got... I've got a degree in textile design for print especially, and there is no places up north for fashion printed textiles, there's more [...] well nowhere close by, it's places like Nottingham, like down in the midlands

## 80 **Organisation 1 Interview 10**

If she did, she pushed her trust more like to us... than I think it would get things moving a lot quicker. Because she's like a one man band, she does all the promotion, all of the running around, sourcing all the fabrics, she's going to all of the fashion shoots and all of the fashion shows and all the lectures. If she has people doing that for her... than it would be a lot more efficient [*break to a different part of interview*]

It and it's frustrating like ... whenever I'm doing my hand sewing of the hand warmers or the elbow patches and ... and O/M will say 'oh no.. that needs done again', because hand sewing takes a lot more... takes a lot longer than just machine sewing... and I just have to un-pick everything and I'm like... so you kind of be-crutch it you know and you know you are confident in your own skills as [...]. And what's wrong with it? They're perfectly fine.. it looks... it looks fine ... yeah.. I just I've... like it's a nice experience for a short period of time, lets say 3 to 6 months, but anything longer and if you don't have a main focus outside of that .. than... it becomes a bit of very frustration ... frustrating but [break to a different part of interview]

I don't know [...] probably the best experience was getting the T-shirts printed. Cos it was [...] I just felt I was.. you know ... up until that point which was in the summer time I felt I was just coming in doing the cleaning, washing the dishes, brushing the floor... and sewing a few things and than making a few buckles... and I was like 'I'm not. I'm talented like... I'm skilled ... I know what I'm doing' and just trust me with something... and it wasn't until that point that I felt appreciated. But it was such a long winded process getting the T-shirts done... it took the shine off of it. [break to a different part of interview]

I feel involved in the brand and because O/M has done my screen prints I feel really, in charge of the illustration end of it... Which is quite a nice feeling. And it is all very... it is like a sisterhood almost... and... it is nice but... yeah... I am ready for that fulltime job... and... I would... oh my good I would work here every single day if O/M could pay me a salary, no question about it. I would love it, I'd be like 'yeah', I would be fricking whistling on the way to work [...] and [...] but... she can't and... but thus, I come in on Tuesday and Thursday just to kind of support her and like because she has been so good to me like... you know with that like little extra bit of help [break to a different part of interview]

But... and it's like off... kind of communication with the customer, like and than you have to like target all of the areas where you know the people with the cash who're gonna go and you have to... [break to a different part of interview]

It's a bit frustrating because whenever she's got 50 jobs she won't remember to tell me to do anything and than she'll come back and be like 'oh, why haven't you sorted them fabrics into rags and [...] stuff for xxx... xxx house and the charity shop?' because you didn't tell me to [break to a different part of interview]

Yeah, like even, because it is the back of [street name] if it would be on the main road, it makes such a huge difference, and that's only a street away. But because that's the main street that all the students come up and down... like... nobody... like I remember I ... a couple of years ago when I interviewed O/M for my dissertation I didn't know where the back of [street name] was. So like... and I lived here... you might think OMG really? I lived here on [street name] just that street along there, but like this never ever stood out to me. [break to a different part of interview]

mainly online sales and I suppose... I don't know how O/M sells here bits through her stockists [break to a different part of interview]

But some of the problems that they've had before is [...] cos everything is pretty much one off ... there's only few things the T-shirts and dresses and have been made the same as... some of the stuff gets put on the website ...like... for sale... so when someone is coming in and buys it in the shop ... but it won't be taken off the website on time and the customer will buy it on the website and than O/M will have to write an apologetic email ... 'So like we are gonna do you a deal on these ones, they are pretty much the same' But I know the frustration as a customer you don't want any of that, you want to have and she wants all of her staff together cos

## 81 Organisation 1 Interview 12

The O/M mentions that they get a lot of new customers through places like ASOS and Etsy. She mentions that sometime these people wouldn't know that they re buying a sustainable fashion brand. They are just buying it as they think it's a great brans and they like the style. She says that they get quite a lot of repeat orders from the same people, that there are also a lot of people ordering for the first time. She mentions whenever she is sending one of her orders out, she is making sure to put one of the company leaflets in too. She feels it is a good way to inform people about the brand, without pushing

too much. People can decide themselves if they want to read more about the brand or if they are just going to bin the leaflet. She feels that her brand is a good entry-level brand for sustainable fashion, and a lot of times people wouldn't even know they are buying it.

### Picture Analysis

#### 82 **Organisation 1 Picture Analysis 1**

We have developed an approach to fashion that is slow. It might sound odd given that fashion has traditionally been about keeping up with the changes, but we're happy to slow down and provide a consistent, considered approach to sustainable fashion whilst adapting to the changing world around us. [*break to different part of analysis*]

(Brand name) builds up close, long-term relationships with its suppliers, and values every member of its design and production team. This is made easier by the fact that everyone we work with is based within a 20-mile radius. [*break to different part of analysis*]

Each season we don't wipe the design slate clean like other fashion brands; we develop our collections and garments over time, trying to make the most of the craftsmanship and fabrics available to us. In fact, if a garment is popular with us and our followers, you may see it in our collections for many seasons to come. [*break to different part of analysis*]

We source our fabric differently to other manufacturers. We embrace the diversity we are able to offer our customers; you are very unlikely to see someone wearing exactly the same (Brand name) skirt as you, and we think this is great! (Brand name) strives to build lasting relationships with its customers; we want you to take ownership of your (Brand name) garment, be proud of its provenance, and be part of our brand.

### Twitter Analysis

#### 83 **Organisation 1 Twitter Feed**

(10/09/12) Cheers for the follow @ASOS\_GreenRoom! Think we might be your only sustainable fashion brand on @ASOSMarketplace atm! What's the verdict? x

(13/09/12) TIME FOR Organisation1's BACK TO SCHOOL & END OF SUMMER SALE! [Org1 website] All items to £10/£20- up to 75% OFF! #sale #sustfash

(15/09/12) (Brand name) END OF SUMMER SALE is all up in your @ASOSMarketplace ! <https://marketplace.asos.com/boutique/> Up to 85% OFF on limited edition pieces, folks!

(01/10/12) (City) Digital Fashion Week gets under way in 2 weeks! – [#bit.ly/Osciyyp](http://bit.ly/Osciyyp) #LDFW

(03/10/2012) NEW BLOG POST: Fashion learning from the past with our new Make Do & Mend feature (website) #sustfash #fashion #sustainability

(06/10/12) STYLE SUPERHERO: After meeting @BEACONFEST, I caught up with CITY fashion student Sally: (website)

(06/10/12) Have a look to this inspiring brand Organisation 1, love the clothes! (website) #Ethical #Fashion @Organisation 1

(03/10/2012) XXX and XXX are busy shooting at our studio this pm for @hebemedia upcoming XXX digital fashion wk... [pic.twitter.com/ymH0SNbD](http://pic.twitter.com/ymH0SNbD)

(4/01/2013) Last weekend of #madein Pop Up shop @CITY FAB SALE now on @Organsiation1 and @XXX pieces from £10! [Pic.twitter.com/nehOoZZT](http://Pic.twitter.com/nehOoZZT)

(30/11/2012) This print is seriously stunning. Check out our 'Organised Confusion' Upcycled Vintage Scarf Jumper @ETSY

(27/09/12) Come and check us out at @UNIVERSITY today for some bargainous shopping & to get yourself well & truly suck into the local fashion scene!

(9/11/2012) What makes an Organisation 1 piece a great gift? Unique, locally made fashion with heart. WEBSITE #sustfash #sustainability #fashion

(24/04/2014) #WhoMadeYourClothes from Organisation1? They're all made here in our studio in CITY, England by Person A, Person B, Person C

#### 84 **Organisation 2 Interview I21+23**

D3 seems to be in her late 60s, she tells me that she has been with the company for 2 ½ to 3 years. Coming up to 3 years soon. She mentions she really likes the new office, she prefers it to the old one. A lot lighter and it feels like a lot more air and sunlight can come in. She mentions that she really enjoys coming here, as she likes working and she enjoys the company. She loves sewing and working with

fabrics. She mentions that sewing would never get boring, especially not around here, with all the designs and the different fabrics once work with. Although most of the shoes have the same technique, it would just be looking at the outcome that makes it worth it. And there is always some change going on, either having to embroil eyes, or sew on ears, or putting a template on the shoe.

**85 Organisation 2 Interview I25+27**

OM mentions that being conscious where you buy your things from starts at home. She personally would try to buy locally where possible, but also knows how hard it is for people who have to live on a budget or are working full time. Being organic, and buying organic, unfortunately is not always feasible for many people. Therefore they are also very conscious to make their products affordable for people. And help that people can by locally and support local people [*break to a different part of interview*]

The O/M mentions that she started the business off designing animal faces that were inspired by the bedtime stories she read to her kids. She said she sewed the first pair for her own children and they really loved them, her oldest son still wants to have some now and he's grown up. And than she thought, why not make them, friends and family really liked them and somehow the business started off

**86 Organisation 2 Interview 29**

She says, if anyone would have a design idea or idea for a different shoes, OM would always be open for any suggestions and takes them into account. She thinks that the relationship between the bosses and the workers is really good. She feels that they are lucky to have such a great working place, but that the boss are lucky too, as they have great workers that all get on with one another, which is not always the case in other companies [*break to a different part of interview*]

Sitting only at home would be a bit boring after a while. She mentions they are really lucky to be positioned where they are. It is a great location, right in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by nice green areas. She mentions it is only sometimes bit of a hassle to get in, as the traffic can be really bad in the morning. But although she is working quite a bit further outside, she would not give up the job for anything. She says she really loves what she is doing, and enjoys it so much that it would be worth the drive. [*break to a different part of interview*]

D1 mentions that they have regular meetings with the bosses, once a month. The meetings are there to catch up, and see if everyone is aright, but also to see if the work is up standard. She says that the bosses are always open for feedback, and are always asking what needs chancing to make things better. This means that people can bring in suggestions and they will be considered She says, if anyone would have a design idea or idea for a different shoes, OM would always be open for any suggestions and takes them into account. [*break to a different part of interview*]

She thinks that the relationship between the boss and the workers is really good. She feels that they are lucky to have such a great working place, but that the bosses are lucky too, as they have great workers that all get on with one another, which is not always the case in [*break to a different part of interview*]

D1 says that it is great working for OM as they understand what it means to have a family. If people are late, it's accepted, they never say anything about it. She says she is chronically late. They accept it, as they know she will make up the time when she needs to, and she is always staying longer anyways. But she said it's also great if you have to call in on short notice saying there's a family emergency, they will understand and it is never a big deal. There has never been an issue, because of it.

**87 Organisation 2 Interview 31**

She is also very proud to be manufacturing in the UK. She is very proud to be making in the UK and seeing people making the shoes. And clothes they are producing. They try to source their material and accessories locally where possible. They get some things from XXXX and XXXX. Only the leather they get from Italy, but she feel, since they are in the European Union, they have high standards and that would be acceptable as well. She mentions there are no mills left that would be able to produce this kind of leather so they need to source it from the EU. She also mentions that the same with the mills, the trade of being a seamstress is dying out. [*break to a different part of interview*]

OM mentions that a lot of people do not believe that they are producing and manufacturing everything within the UK. She mentioned that they provide customers with the option to come by the company and have a look for themselves, get a little tour of their workspace and watch the ladies produce an order. However, he said that so far no one has taken them up on the offer.

OM mentions that most of the forms are metal shapes that have been designed for them, helping them to punch out the different designs out of leather. She mentions that the metal shapes normally cost between £70 – 80 depending on the size. She mentions they get the shape knives for their popular designs, as they use them very often and it would be done very fast to cut them out. She mentions that they bought the silhouette machine for new patterns or those that are not as popular. The machine cost them £200 which already would have paid off. She mentions buying a shape knife for the starts used on the Australian Flag would have been between £90-100, and not worth it as they are not producing that many. However she says that these shapes would allow them to save on material, as the shapes cut very precisely and leave hardly and waste material. O/M states that any of the material that is left over is kept and sold on to another company that uses the material for decorative purposes. Not all of it is used, but a majority of it. *[break to a different part of interview]*

She mentions that they have been to quite a few international tradeshows. Tokyo would have been a great success. She mentioned the Japanese would be very fashion forward. She said it would be very fascinating and crazy to see what they are selling, high heels for kids next to their shoes. She mentioned that she was in the USA for a show, but they would not be ready for the shoes, and fashion wise very much behind. And the market in Russia, would be very different, looking more at fluff and ruffles and satin materials. So overall it would be different when picking out shoes for the various markets, you would have to be very market and buyer conscious.

#### 88 **Organisation 2 Interview 33**

She mentioned that the organisation was standing just before bankruptcy a couple of years ago, as suddenly they did not have any orders anymore. That was when they had to let a couple of people go and also when they moved into a smaller space with their company.

#### 89 **Organisation 2 Interview 35**

Oh right! What other values of the company [...] I suppose, well is that a value? I suppose, the quality... the quality is very important and that's why we stay as we are, because you are in control of that I think... once you... you get to... big ... you loose, you haven't got your finger on stuff... quite as much... I mean you can see what I'm doing... I'm physically doing anything that needs doing so... whereas... you know I could just be sitting in an office ... yeah... that's important.. to be involved, very much so... although I'm trying to take a back seat ... I think employing local people as well for me ... is very important. As far as the brand is concerned ... because for something like this is could be made in a factory anywhere [...] you now with us just saying, please can you make us a 100 pairs of whatever... so for me.. everything being here altogether you know.. from the moment the orders come through the door to ordering the fabric, to picking, to cutting it, to you know making it... it all happens in the same place, that's really quite ... again quite important to me *[break to a different part of interview]*

She's been with us for 1 year, but we've offered her a job, so she is staying. Yeah, she is brilliant. She couldn't sew anything when she came here. Now she is making these (holding up a pair of shoes). Which is very impressive. She is very quick and she's a fresh breath of air she is *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think our brand appeals to everybody, whether you've got children or not, because it makes you smile. It puts a smile on everybody's face *[break to a different part of interview]*

You know... I really don't know. I sort of straight away had (Organisation 2) in my head, because with my initial ideas were kind of funky and kind of different, but unfortunately (Organisation name) had already been taken so I than couldn't get that one out of my head, so we kind of put (Organisation part II) at the end. Which has actually worked out really well, because now that we have survived and we not just supply shoes, so actually it worked ok in the end. *[break to a different part of interview]*

She mentioned they used to go to about 6 to 8 tradeshows a year and each of the trade shows would have brought in a substantial amount of money, however they cut down on that a lot. Now they are

only going to Bubble in London. They cut down especially since the economic downturn, when you have to watch your money even more, and you need to think about what you are investing in. She mentioned that trade shows are very expensive. They would cost on average £5000. In former years it was worth spending the money as they got good business out of it, but now it not worth it anymore. The last UK trade fair they did, they only got £300 worth of orders, so it is not even paying off the cost for the stand. She doesn't know how their competitors can afford to go, someone must do something right and something wrong. They are very happy with Bubble in London, as it is a more international show, and a lot of people especially from continental Europe would come by. She said they would always make enough business to pay for their expenses to go down there. She said that in comparison to former years their stall has shrunk a lot, they do no longer bring everything with them. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Their main business is now with supplier from abroad, either within the EU or overseas. She mentions that one of the biggest clients they currently have is a lady from Taiwan. She mentions that before the economic downturn happened and their main business was with UK suppliers they did a lot of credit selling. The buyers would use them as a bank and not pay for their delivery for about 2-3 months. However, when the crisis hit a lot of these buyers were unable to pay or the stock, even after they already sold them, they didn't get any money for their products as the shops were bankrupt, which hit them very hard. OM2 mentioned that they lost a lot of money during this time. This is also the reason why they had to go smaller and let some people go. She was not very happy with that and she hated having to make people redundant. Now she said they learned from that and they are not selling on credit anymore, they have to pay there and than. They did a couple credit sales for buyers that they had a long-term relationship with, but for all the new buyers they have strictly no credit. She mentions that the Asian buyers would be fantastic as they pay even before the goods are on their way... *[break to a different part of interview]*

However, she hasn't paid for her last delivery, which was 3 months ago now. OM is a bit worried as the buyer would not respond to any messages or phone calls, so they cannot work anything out with her. OM feels very bad about this, but she said she will have to take her before court if she does not respond soon. She mentions they are loosing money, which they cannot afford. The order that went out 3 months ago was worth a lot, they could pay a seamstress wages from that order, so it is hitting hard. She says they are a family run business and they are a micro business, so money is an issue and every payment not made is hurting the business. *[break to a different part of interview]*

There are lots of products out there and [...] we quite like it when people are passionate and as excited about it as we are. As you know they are going to do well [...] when you get the customers that all they are worried about is the price ... and how much profit they are going to be making... than really? They may be not the sort of customer that we want, because you know... that doesn't sell products, does it... We've got a lot more machines for the clothing, which are not in use at the moment. It is quite fascinating... \*\*\*\*\* is our apprentice.

## 90 **Organisation 2 Interview 37**

Very important... very important, I think the top priority really... for us it is really important, how important it is for people to buy the product, I am not too sure... Certainly not in the in the UK I would say, more so abroad... it is important... than it is in our own country *[break to a different part of interview]*

We do mention xxx, we do say they are made in the xxx hills... so ... that ... but we wouldn't put made in xxx, because even people from the UK wouldn't even know where xxx was, but if you... you know.. but if you read a little bit deeper into our blurb it will tell you a little bit about us and where we are. *[break to a different part of interview]*

How did I come up with the concept? [...] Really, I think it started from, when I was at uni, and I had to design a shoe. But I had to make a shoe out of [...] eatable products, so I had to make a shoe out of sweets... and ... and just reading bedtime stories to my daughter really. So I thought, actually I can put this to good use. I've made a shoe that somebody could wear that was eatable... could actually walk in... so ... why not make...do this as a bit of a business, so yeah... that's where it started really *[break to a different part of interview]*

Oh no, we meet a lot of our customers. As in our wholesale customers [...] because we met a lot of those at shows [...]. equally, we've supplied people which we've never met ... where we've never met the people... it's nice when you 've met the people... you know... that somebody is ... loves your product and is going to do a good job selling it [...] cos you know there are lots, as you may well know... lots visiting the show. *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yeah that's really important to us, as it is such a small environment... that... we've had people in that didn't fit the environment which does upset the atmosphere, as they are all working so closely together. You know all getting on is actually quite important... really, it's not like you are in a great big office where it's ok... you get on with a couple of people and some of them you couldn't stand... that if you are in a small place that would affect your work, wouldn't it. *[break to a different part of interview]*

We are going to raise some funds through the business, which will start next month ... trying to raise, not necessarily all the money, but things that they can use for a school in Cambodia. Cos we got a data base of about 4500 customers... so we should be able to hopefully, to do something... hopefully. It should be good. We thought about it a long time ago. – It's sometimes easier said than done. We found a shop that was closing down and giving us lots and lots of shoes. It was so difficult to find a charity that would take some of them off us. And we must have contacted about 20 charities saying that we have 1000s of shoes that they can have, they only need to come and collect them ... and it took us about 1 year to get rid of them. And it was a guy who ended up getting them. It took him a week picking them up and bringing them to a shop. We really wanna try and give something back to the community. xxx is really passionate about it as well. We want to take one pound from every shoe we are selling and put it in a fund. xxx really wants to make sure it gets to the people that need it most, and that it is actually getting there and not just to someone else.

## 91 **Organisation 2 Interview 39**

She mentions she really enjoys getting customer feedback. She says she remembers one letter they got from an orthopaedist . She mentioned that this guy would have done a lot of work on studying feet and children's shoes. In his letter he mentioned that the best solution would be going bare feet, as the Aborigine in Australia had the healthiest feet. She said that XXX shoes would come to be the second best thing. OM mentioned she was really happy about the feedback and shared it with her other customers on Facebook. She mentioned she is always very excited to get things like that in the mail. Hearing that people really enjoy their products. *[break to a different part of interview]*

OM mentions that she really enjoyed the Bubble Tradeshow. She said that there are always very interesting people that they meet. It would also be great to see them grow their business and what they are up to the next time they see each other. She mentioned that they found a children's toys maker (Pebble) who would be very conscious about the way they are producing. *[break to a different part of interview]*

She's always checking Facebook and twitter as well, making sure she's replying to all the posts as fast as she can. OM is looking up and mentions that lately she's quite disappointed about the response rates from the 'XXXXXX Fans' on Facebook. She mentioned he got some pictures from the Taiwanese distributor, kids wearing the outfits, but only about 12 people liked the picture and he got 6 odd comments. She was expecting a lot more comments and feedback.*[break to a different part of interview]*

She asked their fans to send in pictures of their little ones wearing the shoes. She mentioned they got hundreds of photos and posted them. When they stopped the give-away part, the photos stopped too. No one would send in any more pictures. She mentioned they have over 4000 Fans on the website, but none of them would engage in conversations. She's actively trying to communicate, but it would be very challenging to get people to engage. *[break to a different part of interview]*

She mentioned the first time the buyer bought something from them they delivered the shoes to her hotel in the UK, so she could take the order back with her on the plane. Ever since this first initial order, she started to buy more and more, increasing the order size every time. She mentions that she is selling the products on something that is equivalent to a Taiwanese eBay, but not quite. *[break to a different part of interview]*



She mentioned that the buyer was also thinking about getting her own shop in the future. She mentions she would always order random batch sizes of shoes. She says that she has talked to her, and suggested to her to order maybe once a month instead of every week, thereby getting bigger batch sizes. She says, she would also always add more products via email, only a couple of days after she has placed the order. She says that they are really happy with her as a customer, as they don't have any problems with her when it comes to payments. She mentions that they changed their business model and now focusing more on exporting their goods, rather than selling them within the UK. She mentioned that all the Asian customers would pay their products even before the shipment is leaving the premises, which would be fantastic. *[break to a different part of interview]*

She mentions that they have started to talk a lot more with other small businesses, within the same industry or producing things for the same industry sector (targeting children). The companies they talk to are also producing in the UK and are micro businesses. She mentions they talk a lot about their customers with one another, see which ones they having common. They share a lot of their experiences with the clients. She mentions it was one of the best decisions they could have ever made – being more transparent and sharing information. She mentions it is important to know who you are selling to. She points at a ready to ship box on the floor. She says the only reason this package is still there would be, because they talked to other businesses, who mentioned this buyer has problems paying. The package would have been ready to ship 1 week ago, but they still do not have the money, so they do not send it out.

## 92 **Organisation 2 Twitterfeed**

(08/03/2013) Increase in export for (Organisation 2) –UK manufactured brand doubles workforce to meet demand *[website]*

(10/08/2012) Made in the UK – (Organisation 2) Town SB. KTL are delighted to be delivering our Fashion and Textile training here at *(website)*

(10/01/2012) Bubble London Homegrown showcases labels that are designed and manufactured in the UK. Come and see us on stand A40... we're completely Homegrown!

(08/04/2014) Hi #sbswinnershour am so delighted to be able to join in the #SBSFamily keeping it British and proud!

## 93 **Organisation 3 Interview 1**

Ok, I started the business... well... I didn't even mean to start a business in the first place, I was just making for myself [...] making hats to wear to burlesque nights. I was making for my housemate at the time and a few other friends [...] but the lady who ran the night, also ran a shop in the Forum and she asked me if I stocked the shop and I thought, oh.. ok [...] why not? And it went really well. But [...] I moved house, things changed, it but a tied brush on it and than once I got things sorted out again, I was like right: I'm gonna do this again, and I'm gonna do more. So I started to do vintage fairs. *[break to a different part of interview]*

We have... we have the official open page [...] to allow us to communicate with... with ... customers.. and other sellers [...] we also have sort of a hidden group as well ... that we can let people know... send messages if they are out of stock or if I customer came in and said oh I really want this but I need it in this size you know... to make sure that ...the customers get what they want ... and the shop you know stays full and .. you know if people do have any questions that you cannot answer... you can post them to the seller... I do go... I've been in the shop today and ... I obviously do a shift do... the equivalent of 2 days a month and... so I'm there to talk to customers in person ... to talk to the other store ... sort of sellers .... Yeah I think... I do email. Most of it is online and it's either online or in person... it's not really by phone cos you never know where it's gonna be in the end ... you never know if anybody is actually gonna answer [...] but because I'm working fulltime and so do a lot of others...it's ... outside of everybody else's working hours ... so ... online is... Is how we normally, you know communicate *[break to a different part of interview]*

Online, very vocal on Facebook *[break to a different part of interview]*

And asking questions and than maybe a customer has asked you a question ... you don't know the answer to and you say, I'll find out for you .. so that might a phone call to the seller or a question on the page, in the evening and saying this person was after this, this is their contact details, can you give them a bell, they wanted to know more about *[break to a different part of interview]*

Not financially ... it was done on my credit card and through sales. [...] I am still paying the credit card off [...] in terms of support.. moral support, lots of moral support lots of advise support [...] I was able to get some assistance from a couple of local agencies that I think I have now been wound up... but on the whole it's just been me. Crafting... you know... and.. and a bit of understanding from my boss. I really, really got to go, I got to get this order in the post. [...] So yeah. I work flexitime so it has a big impact on what I can and can't do [*break to a different part of interview*]

Actually my bridal wear is very reasonably priced [...] affordability is quite important [...] I have some... I have overheard conver... I have heard some people think that what I do is overpriced ... put they have no grasp about all the work that has gone into it [...] and it's not just the work that goes into the one design ... it's the work that goes into the photographs ... coming up with the design, sourcing the materials... promoting that design... and than keeping it going [...] other people say that I'm ... under-priced some people say I'm reasonably priced [*break to a different part of interview*]

I have done some repairs for men ... but It's ... it's women [...] generally [...] mostly for [...] sort of occasions, so birthdays, weddings [...] christenings... also than people just want stuff [...] and at the fairs it's a real mix ... as what I mean, because the vintage fairs attract so many different age ranges ... the shop attracts so many different age ranges [...] my head bands fit form about sort of 7 years old all the way up to adult and that's just the one size ... which is great because they are really versatile [...] I think it's more about people who like hand made and people who like pretty things rather than ... possibly being a set.. a set age or anything... it's just... women in their 30s are more like to go [*break to a different part of interview*]

They don't ... they don't know how to engage with customers [...] I've done a lot quite a lot of fairs, I've done bar work, I've done shop work for half of my life ... I'm not saying I'm an expert, but you get to know how to read people, you get to see when it's ... when they want to be engaged with ... [...] so I think sometimes the dynamics between customers and sellers can be a bit awkward, depending on the type of personality of your customer and also the type of personality of the seller ... and because they've possibly got no retail training and... or... possibly it's confidence, I don't know and I think [*break to a different part of interview*]

We have... we have the official open page [...] to allow us to communicate with... with ... customers.. I've got main access to that so I can ... I'm in charge of the morning post that says 'Right here's a little about what's going on today' who's in you know... like today I put up a picture of an ice cream and said it's our 2 months birthday ... you know [...] so I can .. can communicate as [Organisation 3] through that but than I can communicate as myself and [my brand] with [Organisation 3] and the other sellers on it ... because they are multiple profiles so ... I've got to decide which hat I'm wearing ... who am I today [...] we also have sort of a hidden group as well ... that we can let people know... send messages if they are out of stock or if I customer came in and said oh I really want this but I need it in this size you know

## 94 **Organisation 3 Interview 3**

And I work on my own at home ... in my basement, I don't have a window, all my lights keep blowing... and it's cold. [*break to a different part of interview*]

I don't know. To be honest.. I need... you know ... I'd love to have a shop, I looked at shops on XXXX Road and XXX and at the XXX... but because the business is so small ... it's not really something I can afford to do on my own. So for the moment, this is... this is really good for me. [*break to a different part of interview*]

And everybody kept saying to me and eventually you know I couldn't get any more work... oh you have to retrain, you have to retrain [...] and I was like, I don't want to retrain, this is all I've ever done. You know I'm a footwear designer and I don't wanna work behind the till for the rest of my life... so it was basically make or break, it was you know it was starting my own brand, which I was saying to people for years which I was going to do [...] and than eventually the opportunity arouse, like I had some money from a sale of a house and I mean it was only £12.000 [...]... and it was either go work in John Lewis behind the till or set my own company up. Because being in Sheffield does not really,, hasn't got any .. basically there wasn't any more footwear freelance to do... I was at one point

commuting down to Watford 2 days a week and I've got a 2 and a 4 year old [...] so it was really the only option available to me and that's why I ended up doing it [*break to a different part of interview*]

I mean I don't do everything perfectly eco-friendly at the moment but I wouldn't do any less than I do already. You see I do really try, it's like if I have to send stuff out in the post... the postal bag is biodegradable [...] my business cards are all recycled cards [*break to a different part of interview*]

I think it's really important, especially you know now a days it's ... it's the way to get a message out... you know I don't have full control over my website as it's an out of house, so for me Facebook page is really important. [...] cos I can just put my own rumblings on there and it's really nice, because [*break to a different part of interview*]

Which would have made the retail price £40 a pair. And at the moment they are £16 a pair, and nobody would buy them at £40 a pair... so I would have made a completely unsustainable business ... that's why it's done through China. Plus they're people that I've worked with for years. And one of them used to be my merchandiser when I worked in London and the mother owns the factory, so it's like trusted contacts. [...] so the material for the footwear is cotton twill ... and it's all hand printed... it's not machine printed [...] and it's cows wade on the bottom and that was tested through SGS lab [...] to make sure that there's nothing in the inks that should be in there, because baby could put them in their mouths... [...] and than the T-shirt ... they are bought as blanks at the moment [...] some of them are African fair [...] the ones I get from Continental are Indian organic cotton and than I had some from American Apparel, which is just cotton. [...] and they are printed in Sheffield with water based parasol inks... which are Australian and non-toxic [...] so that's kind of the history of those [*break to a different part of interview*]

I mean if you see the postcards ... of [Organisation 3], it doesn't really say there's anything for children in here.

## 95 **Organisation 3 Interview 7**

The O/M mentions that she is taking great care who is coming into the co-operative. It would be very important for her that it is all good quality. Although some of the smaller things might not be as high quality as others, which she says shows in the price, but she says they all look pretty. For her, when she is sourcing things for her upcycled vintage collection, she is always making sure it is real vintage and when she is hanging it out that all the buttons are still on, checking the zips and the materials and all that kind of stuff [*break to a different part of interview*]

The O/M mentions that in the shop they try and use energy saving bulbs, as they not only cut the costs, but are obviously better for the environment. She cannot say anything about the actual energy supplier as they were limited in the shop to what was already set up. She says that she feels if more people would be conscious about what they are producing and where they things from it would change a lot. Local production is vital to her as she believes it helps the economy, getting back on track and supporting local designers [*break to a different part of interview*]

The O/M mentions that for her it's really important that people know what's going on in the shop. She says she would ideally want everyone to know everything, but that's probably not going to happen. She says she mentioned to everyone that they always need to make sure that the customer can get what they want, so they are coming back. In her other shop, they have a policy that they write down enquires that are made and just hand them over with all the details to the person that sells that specific product. She says she wants that to be introduced to Organisation 3 as well. It would help to be organised. She also says that good communication between one another would be key to have good customer service. They are one community and need to look after one another. [*break to a different part of interview*]

The O/M mentions in her conversation that she is also running a shop in the neighbouring town. The shops name is exactly the same as Organisation 3, apart from that the apostrophe has been placed slightly differently. She mentions she is very keen that people spell the name correctly, she sometimes gets really frustrated, when people misspell the company's name. She also mentions that she had been running the other shop for years, and people would know her and there is a little community that formed around the store. She feels people will associate the brand in this city with the one in the neighbouring city's, which will help to get customers coming. People will be curious how the two stores differ. She believes that her current customers will come to this store as well. She says it's a

quirky community, they all support each other and always come to their individual locations [*break to a different part of interview*]

Eclectic. [...] I really, really like it [...] I think... there have been quite a few project places like XXX [...] and what's the other, XXX ... where people are renting out spaces to makers, vintage sellers ... alike [...] but this is slap bang in the city centre ... Independent. it's just a group of independent you know creative people, who just need a base a retail base to sell their things.. and we all use each other .. we all like help each other out [...] and I would say *Locally made..* that's kind of obvious... it's to show people what we can.. make people happy in a way [*break to a different part of interview*]

It's lots of very different things in here ... it's just full of lovely gifty things I think.

#### 96 **Organisation 3 Interview 9**

I9 mentions that one thing she loves about working in the store is the fact that she can talk to people. Everyone would be really nice and friendly. It would be nice to do some small talk in between. She likes the fact that she is getting on really well with everyone. She has met most of the designers showcasing in store. There would be some that come in all the time, so she would get to talk to them a lot. Others she is seeing once or twice a month, so she mostly talks to them when they have a social event, but more likely online.

#### 97 **Organisation 3 Interview 11**

Facebook and Twitter like all the social media site they are really important...and we do bounce ideas of each other, we do like you know [...] share pictures.. and stock and things like that.. and well, you know it's a free website... so yeah.. you can share everything.... And promote, you know all the events you are going to... talk to people... and don't have to spend a lot on flyers and stuff like that... and you can access everywhere [*break to a different part of interview*]

Well, XXXX is my business and I make [...] hats and bags and accessories ah... for men and women and children even, from recycled clothing, particularly denim obviously, but I like to use vintage fabrics and just anything that catches my eye [*break to a different part of interview*]

Daily, throughout the day... you see I do the Facebook page for Organisation 3 as well.. so I'm working on that like, you know every couple of hours ... so I'll be posting every couple of hours for that and with XXXX it's different I suppose, because it's less [...] like products, you know... I .. I just post my things, whereas when I'm posting for [Org3] there is just so many different ones so that I can put something different on every couple of hours ... but.. you know when there's like an event coming up ... or you know a new range ready to launch ... then you I'll be really blogging away, but daily ... I try and put something on every day. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Opportunity... independent, just brilliant

#### 98 **Organisation 3 Interview 13**

She mentions at times it is super busy, especially when events are on. She mentions the Alice in the Wonderland event that happened only a couple of days ago. She said it would be great how many people are coming to those events. There would always be some newbies who have lots of questions. And you get to talk to them a lot. She likes the designers, but because she is mainly working at the till, she gets to talk a lot to customers but not so much consumers. [*break to a different part of interview*]

She mentions the Facebook Group and the fact that it I only for people who are working at Organisation 3. She is quite connected online, she likes Facebook, so she always is on there and talks to people online.

#### 99 **Organisation 3 Twitterfeed**

(19/12/2012) There's still time to buy those last minute gifts! Get down to @Org3 lots of lovely, quirky, one-off pieces!! #buylocal #Town

(22/12/2012) @Org3 is open today. Come in from the rain for some lovely handmade gifts #localshopping

(16/01/2013) We sell art & craft from up and coming UK designer-makers! Our micro-boutique can be found @Org3 Town #BuyBritishBrands x

(07/12/2012) A huge #ff for @ Organisation3 new #CITY collaborative shop in town, full of local talent, partly funded by @COMPANY scheme.

## 100 Organisation 4 Interview 20

Most of the products are.. obviously quite high, you know very, very well made [...] there is an odd thing that [...] somebody slips in that I don't particularly like ... and I can't... and I can't take something out just because I don't like it... doesn't mean that it isn't gonna sell... you know.. but [...] everybody who comes in you know is saying that the products is really good standard... which is what I was aiming for. *[break to a different part of interview]*

You know... I thought it would be your... your grandmas, you know the M&S customers, that's why I wanted it here ... cos I thought they've got the money in the pocket ... but you know.. we get everybody... I can't actually say that we have a particular target ... we get from [...] you know like your 15 year old up to your 80 year olds... we get... and we get quite a lot of men.. maybe it's maybe... 30% of the market that I targeting at, but we do cover the whole range.. it's quite surprising cos that has shocked me *[break to a different part of interview]*

This page on Facebook... so if you want to swap a shift or something like that... ask people to help out and it's always the same people *[break to a different part of interview]*

Yeah I do... sort of like [...] we started a knit and natter group on Tuesday so we've commun... communicated in the past, but than tonight until sort of like over the weekend, I'll sort of keep putting it out that... you know about the knit and natter group and ... for people to be here and people can come in and learn to knit and stuff like that, it's a bit of a social gathering... so. *[break to a different part of interview]*

I think like for me, the biggest thing is ... that.. you know.. everybody in here works in here... everybody is from like the XXX area so... if you come in here you know that someone is actually spent time like sourcing those [...]. You know the bits and pieces for the products ... have actually made them by hand put them together ... and.. you know, I think for me as a [...] as a consumer ... [...] as a customer ... this would be the thing that I would look more for than you know... more than anything *[break to a different part of interview]*

Because... I did think of Made in xxx, but there's a company that's called Made in xxx. And... on this particular site that I'm on [...] at this Craft Soap, I did say that I wanted [...]it's called Made in xxx, but a few said, well there is a Made in xxx organisation... it was actually xxx to said 'What about Created in xxx?' So it was actually down to xxx who said created, because I was trying to think of some word other than making, I think we had created and some other things, but I think xxx was the one who actually said created. So cos I wanted people... I mean that's the branding. And I wanted people to know that everything ... from the name... that everything was created in XXXX, because obviously I am proud to be XXXX. And you know... and I think, I think that everyone who's in here are proud ... and I think people are well proud of the fact that it's all made by local people. *[break to a different part of interview]*

The graphics company that the XXX use they asked... sort of for mine and TTT, because obviously TTT and I did it together ... came up with the idea and they sent us ... [...] this picture and she sent it to me in an email, and said what do you think? And I just went, it made me think of Bewitched... This you .... It was just terrible... so I said... so I sent some bits of pictures that I wanted and she said yeah that's where I am coming from... and it was similar to [...] and you know we wanted the like the tea cup for the D... you know what I mean, and things like that so. So that's how I came up with that ... it was sort of like the information that we'd given them... more down-to-earth home-grown, you know *[break to a different part of interview]*

I find it really difficult, but I have to do it. It's not what I particularly like doing. I mean... I cheat really, because somebody showed me how to link my Facebook page to Twitter, so it automatically puts it on Twitter as well. I mean, I don't understand Twitter and XXX is supposed to gonna show me what that #-tag thing is, I don't even know what it is... but I keep hearing about this #-tag... and ...but.. you know... it... it's sort of like beyond me... Facebook is hard enough. You know... I don't

do change particularly well, but Twitter is beyond me. I got to say, it's beyond me. [*break to a different part of interview*]

We do ...I have actually ... because money is a problem and getting money out of everybody for different things ... they just don't care .. so ... I sort of have like a couple of people that we have on commission that is a bit of a slash fund that pays for the paper ... and [...] I'm obviously trying to set up the room at the back so we can do workshops in the We have... we do have little carrier bags, but our policy is that we do wrap everything, we take the prices off and wrap it as a gift and the reason I wanted that ... because when I used to take my children on holiday to France... whatever you bought was wrapped in... food or you know a jar of jam or something like that... they just tor a little bit of paper and wrapped it up ... and I loved that ... and ... and it just came to my mind when we had this shop ... that everything would be wrapped... and... obviously if they buy a few things than we put it in a carrier bag ... and she just hasn't wrapped that.... I'm gonna have a word with her in a minute... see this is what annoys me ... they blow off all the rules... back .. so until that's done ... than I'm getting stamps made.. so that we can actually stamp on the back... so that it says XXX ... but it's just sort of getting the money... my husband said I've gotta stop spending money [...] sorry his money [*break to a different part of interview*]

Yeah... yeah I think it is really. Yeah.. I mean.. because I see the shop as an extension of me ... and ... if somebody said they didn't like something it's personal... you know and... I think that's the difference. When you [...] when you're making something

#### 101 **Organisation 4 Interview 22**

It is really different, like everything in here is like... the person's gotta do it themselves... like O/M is really strict about like... it's gotta be your stuff, you've gotta like make it.. you've gotta do it... you know what I mean? It's gotta be you and like... the shop.. [*break to a different part of interview*]

So yeah it's really good, it's nice to be able to work as well, you know, cos you can talk to everyone... who comes in, cos your work is here... you can talk to people a little bit more about it, which is nice as well.. It's a bit more personal about the stuff that you've got in here ... you know what I mean? It's nicer to be... to talk to people about my work who are interested. [*break to a different part of interview*]

O/M who owns it has a lot of morals and values and that she likes you know to stick to for the shop... and even though everyone is really friendly like ... well talk to each other and like ... and I haven't met most of them, but on Facebook we've got spoken lots, which is really friendly, but OM has a lot of values that she wants it to be. [*break to a different part of interview*]

Yeah.. normally.. what O/M has done is.. she created like a group and she only invites ... you can only look on the page if you're part of the group... like if OM invited you... and like... it's like... it's mainly like I can't work this shift, can someone swap with me ... that sort of stuff.... So yeah... [*break to a different part of interview*]

With this [...] basically what I did, I didn't really have anything... I decided to a ... an art fair... you know where you are selling all your little stuff and that... so I some of my stuff there and [...] it was in XXX, which is a really little one... so I took all my stuff there and OM just like came around... and her daughter bought one of my things... and she basically just gave me... she said [...] can I get your email and talk to you ... I want to talk to you about XXXX, cause she like... from what I've liked hear from her she ... she emailed me about it and sent me the contract and told me to come down, to actually have a look and like the space and everything, and she just basically said

#### 102 **Organisation 4 Interview 24**

We have a Facebook group, so we communicate through that [...] or... just through O/M really... so you know like ideas and suggestions would normally go through to her, so I'd either email or when she is coming I'd say 'oh have you [*break to a different part of interview*]

I think it's nice if people know, when they come in and say ... we always talk and say it's a cooperative you know... we all sell in here and we all work in here... as well and ... you know.. I think people like to know [*break to a different part of interview*]

Absolutely! Yes... so all my [...] all my [...] like products... products that I use are ... come from [...] like... vintage fairs in XXXX [...] car boot sales again from like the XXX area... [...] you know... beg borrow found from friends ... and everything.. so [...] yeah everything is recycled... pretty much from 'old junk' really... you know made into something more beautiful [*break to a different part of interview*]

Rather than just buying something on the High Street, I think it makes it a little bit more personal [...] I guess the good thing about working here as well is .... Meeting all the other crafters and meeting you know all the other artists and learning from each other... looking for collaborations as well... so ... you know [...] we've been chatting about getting some of my products and getting them incorporated in different styles ... and stuff like that so... yeah... and just finding out like where people get their inspiration and you know... and how they got into making what they do

### 103 **Organisation 4 Interview 28**

The O/M mentions that she never had the chance to go to university. When she was young it was not an option as there was no money available to her and she need to get a job. She said she always really enjoyed to make her own clothes and be able to design things. She points at her collection and says that these days there are not many stores that cater for slightly curvier people. She feels most things that are around are not very fashionable and she doesn't like wearing them. That's why she started her brand. She says she wanted to make it affordable to people so she is taking great care when she is sourcing her material that it is not only locally sourced, but also affordable. She said she did it just for fun for quite a while and than thought that she is just going to try and see if other people will buy her creations. So it is now more than just a hobby

### 104 **Organisation 4 Twitterfeed**

(17/03/13) Tomorrow is a very exciting day for us, as we have the BBC filming a short interview on our co-operative, so if you... [fb.me/gshls](https://www.facebook.com/gshls)

(25/03/13) Looking forward to seeing you all tomorrow at our Knit and Natter group

### Consumer Interviews

### 105 **Consumer Interview 1**

Social media for me is important, but not in terms of advertising, so ... I use twitter, I use Facebook, I use all the rest ... but I block ads on my browsers and I tend to flip right past any sponsored advertising on Twitter it's, because I know what it is, I know why it's targeting me, I know the algorithms behind it... so... it's useful, but it's also useless. If I am seeking something social media might help... it won't surprise me though. [*break to a different part of interview*]

That I think it's... it comes down to demographics I suppose, because there are people who... like myself and I would say probably people older than me as well ... wouldn't... no matter how many times a label is to get their brands name on your Facebook page or Twitter feed or anywhere else, won't convince you to go and buy... you know I won't go buy something from I don't know River Island, because it is pestering my page... I will if I already think that it's a good brand ... in the same way... it is useful to sort of draw in a new base, and maybe that is part of the system ... and ability of it ... I don't think it can be ignored ... because I certainly from my own line of work I know ... you are not going to be able to advertise in newspapers forever ... and consider yourself profitable, but it can be overstated... and I think it's that overstated part where the negative comes in.

### 106 **Consumer Interview 2**

It's not necessarily new on the market but it's new to me than I'll go online and I research it, because that's something I'm interested in... it's a type of clothing, I would like to know more about and I would like to purchase, but [...] it would be more in that rather than me going on Facebook or twitter or some sort of social media and like looking up... well (pause) no, see if I do that it's all related to yoga clothes, for kind of every day wear I wouldn't really seek out clothes, research clothes online... I actually didn't think about that before, but [...] usually, for every day clothes I just go out and go shopping and and I think... because I also like to try them on and things like that... whereas yoga clothes it's sort of the whole experience, so it's the clothes and where they are made and related to yoga, so I ma curious to know more about them.

107 **Consumer Interview 3**

I don't like .. what do you call these things? Is it... was it social something... media? My granddaughter likes that stuff... I am a bit too old (laughs) ...I like to be able to see what I by... you know ...like in the old times... you walk in... you ... you know... you have a chat... you talk to people... you meet for tea... what is wring with that? Everyone is always on the phone... always busy... I .. I don't understand all of that.

108 **Expert (N) Twitter Feed**

(18/01/13) A Big thank you to XXX of XXXX CITY for her lovely piece on our local Boutique... we are now...

**Questionnaires**

Organisation 3

- 109 • **Q16:** Happy, a different kind of shop other than the high street shops
- 110 • **Q23:** Better than in the usual high street shops
- 111 • **Q48:** I like the choice at this store, because it differs from most high street varieties. I also like the collections with craft and design options, like that this all combined in one store
- 112 • **Q49:** Comfortable, friendly atmosphere, happy
- 113 • **Q53:** Happy, lovely clothing
- 114 • **Q64:** I like it's original and has unique products
- 115 • **Q68:** Made me feel like there should be more shops like this, too many people shop in H&M and Top Shop, been though I shop there, variety is the spice of life
- **Q71:** I enjoy the experience of shopping in XXX, great music, unique and interesting things to look at. Great gifts, friendly staff, nice layout, no hard sell, very close to work - nice break at lunch to browse collections
- 116 • **Q120:** Very welcome and at ease
- 117 • **Q124:** Good effort - nice staff
- 118 • **Q135:** Welcomed
- **Q142:** Lovely, friendly atmosphere, love seeing locally made products that are hand made
- 119 • **Q147:** Welcome and inspiring
- 120 • **Q148:** Made to feel welcomed, friendly staff
- 121 • **Q191:** It was a lovely experience, the staff were great, will come again
- 122 • **Q200:** It didn't really make me feel anything, but it was a nice calm shop with friendly staff

Organisation 4

- 123 • **Q208:** I am looking at things that I can't get elsewhere
- 124 • **Q231:** I loved to see the unique products available
- 125 • **Q234:** Looking for a particular item (just for me not a gift) and found the ideal piece: unique selection of goods/interesting and quirky
- 126 • **Q239:** Enjoy being able to purchase good quality unique goods at an affordable price. Staff always happy and friendly. Leave in good mood whether purchased anything or not
- 127 • **Q283:** I always enjoy shopping here, beautiful products and friendly staff
- 128 • **Q286:** Always gives a nice feeling, friendly staff, good products to look at; good range
- 129 • **Q299:** Welcomed