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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Words are just words until they appear in action, right?

Sustainability reporting and its significance for customers in the Swedish fast fashion industry

Bachelor thesis, Accounting, 15 hp

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Abstract

Title: Words are just words until they appear in action, right? Sustainability reporting and its significance for customers in the Swedish fast fashion industry.

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Background and Problem: The awareness towards environmental sustainability has increased rapidly both in society and among clothing companies' stakeholders, e.g. the customers buying their products. This awareness affects the fast fashion industry which is one of the most polluting industries. The companies operating within this industry are communicating their sustainability work through sustainability reports. In that sense, a thesis investigating how companies in the Swedish fast fashion industry reflect consumer preferences in their sustainability reports and how customer perceive this information, is of interest. Thus, a thesis investigating how companies in the fast fashion industry report reflect consumer preferences, and how the company's sustainability work is perceived among customers, is of importance. This paper will make the analysis possible through three different interacting aspects. The first is to find and evaluate the customers' preferences and their most important environmental sustainability aspects. The second is to analyze the sustainability reports due to these preferences and finally, investigate the customers perception on sustainability reporting related to these aspects.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to gain insight in the sustainability reporting of companies operating within the Swedish fast fashion industry and its significance for their customers. More specifically, towards how consumer preferences are reflected in the content included in these reports and how the customer perceives the sustainability work done by these companies. The focus is solely on the environmental aspect of sustainability issues. Hence, the economic and social aspects of sustainability are not included in this thesis.

Method and Theory: The sustainability reports were analyzed through a content analysis named the CONI-model. Additionally, a customized survey addressed to customers was sent out to gather information about customer perceptions. Three theories, namely stakeholder-, institutional- and legitimacy theory are included to explain underlying forces affecting a company in its operating environment. Information about sustainability reporting, Triple Bottom Line, Corporate Social Responsibility and Global Reporting Initiative are included to provide the reader of the thesis with essential background fact. Additionally, previous research is presented and discussed to highlight earlier findings

Findings: The findings in this thesis presents evidence that consumer preferences, in most aspects, are reflected in the sustainability reports issued by the companies within the Swedish fast fashion industry. Yet, differences occur regarding the extent of information provided between the different aspects and between the different studied companies. This points to the conclusion that the studied companies pay attention to stakeholder pressure and societal norms. Additionally, the consumer perception towards the different companies tend to resemble each other. However, the quality of the information provided in the reports and the consumer perception concerning it, does not match. In contrary, the three areas in which the studied companies tend to provide the highest disclosure quality are the categories in which the customers expressed themselves as lacking an opinion.

Keywords: Sustainability Reporting, Swedish fast fashion industry, CONI-model, Consumer preferences, Consumer perception, Environmental sustainability

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Irma Weberg Ekelund   Clara Grönberg

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the area of sustainability reporting within the Swedish fast fashion industry and describes the purpose of the thesis. Finally, the investigated research questions are presented.

1.1 Background Discussion

The clothing industry is one of the most discussed line of business when it comes to sustainability issues and it is constantly a part of debates in media. According to a research conducted by Naturvårdsverket (2019), the emissions caused by the Swedish fast fashion industry have risen by 27% from the year of 2000 until the end of 2017. In that sense, the industry is considered one of the most resource intensive in the world. Therefore, this thesis will study the companies in the clothing industry, more particularly within the Swedish fast fashion industry. It has been well contested that the consumption of clothing is characterized as a "wear and tear" type of culture, where a substantial larger portion of the clothes purchased is thrown away rather than re-used for longer periods (Veckans Affärer, 2019). An expression frequently used, by media, in articles related to overconsumption is "Fast Fashion", a phrase used to describe clothing companies with a high turnover rate, rapidly change of trends and low prices (Veckans Affärer, 2019).

According to the founder of the Triple Bottom Line theory, John Elkington, (Carmichael et al,. 2011) the economic aspect should not be the only aspect in focus for companies seeking to develop sustainable growth. Instead, the focus should be wider and include the other two elements of sustainability; social and environmental (Carmichael et al,. 2011). Huang & Rust (2011) argue that economic, social and environmental issues caused by clothing consumption have created an increased attention within the subject. Thus, as the climate challenge increases, the sustainability requirements from various stakeholder groups, such as consumers, increase as well. According to a research conducted by Veckans Affärer (2019), 75% of the respondents have clarified that they consider companies' sustainability work as an important factor for their choice when deciding where to buy clothes. In addition, more than 50% of the respondents from the research plan to change to sustainable actors (Veckans Affärer, 2019).

Today the customer expects transparency in the entire production chain in order for them to achieve sustainable consumption. This forces companies to provide new alternatives and make their sustainability work clear towards the customer. Society's progress towards greater environmental awareness and wider digitalization has contributed to making the sustainability reports more visible to society. Sustainability reports presents information concerning activities taken within all three aspects of sustainability, i.e. economic, social and environmental, and can therefore be explained as the answer to the various stakeholders' demand for transparency (Frostenson et al,. 2015). Moreover, it is also important for the companies to ensure that the published information is correctly perceived by their customers. Otherwise, they will lose competitive advantages and therefore risk losing customers to their rivals. Another consequence of not following society's trends could be bad publicity in media resulting in damage to the brand image with takes a long time to re-build. In order to ensure that the requested information from customers is not missing in the sustainability reports, standardized frameworks with useful guidelines regarding sustainability reporting, such as the "Global Reporting Initiative", can be used (Global Reporting Initiative, 2019).

The increase of societal pressure on transparency within sustainability reporting together with the criticism and uncertainties about the fast fashion industry's approach and environmental impact creates an interesting research area. Finally, environmental issues and excessive consumption are well discussed topics in today's society. Thus, several studies within this subject have been conducted before. For instance, a study made by Idmark and Berglundh (2019), investigated the sustainability reporting and how it reflects consumer preferences within the food industry. With inspiration taken from this study, and other alike, opened up the research area for this thesis, i.e. companies operating in the Swedish fast fashion industry.

1.2 Problem Discussion

The companies operating within the fast fashion industry faces increasing challenges each year which in turn forces them to adapt their daily work to ensure a long-term viable future for all stakeholders. The consumer is the key stakeholder for all customer-oriented companies. This is clearly stated in several sustainability reports issued by large fashion companies (Gina Tricot, 2018) (KappAhl, 2019) (Åhléns, 2018) (H&M, 2019). According to a survey conducted by Svensk Handel (2018), consumer awareness and engagement in sustainability issues towards fast fashion companies have increased rapidly over the recent years. Simultaneously, companies have noticed the increase in customer demand and awareness concerning sustainability issues connected to their industry (Svensk Handel, 2018).

The increase in customer awareness towards fast fashion companies causes an increase in expectations and requirements demanded by these customers as well. As previously stated, sustainability reports are a vital communication tool for companies in order to mediate their work for a sustainable future to their stakeholders. Since customers are the key stakeholders for all companies within the fast fashion industry, it is of interest to question how the consumer preferences concerning environmental sustainability issues are reflected in the sustainability reports issued by these companies. Therefore, this thesis will have a customer- oriented perspective and question if and how companies in the fast fashion industry report in line with consumer preferences. Further, this thesis questions how consumers perceive the sustainability information provided by fast fashion companies, in order to investigate the information's effect on customers. To gain the insight needed to answer these questions, possible parallels and patterns in the findings will be investigated.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to gain insight into sustainability reporting within the Swedish fast fashion industry. This, to gain an understanding of the studied companies' underlying reasoning when deciding on content and structure for the sustainability reports. Moreover, how a specific stakeholder group, more particularly the customers buying the companies' products, affects the sustainability reporting. In addition, this thesis aims to investigate how the information included in these reports is perceived by the customers.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions this report aims to answer are listed as follows;

- *How are consumer preferences regarding environmental sustainability issues reflected in the sustainability reports issued by companies operating in the Swedish fast fashion industry? Can any patterns be identified?*
- *How do consumers perceive the information included in the sustainability reports issued by these companies?*

2. Literature Discussion

This chapter presents the concept of sustainability reporting together with an explanation of the theoretical framework used in the thesis and how they relate to the investigated area. In addition, factors influencing sustainability reporting are explained as well as previous research within the subject area. Finally, the studies used as information sources for consumer perceptions are presented.

2.1 Sustainability reporting

/ This section introduces the concept of sustainability reporting and how external pressure, or more particularly consumer preferences, affects the content and structure of these reports. /

Today the companies' stakeholders, such as customers and media, expects the company to provide explanations on their actions and positions concerning sustainability development. There is a prevailing demand among the customers for information including more than just numbers. Companies are given the opportunity to communicate their sustainable work and position regarding all aspects of sustainability, through the reports (FAR 2000-2006). Scholars state that the interest in sustainability reporting has increased notedly since the year of 2000, thanks to the greater concern of sustainable issues in all three areas; environmental, economic and social (Frostenson et al,. 2011). The emergence of sustainability reporting is largely considered due to society's requirement for transparency. Hence, the company provides this type of information to defend or increase their legitimacy and to obtain a good brand image (Maas et al,. 2016). Nonetheless, as companies gain more insight in the new type of demand, they put more effort into the subject, thus creating a modern form of competitive advantage.

According to Fagerström and Hartwig (2016), sustainability reporting can also be seen as a tool towards risk minimization and opportunity optimization. The development of the reports can assist in finding new efficient ways of improving the current function (Fagerström & Hartwig, 2016). Additionally, there are certain guidelines on how to decide on content and structure of the sustainability reports. To conclude, all questions related to environmental impact and climate issues are in constant debate, not least in the clothing industry and a significant increase in customers demand on transparency can be seen. Therefore, it is of great interest to investigate the sustainability reports of the selected companies to enable an analysis and comparison of the information presented related to consumer preferences.

2.2 Theories

/ In the previous section, information on the effects of consumer preferences on sustainability reporting was presented. This section introduces the theories used to describe why these effects occurs. As well as why companies tend to listen to consumer preferences and strive to fit and follow industry specific norms in order to create a positive perception among their customers. /

2.2.1 Stakeholder Theory

According to Clarkson (1995), companies have several groups of stakeholders from whom pressure concerning sustainable development occurs. The stakeholder perspective becomes more substantial as interest in global sustainability increases. In the current competitive environment within the fast fashion industry, it is vital to retain as many competitive advantages as possible. Hence, listening and answering to customer requirements in terms of environmental responsibility will create additional values that strengthens the company's market position (Clarkson, 1995). Furthermore, the stakeholder theory explains the relationship between companies and its stakeholders and is therefore applicable in this thesis.

Stakeholders can be both internal and external. For example, internal stakeholders consist of board of directors, management teams and shareholders who have invested capital in which they expect to gain a return on (Clarkson, 1995). The external stakeholders consist of various groups. Firstly, the customers paying for the product and the company needs to make sure they get returning customers. Media, i.e. newspapers and fashion magazines etc., also have a considerable role to play since they are in a position of improving or damaging the brand image (Clarkson, 1995). This thesis aims to focus on the external stakeholders and in particularly the customers buying the product.

2.2.2 Legitimacy Theory

The companies operating in the Swedish fast fashion industry are dependent on their customers, these companies need to possess awareness of the current customer demand. In that sense, acting in line with this demand secures a good customer relationship based on trust and constitutes a pivotal role in the creation of legitimacy. The legitimacy theory, a theory created to explain a company's behavior towards the environment in which they operate is useful for this thesis. According to this theory, a company neglecting to adapt themselves to environmental standards and norms of society, will not be considered acting in an appropriate manner by its current and potential new customers. Thus, risk losing their customers and market share (Deegan, 2002). Furthermore, norms and standards are inconstant, and it is therefore of great importance to pay attention and respond to changes in the environment (Deegan, 2002).

This thesis investigates consumer preferences and perceptions towards environmental sustainability issues. Therefore, as Deegan (2002) states, companies have incentives to communicate the initiatives and commitments that are in line with society's anticipation, thus the legitimacy theory becomes highly applicable in this thesis.

2.2.3 Institutional Theory

In order to analyze how external expectations affect the sustainability reporting made by companies, the institutional theory becomes relevant. Companies acting in line with these expectations will gain respect and legitimacy from the environment (Rimmel & Jonäll, 2018). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), companies operating within the same industry are likely to become more homogeneous as they achieve growth, regardless of individual goals and strategies. According to the institutional theory this phenomenon can be explained by institutional forces, called institutional isomorphism, including coercive-, imitative- and normative forces. Coercing isomorphism refers to both formal and informal pressures from external parties, such as laws, regulations and societal values (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009). The second form of isomorphism, the mimetic, occurs when companies find themselves in uncertain situations. Hence, they tend to imitate similar companies that have achieved success within the same industry. Lastly, the normative forces are said to be affecting the perception of what is the right this to do (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009). More particularly, how to act with moral and in line with the existing values in the operating environment (Martínez-Ferrero & García-Sánchez, 2017). Since this thesis investigates several companies operative within the same industry the use of the institutional theory becomes relevant since it provides explanations of why companies act the way they do. Moreover, institutional theory will be helpful when gaining understanding of why the investigated companies formulate their sustainability reports as they do. As well as why potential patterns and similarities between the studied companies might occur.

2.3 Influencing factors

/ *With the information given in the two previous sections, a picture of the effects on sustainability reporting caused by consumer preferences and underlying forces is created. Thus, this section explains frameworks and ideas that introduces the non-monetary aspects of sustainability, with the aim of providing further knowledge concerning the emergence and structure of sustainability reporting.* /

2.3.1 Triple Bottom Line and Corporate Social Responsibility

As mentioned earlier, the primary source of information concerning the sustainability work done by the studied companies are the sustainability reports issued by each company. Hence, explaining concise background facts about these kinds of reports serves its purpose, since it will facilitate the understanding of further and deeper analysis.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is a multifaceted concept creating the basis for sustainability reporting. It expresses the obligation on business leaders to make decisions and strategic goals towards actions in line with social and environmental sustainability. CSR is frequently seen in attempts to manage the "Triple Bottom Line" (Farrington et.al., 2017), a theory originally explained by John Elkington, also called "TBL". According to Elkington, companies enable a holistic perspective when focusing on the three aspects of sustainability; social, environmental and financial (UNWCED, 1987). CSR has led to several positive changes, such as the increase of awareness among common people regarding the actions taken by companies in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, companies that incorporates all three aspects of the TBL within their business will create stronger bonds and relationships with their customers (Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008).

Although this thesis is focusing solely on the environmental aspects of sustainability, excluding the financial and social aspects, it is of relevance to understand the underlying ideas behind CSR and the TBL-framework. This, since it contributes to the understanding of the content included in the studied sustainability reports.

2.3.2 Global Reporting Initiative – The establishment of sustainability reports

All companies analyzed in this thesis use Global Reporting Initiative standards as a basis when creating their sustainability reports. This affects the structure and content of the reports in terms of what different environmental subjects to include. In this sense, it is of relevance to briefly explain how these standards affect sustainability reporting, although this thesis does not take a starting point in them. These standards are presented to help in the interpretation of the reports.

Global Reporting Initiative "GRI", is an independent organization working to enable comparable sustainability reporting for businesses worldwide. They compose and publish standards within the three sustainability areas: economic, social and environmental (Global Reporting, 2020). The GRI standards allow a global common language for non-financial information, with the aim to create transparency and homogeneity (Global Reporting, 2020). At the same time, GRI helps to shape the sustainability report and to ensure it is an efficient tool for improving the relationship with key stakeholders and customers (KPMG, 2020).

However, there is no absolute approach for which GRI standards to include in a sustainability report. Considerably, this implies a probability of divergence between the reports from different companies applying the GRI standards. Meanwhile, the use of these standards in a certain industry will create conformity within some environmental topics in the reports. Institutional and legitimacy theory could possibly reinforce and extend the reasoning behind this hypothesis. Due to the GRI standards, together with an adoption of expectations, norms and institutional phenomenon, companies operating in the fast fashion industry might move towards a more homogeneous way of reporting.

2.4 Previous research

/ The following section presents previous research in the area of sustainability reporting within the fast fashion industry. For instance, information about the increased interest in sustainability among customers and the relationship between consumer perception and company performance are included. In that sense, the aim of this section is to provide versatile information in order to enhance the analysis and understanding of the prevailing situation. /

In a research conducted by Kaisa Vehmas et al., (2018) it is stated that consumers' interest in sustainable solutions has increased rapidly in recent years. Clothes produced by recycled textiles, circular products, are now attracting customers. Alongside this increased interest, customers have started to demand more concrete information on the environmental aspects of clothing production (Vehmas et al., 2018).

Park & Kim (2016) elucidates in their study that the existing research on sustainability in the clothing industry is limited to two aspects. Firstly, the writer's point out the lack of concrete explanation, for fashion companies, of what is means to be sustainable and how to measure sustainability in terms of the consumers' perceptions. Secondly, the lack of understanding about the discrepancy between consumers' perception regarding fashion companies' sustainability work and the customers' actual behavior towards the same companies (Park & Kim, 2016). Joy et al., (2012), explains this discrepancy by the continuing profit making by the companies operating

within the fast fashion industry, alongside with the encouraging of over-consumption. Therefore, the previous discovery might indicate that the predicted role of a company's effort in creating a positive customer' relationship regarding the prevailing sustainability work may not apply to the companies operating in the fast fashion industry (Joy et al., 2016). To prove this discrepancy Mcneil and Moore (2015) argue that the desire for the latest fashion makes even the most sustainability aware consumers to engage in consumption of these fast fashion products. In the study, Park and Kim argues that the use of the TBL-model will act as a key tool explaining and supporting a company's sustainability goals. Therefore, they argue that the TBL-model should be used as an essential reporting framework to explain both customers' perception towards the company's sustainability work and the relationship the two parts in-betweens, this through loyalty and trust (2016).

Peloza et al,. (2012), the writers of an article about the discrepancy of stakeholder perception and corporate reality, acknowledges a good reputation as a highly valuable asset of a company. Furthermore, they mean that corporate sustainability is an essential component of a company's reputation (Peloza et al,. 2012). In contrast to Park's and Kim's findings (2016), Peloza et al,. (2012) insists that stakeholders, such as customers and investors, consider sustainability as an important aspect in the decision-making process. However, another finding in this study is the discovery of a gap between consumers' perception and company performance. The writers of the study mean that not all efforts that company's make regarding sustainability reaches their stakeholders. They mean that there are some existing errors in the communication regarding sustainability between companies and their stakeholders. Either, the efforts are not mediated clearly enough to reach the stakeholders, or a perception is built up around a company creating a deceptive picture, distorted to the better, of the sustainability actions taken (Peloza et al,. 2012).

Frostenson et al,. (2011), have written a paper about corporate responsibility communication, in which they describe the dramatically rise in consumer demand for transparency efforts and the effects on communication regarding sustainability. However, they clarify that the increase in both transparency demand and sustainability communication may not necessarily indicate the same increase in actual actions taken by the companies (Frostenson et al,. 2011). The writers argue that an increase in sustainability communication may be an attempt to protect the core business from external pressure in order to adapt to societal norms (Frostenson et al,. 2011). Moreover, this paper emphasizes the link between customer demand on transparency and the information given in the sustainability reports.

In the paper written by Fernandez-Feiijoo et al,. (2013), transparency is defined as a concept linked to reporting, particularly to sustainability reports. The aim of the paper is to investigate if pressure of stakeholders determines whether the published sustainability reports are transparent or not. Furthermore, the findings from the studied topic is that customer and societal pressure improves the quality of transparency in the sustainability reports (Fernandez-Feiijoo et al,. 2013). In summary, the authors conclude that the existence of external pressure is important in order to impel transparency in sustainability reporting Fernandez-Feiijoo et al,. 2013).

2.5 Research conducted by Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel – consumer preferences

/ With information provided on the concept of sustainability reporting together with theories, influencing factors and previous research, the understanding of the prevailing situation regarding sustainability reporting is enhanced. The last section of the literature discussion presents the issuers behind the two surveys which, in this thesis, constitutes the main source of information regarding consumer preferences. This creates the condition needed to implement the research design in order to construct the analysis of this thesis. The results of these surveys are presented later in the empirical findings chapter. /

To set the basis for consumer preferences in this thesis, a survey conducted by Naturvårdsverket, a Swedish state authority, was used. This survey investigates common knowledge, awareness and consumer preferences within the Swedish clothing industry (Naturvårdsverket, 2019). The survey has a sample of 1000 people and was performed during October and November in 2019. The result is estimated to be representative for the Swedish population regardless of age and sex (Naturvårdsverket, 2019). Furthermore, a state authority provides reliable information; therefore, this source is considered as trustworthy. In addition, a survey performed in 2018, conducted by an employer organization in the retail industry named Svensk Handel (Svensk Handel, 2019) has also been used as a source of information when studying consumer preferences. However, the findings from Naturvårdsverket's survey have been used as the primary source in this thesis, since this survey provides information about the clothing industry to a greater extent. Hence, the information used from these surveys will be presented later on in the empirical findings chapter.

3. Method

In this chapter, the research design and theoretical framework, as well as the selection and limitations within this thesis are described. In addition, the CONI-model with its three steps is explained. In the last section, a description of the customized survey concerning consumer perception, as well as a discussion of the chosen method are presented.

3.1 Research design

To fulfill the purpose of this thesis, a specific research design was used. The design of the research used will be decomposed and explained in three different interacting aspects; consumer preferences, the information given in sustainability reports, and consumer perceptions. These aspects are briefly presented in this section and will be further explained throughout the chapter.

The first aspect consists of the most crucial environmental sustainability issues considered by consumers and will be labelled consumer preferences. This aspect constitutes the basis for the analysis of sustainability reports issued by companies operating within the fast fashion industry. Previous research conducted by Naturvårdsverket (2019) and Svensk Handel (2019), have been considered as useful sources, in order to find information on consumer preferences. Furthermore, this research provides valuable insights on consumers preferences concerning environmental sustainability within the clothing industry. The consumer preferences are presented further later on in this chapter.

The second aspect consists of an analysis of the information included in the sustainability reports issued by the companies operating in the fast fashion industry. When analyzing the reports, the content analysis method, named the CONI-model, was considered as an appropriate model to use in this thesis. The CONI-model is suitable, since it is a transparent and flexible approach providing a systematic and quantitative description of the content (Beck et al,. 2010). The reports issued by the selected companies are structured in different ways, therefore the flexibility of the method is beneficial for the purpose of this thesis. Moreover, this method allows finding patterns and relevant information easily (Bell et al,. 2018).

The third aspect consist of a customized survey designed by using Google Forms and was created in order to gain an understanding on consumer perception towards the companies' sustainability work in terms of the environmental aspects. The questions presented in this customized survey are related to consumer preferences mentioned in the previous research conducted by Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel. The goal for this survey is to gain an understanding on how customers perceive the information provided in sustainability reports concerning the current sustainability work done by companies within the fast fashion industry.

As a conclusion, the three aspects, described above, are used to enable a feasible research design in order to analyze the sustainability reports issued by the studied companies. Further, to investigate the significance of the information provided from a customer-perspective. This section presents a model (see figure 1) that illustrates the research design used in this thesis. The three different interacting aspects form the three corners of the triangle. The left black arrow corresponds to consumer preferences impact on the information included in the sustainability reports. The right black arrow corresponds to how customers perceive this information. The red arrow in the bottom implicates that consumer preferences and consumer perception, both represent the same customer segment.
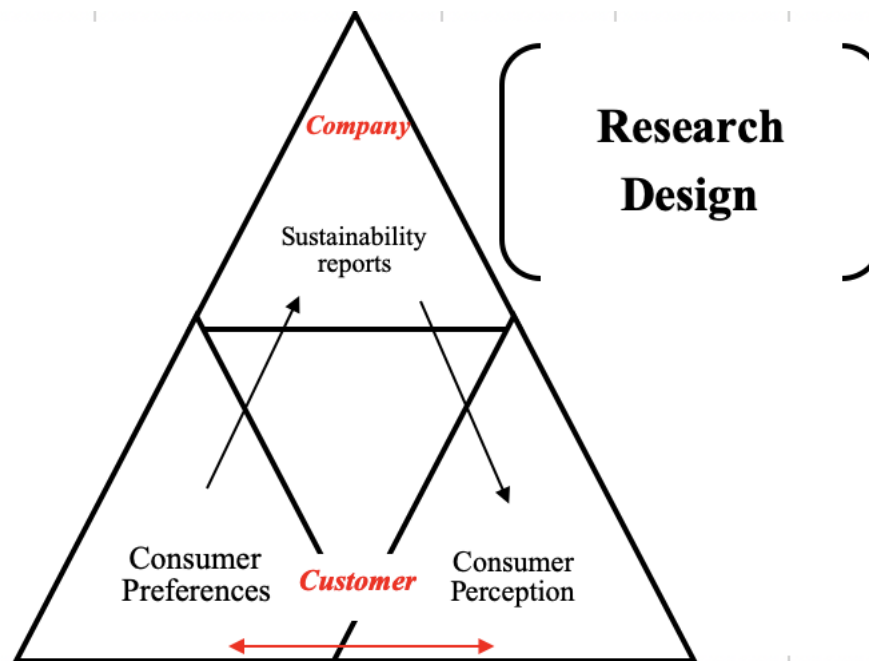
Figure 1. Research design illustrated and decomposed to the three different interacting aspects.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The stakeholder-, institutional- and legitimacy theory are included in the theoretical framework to explain the forces affecting a company in its operating environment, as well as interpreting patterns and similarities found in the reports. In order to provide the reader with essential background facts on the structure of sustainability reports and underlying incentives, the literature discussion chapter includes information about sustainability reporting, TBL, CSR and GRI. Besides, the theories help to explain similarities and differences between the studied sustainability reports. In addition, previous research is presented and discussed to highlight earlier findings relatable and usable to help interpret the empirical findings in this thesis.

The model illustrated below (see figure 2) is an evolved version of the research design model described in the previous section. This version describes the analysis method used in this thesis, i.e. how the empirical findings have been analyzed together with the theories and influencing factors included in the theoretical framework. Moreover, the model illustrates how the theoretical framework interacts, explain and evaluates the three interacting aspects presented in the research design.
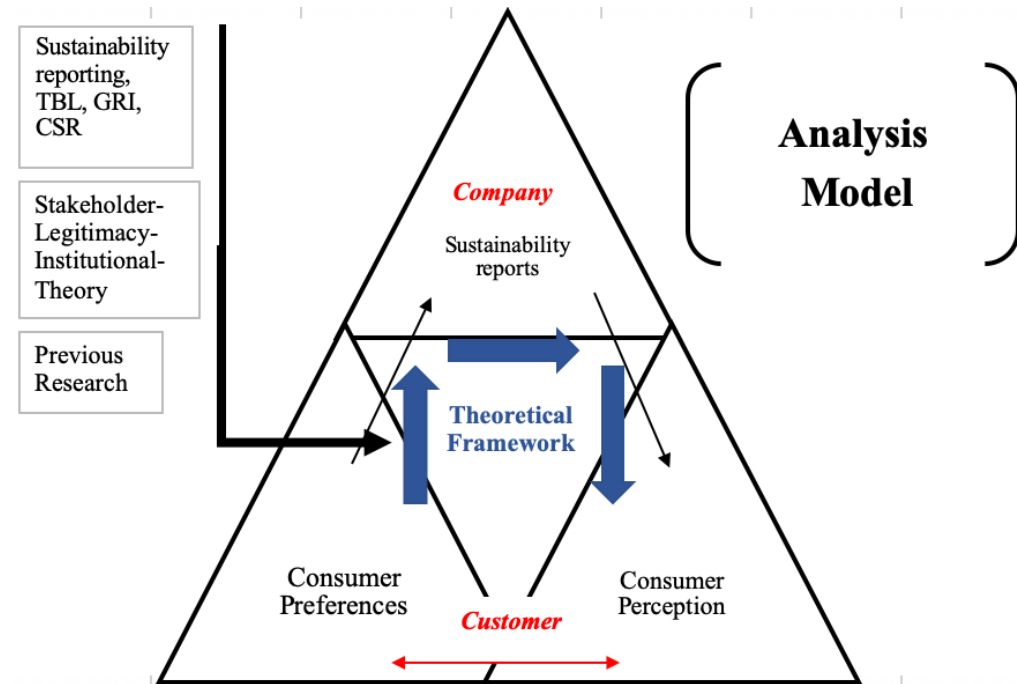
Figure 2. Illustrated analysis model.

3.3 Selection and data collection

Companies in the clothing industry operate in a competitive environment, and therefore they are constantly being evaluated by society. Hence, consumer preferences and requirements on transparency becomes highly important for companies in order to remain competitive and gain in popularity. This was considered as an interesting and well-suited industry to dig into in terms of environmental aspects. The companies studied in this thesis are H&M, Gina Tricot, KappAhl, Indiska, Ellos and Åhléns. These companies are selected since they engage in similar activities towards a homogeneous target group. Furthermore, the selected companies are all colored by the expression "fast fashion". Since, all the selected companies share the same qualities and shape the research on consumer preferences were suitable to use as a basis for further analysis. In addition, all of the six selected clothing companies shape their sustainability reports in line with GRI's guidelines, which were preferable when making conclusions from comparing them. Lastly, all selected companies are statutory to publish a sustainability report due to Swedish laws (FAR, 2020).

Instead of making a comparison over time, the purpose of this thesis is to analyze the prevailing circumstances and the potential patterns in-between the information provided in the sustainability reports and consumer preferences. Furthermore, how it is perceived by the customers. Therefore, the sustainability reports analyzed belongs to fiscal year 2018 and 2019. The use of the latest issued reports is the most eligible when draw conclusions based on contemporary actions. Some of the companies had not yet released the reports of 2019, therefore reports from both 2018 and 2019 were used.

The sustainability reports conducted by each of the selected companies are public documents and could easily be downloaded from respective website. Since, these reports are created directly by the studied companies, the information presented in these reports have been considered as reliable. Furthermore, previous research and studies of sustainability reporting and the environmental

impact from companies were selected with the aim of gaining insight within the topic and to get a wider perspective. This research was found through data bases of University of Gothenburg. Suitable keywords concerning the thesis topics were searched for, such as "Fast Fashion, Sustainability, Reporting, Perception, Customer, Communication, Users of Sustainability Reporting".

To analyze consumer preferences, secondary data was collected from Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel. As earlier mentioned, these sources were considered to provide reliable information since the first mentioned is a state authority and the second an employer organization in the retail industry. The reason for using secondary data is the difficulty to get as many answers as if a similar study was to be done from scratch.

3.4 Limitations

This thesis is limited to Swedish companies operating in the fast fashion Industry. The reason why this study is limited to the Swedish market is due to the laws and constraints affecting the companies with a legal seat in Sweden. Hence, comparing companies from different countries would therefore impair the analysis when trying to compare and find patterns between the companies related to its customers. Besides, all the selected companies are well known by the Swedish customers which is vital when using the answers from the surveys as basis for the analysis, since these surveys are addressed to Swedish customers.

In order to create a relevant analysis, the data used needs to be trustworthy and comparable. Since, media and other narrators sometimes distort the truth, the information given by them cannot be seen as trustworthy. Therefore, it is more reliable to search for the origin publisher of the information that the media based their conclusions on. Even though the risk remains that the information presented in the sustainability reports may be angled for the better, it is still considered as the most credible source of information. Hence, the sustainability reports of each company chosen for this thesis will be used as a source of information. Finally, interviews have not been conducted since the sustainability reports have been assumed to provide enough information for this thesis.

3.5 The CONI (Consolidated Narrative Interrogation) model

To enable a content analysis of the sustainability reports, a model named consolidated narrative interrogation model, the CONI-model, have been used. The CONI-model consists of three steps, where the first two steps are considered as qualitative and the third as quantitative. This method was first developed and used by Beck et al,. (2010). This unique combination gives the possibility to possess a detailed content analysis (Beck et al,. 2010). This CONI-model forms a method where categorization enables the analysis of reports. Through coding of both qualitative and quantitative content, indicators can be found. The quantitative part provides information about word frequency, which indicates the words' importance (Beck et al,. 2010). On the contrary, the qualitative part provides information which afterwards is evaluated by the content of the information. To do the analysis, head-categories together with relatable sub-categories are chosen. Further explanations within each step are provided below.

3.5.1 Preparing Step: Categorizing

Before starting the content analysis, an initial preparing step had to be done. In this preparing step, the categories were formulated. Further on in the method, the formulated categories will be labelled "head-categories" and "sub-categories". As earlier mentioned, the head-categories are based on consumer preferences regarding sustainability issues in the clothing industry, gathered from customer surveys conducted by Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel. The preferences, in which the answers to the related questions were either strong or had increased rapidly between the year of 2018 and 2019, were considered as the most crucial to the consumers. If the answers were either strongly consistent or had increased quickly between 2018 and 2019, the topic was considered as a consumer preference.

Due to Beck et al,. (2010), it is of importance that the sub-categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive in order to avoid counting the same word twice, also known as double coding. This have been taken into consideration when choosing suitable sub-categories. The sub-categories were selected in order to increase the scope within specific areas in each head category and not to overlap each other. To attain the head-categories, it is unavoidable that subjective interpretations had to be made to some extent. To decrease these possible subjective interpretations, the original words in the question that was asked to the customer, was in its turn used to label the category. For example, one of the questions were: "If you knew that your choices impact the environment, could you consider repairing or let it be repaired when it is possible?" (Naturvårdsverket, 2019) This motivated the consumer preference "Repair" as a head-category. Six different preferences were identified from the surveys from Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel. The information that motivated these preferences is presented in the chapter of empirical findings in the section Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel. These preferences became the equivalent head-categories. The definition of each head-category was discussed between the writers. One of the categories, "Production & Transportation", was considered as more comprehensive than the other five. Hence, it was separated into two head-categories, one applied for resources; water and energy, and one for the environmental footprint: waste and emission.

The final six head-categories and nine sub-categories was gathered in table 1 together with the corresponding search words in English and their Swedish translations. The search words are the words searched for in the report, these sometimes differ from the actual word in the category to include synonyms. To clarify, the writers made definitions of each head-categories. This to clarify in what context the words were counted, and to minimize the risk of misinterpretation between the writers and additionally for the reader of this report. These definitions can be found in appendix 1. The final categories are described below, in table 1.

Head categories & Sub categories					
Rental	**Repair**	**Quality**	**Recycle**	**Production & Transportation Environmental footprint**	**Production & Transportation Resources**
Service	Sew Service	Material	Collect	Waste Emission/Effluent	Water Energy
Search word					
Rent, Hire, Lease, Service	Repair, Sew, Service	Quality	Recycling, Recycle, reclaim, Collect	Waste, Emission, Effluent, CO_2	Production, Water, Wash, Energy
Hyr, Låna, Uthyrning, Service	Laga, Reparera, Sy, Service	Kvalité	Återvinna, Insamling	Utsläpp, Avfall, koldioxid, CO_2	Produktion, Vatten, Tvätt, Energi

Table 1. Head-categories, sub-categories and search words.

3.5.2 The first qualitative step

The first step in the CONI-model was to search for and recognize the relevant content from the reports (Beck et al,. 2010). To accomplish this, each report was tested with the head- and sub-categories. To test the reports, each head- and sub-category was searched for in the text. Then, in order to get an overview of the content found, the suitable information was gathered in a shared document between the writers. In order to search for information in each report, both the hotkey "command+F" and the program Nvivo 12, a tool for classification and categorization was used.

However, Nvivo 12 was more appropriate to use in the third quantitative step, where only the word frequency is of relevance, since Nvivo is more effective when counting the words searched for than using commando+F. To prevent incorrect measurement, words mentioned in the table of content, headlines, index, such as GRI-index or in a context with clarification market (*), was excluded.

3.5.3 The second qualitative step

The content found when searching for the head- and sub-categories was evaluated in this step. This was done through scoring based on a table with five different levels of coding categories. The table determines the conditions that has to be fulfilled to reach the scoring level. The coding category zero in table 2 was used for occasions when the category was not mentioned at all in a report (Beck et al,. 2010). Further, the table with definitions of each level 0-5 is taken from the original CONI-method formulated by Beck et al,. (2010). The information in which the search words was mentioned was evaluated by the two writers in order to avoid inequalities when scoring. Finally, when the scoring levels of each category were made, the results were put together in a table with an illustrating histogram, which are presented later in empirical findings. To avoid overestimations, the lowest level was chosen if there were any uncertainties.

Disclosure Type	Definition	Examples
1	Disclosure addresses issue related to category definition; Pure narrative	" Products can also be repaired or re-newed in order to prolong the garment's life."(Sustainability Report 2018 p.30)
2	Disclosure addresses issue related to category and provides detalies; Pure narrative	The use of water, which today is a scarce resource, is crucial to reach a sustainable development. The usage needs to decline, from growth of cotton to production… /…/ As a company in the textile industry we will do everything we can to reach a sustainable management of water everywhere. We have learned a lot though changes we've made, but changes need to be made with common knowledge and powers. Therefore, we collaborate with suppliers, sub-suppliers and colleges in the industry…" (Hållbarhetsrapport för indiska 2017/2018 p.17)
3	Disclosure addresses issue related to category in numerical way; Purley Quantitative	" The proportion of sustainable cotton used in our cotton products has increased from 69% in 2017 to 81% in 2018". (Extended sustainability report 2018 p. 19)
4	Disclosure addresses issue related to category in numerical way, including qualitative explanations; Narrative and Quantitative	" We've made significant progress, but several crucial steps must still be taken before we can honestly say that fashion has become sustainable. One important step involves collecting garments once they have worn out or are no longer wanted. They need to be recycled and sent back into the production loop as new raw materials. /…/ In 2018 we collected 50 tons, which is an increase of 61 % compared to 2017 (31 tons) …" (Sustainability Report 2018 p.28)
5	Any numerical disclosure to the category including qualitative statements demonstrating year comparisions; Narrative, quantitative and comparable	" Inbound freight, the transport of products from our suppliers to our warehouse in Borås, is our largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 61% of total CO_2 emissions for the Ellos Group in 2018. Outbound freight, to our customers, accounts for 30% of emissions. In total, the transport of our products to reach our customers, accounts for 91% of our CO_2 emissions". (Extended sustainability report 2018 p. 42)
0	Not mentioning the category	-

Table 2. Definition of each scoring level (Beck et al,. 2010) and explaining examples from the reports.

3.5.4 The third quantitative step

The third quantitative step indicates the importance of the head-categories within the report. It can be seen as a distinct contrast to the first two qualitative steps. According to Beck et al,. (2010), words and sentences that are assignable to the sub-category are counted. In this thesis, only search words for each category were counted, not sentences. The reason is that only counting words removes the risk that the same sentence is counted more than once, since several of the search words could occur in the same sentence. Therefore, our method differs from the original. To enable an overview, the search words were counted and then put together in a table and associated histograms presented further in the empirical findings. The more a category is mentioned, the more relevant it can be assumed to be, since the category is given greater room in the report. (Beck et al,. 2010).

3.6 A customized survey regarding consumer perceptions

To investigate the consumers' perception regarding sustainability work within the studied companies, a customized survey addressing consumers was conducted. The study aims to capture consumers' perception of the sustainability work initiated by the companies in the Swedish fast fashion industry. It was designed in Google Forms, a free online program that enable the creation of surveys (Google, 2020). Six questions associated with each of the six head-categories used in the CONI-model were formulated. In each of the questions, the respondent got the opportunity to

choose between eight different answer-alternatives. Answers with the numbers from 1-7 corresponded to whether they agreed or disagreed with the questions. Whereas the eighth alternative gave the opportunity to answer "no opinion". To effectively receive answers, the survey was sent to the authors' (of this thesis) families, friends and relatives via a social media platform. The corresponding individuals was prompted to do the survey only if they have been buying products from these companies occasionally or more often. The survey got 153 answers and with the age ranging from 17 to 72, yet centered around the age of 21 to 26. The respondents were distributed in 80,5% women, 18,7% men and 0,8% who identified themselves as "other".

3.7 Method Discussion

All the terms; reliability, trustworthiness, validity and relevance, needs to be questioned concerning the method used (Stockholm University, 2016). The thesis aims to investigate the sustainability reporting within the Swedish fast fashion industry. The reliability of the generalized conclusions made about the Swedish fast fashion industry can be considered as weaker compared to if a larger selection of companies had been made. However, the time limit and scope of this thesis did not allow a wider selection of companies. This since the analysis that was considered to be needed to perform a more dependable conclusion would not have been possible. However, the selected companies are considered to be well known by the public and can therefore be assumed to represent the overall Swedish fast fashion industry. Furthermore, the surveys used as the sources of information regarding consumer preferences have a sample of 1000 people (Naturvårdsverket, 2019) (Svensk Handel, 2018). Although the sample size may not be large enough to ensure the general Swedish consumer preference, Naturvårdsverket (2019) claims that their sample is representative for the Swedish customers. Therefore, the use of these surveys has been considered as reliable.

The content analysis can be considered limited since it is only emphasizing the content in a numerical way (Beck et al,. 2010). Therefore, subjective interpretations were needed, both when retrieving content from the reports and when evaluating the scores. However, although these subjective interpretations can be considered to weaken the reliability of the method, it was considered necessary in order to accomplish a reliable analysis. In order to reduce the risk of misjudgment, the scoring levels were discussed by the writers before the final decisions were made. Besides, the risk of missing out sentences discussing the selected categories without mentioning the actual search word, occurs. However, the sub-categories are established to avoid this to the greatest possible extent. In addition, all reports were read through one additional time in order to ensure a fair perception of the analyzed information.

The final, quantitative, step can be considered as doubtful when determining the importance of a subject since factors affecting the findings might have been excluded. However, Beck et al,. (2010) means that the qualitative and quantitative step complement each other and are therefore enabling a unique and detailed method, resulting in a reliable analysis. Nonetheless, the method is originally constructed to fit sustainability reporting analysis.

The data collection in this thesis can be considered limited, since the data retrieved only consists of the information given in each sustainability report issued by the studied companies. Furthermore, the remaining alternative sources of information that could have been used, such as interviews with employees, were not feasible due to surrounding circumstances in society, i.e. the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, content published on each companies' website was not investigated since it was considered to include similar information as in the reports. Although the information given in the reports are revised by auditors, it can be considered biased since it is issued by the companies

themselves. However, it is nearly impossible to find completely impartial information from a profit-driven business and the reports were therefore considered as a the most suitable source of information. Moreover, since all of the investigated companies performs sustainability reports the reliability of the analysis increases due to the use of the same type of information source from each of the investigated companies.

The customized survey in which consumer perception was investigated, was directed to the authors' networks consisting of students, relatives and friends. Therefore, one bias is that it cannot be fully ensured that the answers corresponds directly to the companies' customers, but due to time constraints and the scope of the thesis, this alternative was considered most suitable to fulfill the purpose. However, this problem was taken into consideration and the respondents were enlightened to only accomplish the survey if they considered themselves as a customer of the company. Finally, the chosen years of the sustainability reports are 2018 and 2019 and the surveys regarding consumer preferences conducted by Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel are implemented during the same years. This can be criticized since it implies that contemporary requirements and preferences from customers may have not been perceived by the companies yet. More particularly, time-lag might occur which could contribute to misinterpretations in the conclusion. However, similar surveys conducted in clothing industry could not be found from previous years. It was therefore considered appropriate to use these surveys to receive the most recently updated information about the consumer demand in order to ensure validity of the thesis. Nonetheless, since the purpose of the thesis was to get a picture of the current situation, the most appropriate choice was to use the most recently updated information. Besides, the most crucial environmental concerns for customers when buying clothes, can most likely be assumed to not have emerged for the first time during the two previous years and can therefore be assumed as known within society before the year of 2018.

4. Empirical Findings

Initially this chapter presents the information retrieved regarding consumer preferences, followed by a description of the investigated companies. Thereafter, the qualitative and quantitative findings from the CONI-model are presented. Finally, the findings from the customized survey concerning consumer perception is presented.

4.1 Consumer Preferences

The surveys directed to customers in the clothing and retail industry, conducted by Naturvårdsverket and Svensk Handel, was used to gather information on consumer preferences. The findings from these surveys are used as a basis for the creation of head- and sub-categories. A table with the resulting head- and sub-categories can be found in the method chapter.

In the survey conducted by Naturvårdsverket (2019), 93% of the respondents answered that they aimed to take care of their clothes to a greater extent. In 2019, 93% of the respondents could imagine repairing their garment if possible. In comparison, 78% could imagine repairing their clothes 2018 (Naturvårdsverket, 2019). Half of the respondents said that they used their clothes for more than four years. Furthermore, an increase in demand for the possibility to borrow clothes in store during 2018 to 2019 was seen (Naturvårdsverket, 2019). Almost half of the numbers of respondents answered that they are recycling their damaged clothes. 24% returned their used clothes in store (Naturvårdsverket, 2019). According to Svensk Handel (2018) between 2016 and 2018 there have been an increase of 22% of consumers who leave their used clothes in stores for recycling.

Most people believe that the largest impact on the environment occurs in the production stages. Thereafter, most people think that the largest impact occurs when transporting clothes. Additionally, almost two thirds (57%) are thinking about the sustainability perspective when buying clothes (Svensk Handel, 2018). Around 70% of the consumers gets their information on the environmental impact caused by the clothing industry from media, social media or the internet (Svensk Handel, 2018). Lastly, between 2016 to 2018 there was an increase in the customer awareness on environmental impact in companies in retail industry. Four out of five thinks it is important to consume from companies regarded as sustainable. Furthermore, companies are experiencing an increased awareness as well as sustainability-interest among their customers (Svensk Handel, 2018).

4.2 Company descriptions

4.2.1 H&M

Hennes & Mauritz is a Swedish family business established 1947 with around 5000 stores. They run stores all over the world, in Africa, Asia, Europe, north America, Oceania and south America (H&M, 2020). The primarily focus is on clothing for women, men and children. On their website, a separate tab for sustainability can easily be found. Furthermore, they own several brands, such as COS, Arket and Monki. Primarily H&M's desire is to make design available to everyone in a sustainable way. Their collections are offered online in 35 countries (H&M, 2020). In total, H&M have 179 thousand employees (H&M, 2020)

4.2.2 Gina Tricot

Gina Tricot is a Swedish fashion company, founded 1997 in Borås, Sweden. The company runs 160 stores in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Germany and have 1900 employees. Their assortment is also available online in Europe, and information about their sustainability work can easily be found on their website (Gina Tricot, 2020). The focus is to offer affordable fashion for women.

4.2.3 KappAhl

KappAhl was founded 1953 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The company run around 400 stores in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Poland and Great Britain (KappAhl, 2020). KappAhl offers fashion for women, children and men since the focus is on the woman and her family. They offer their assortment online in all of the countries they are running stores in, and information about sustainability can easily be found on their website. The company have around 2780 employees (KappAhl, 2020)

4.2.4 Indiska

Indiska is a Swedish family business established in 1901 that offers clothes, accessories and interior design in their own brand. (Indiska, 2020) However, this study will only focus on the work and actives connected to the clothing- and accessories part of the business. Indiska currently has 60 stores located in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Germany. (Indiska 2020) In addition, the entire collection is also available online in every country they operate in and a separate tab for sustainability can be found on their web page. In total, Indiska have about 300 employees (Indiska, 2020)

4.2.5 Ellos Group

Ellos Group is a Swedish e-commerce company with headquarter and warehouse in Borås, Sweden (Ellos, 2020). The company operates in all Nordic countries and offers both clothing and interior design. However, the focus in this paper will be solely on Ellos' own brands within the clothing segment. The products offered mainly consists of their own brands, however, they do also offer external brands as supplements (Ellos, 2020). Furthermore, they have a separate tab for sustainability information on at their web page. Ellos Group has about 550 employees in 2018 (Ellos, 2020)

4.2.6 Åhléns

Åhléns is a Swedish family-owned retail company, founded in 1899, with headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden. (Åhléns, 2020) The company has 57 stores in Sweden and is one of the country's strongest brands. The customers can also reach the products through the company's website, where a separate tab for sustainability information can be found as well. (Åhléns, 2020) The company offers a mix of products, ranging from clothing to interior design, from different brands. However, the focus in this paper will be solely on Åhléns's own brand within the clothing segment. The company has 3000 employees (Åhléns, 2020)

4.3 Findings from the CONI-model

/ In this chapter, the qualitative and quantitative findings from the CONI-model are presented. The explanations regarding the qualitative findings are divided into sections related to the different categories, that is referring to consumer preferences. Whereas the quantitative findings are described in short comments in the end of each category-section. Additionally, numerical

information about the reached qualitative score levels and the quantitative word frequency are compiled in histograms, presented in the end of each category-section. /

As stated in table 2 in the method-chapter, reaching score level 0, 1 or 2 concerning a certain category, indicates that the information presented in the sustainability report does not include numerical information, nor comparison with outcomes from previous years. Moreover, there is a lack of detailed information about the category which complicates the possibility to possess a holistic view of the prevailing circumstances. Hence, companies scoring below level 3 within a category, will not be further described in writing in this chapter. However, all score levels reached by each of the studied companies will still be included in the histograms presented in the end of each category-section.

4.3.1 Recycle

/ In this category, the search words described in table 1, mentioned in the context regarding both the use of recycled materials and the recycling of used or unsold clothing are included. When searching, all inflections of the previous mentioned words have been tested in order to examine all sections describing the recycling-area. /

H&M
The company provides a comprehensive picture of how they work with recycling. Both numerical and written information describing and comparing the outcomes between the current and recent years are disclosed. Numbers from previous years can be found in tables and charts, together with descriptions of future goals (H&M Group Sustainability Performance Report, 2019). Due to the information given in the report, H&M reaches score level 5 when it comes to information regarding recycling.

**Gina Tricot, Kappahl, Ellos and Åhléns**
In the reports issued by Gina Tricot, Kappahl, Ellos and Åhléns, clear descriptions of goals regarding recycling are disclosed. Both numerical and written information is included which provides a full picture of the current situation and actions taken during the fiscal year. Additionally, comparisons with the previous year are presented. However, the lack of detailed information and further explanations of the outcomes from additional years back lower these companies' overall score level. Therefore, the sustainability reports issued by these four companies reaches score level 3 when it comes to information regarding recycling. (Sustainability Report, 2018) (Kompletterande hållbarhetsinformation + Årsredovisning, 2019*)* (Extended sustainability report, 2018) (Åhléns hållbarhetsrapport, 2019)

Example of information reaching score level 3:

Ellos states the following; "The proportion of sustainable cotton used in our cotton products has increased from 69% in 2017 to 81% in 2018." (Extended sustainability report, 2018 p. 19)

KappAhl states the following; "[...] During the fiscal year we have sent 4 776 (10 278) products to combustion of health, safety or environmental reasons, furthermore 9 874 (15 116) products have been recycled or reused." (*Translation from Swedish*, Kompletterande hållbarhetsinformation + Årsredovisning, 2019. p.26)

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part regarding all of the studied companies within the category "Recycle" are presented below:
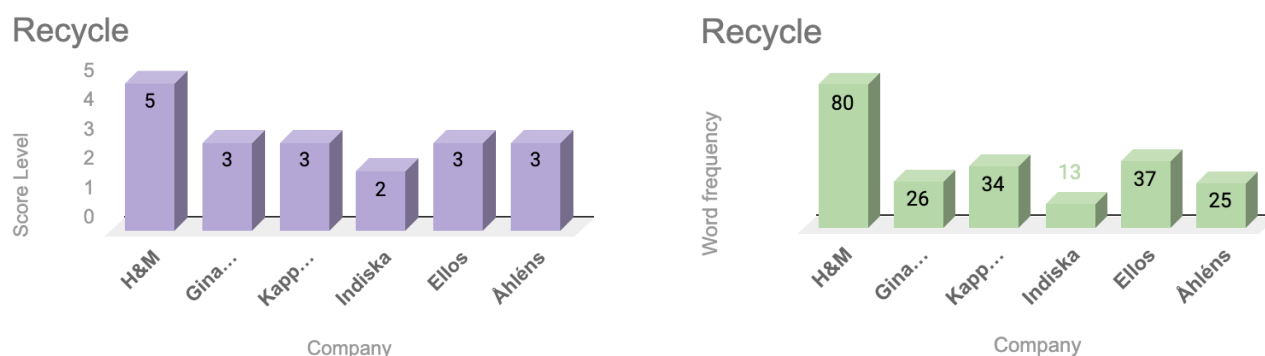
Histogram 1. Recycle. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

H&M is, by margin, mentioning the search words within this category most frequent. Thereafter, the remaining companies are relatively even in terms of mentioned search words. Moreover, "Recycle" is the category in which the search words have been mentioned the most times within one report, particularly 80 times.

4.3.2 Production & Transportation: Resources

/When searching, all inflections of the search words (see table 1) related to this category are tested. This, to ensure that all sections describing the use of resources within production and transportation are investigated. /

H&M, KappAhl and Ellos
In the reports published by H&M, KappAhl and Ellos, the issues concerning usage of resources within production and transportation are disclosed. The information is given in both numbers and writing. Furthermore, the goals within this area are explained in detail. Additionally, comparisons with outcomes from additional years back are included and well presented. Therefore, the sustainability reports issued by these three companies reaches score level 5 when it comes to information concerning resources within production and transportation. (H&M Group Sustainability Performance Report, 2019) (Kompletterande hållbarhetsinformation + Årsredovisning, 2019) (Extended sustainability report, 2018)

Example of information reaching score level 5:

H&M states the following; "Our suppliers achieved a reduction in production water usage of 7% compared to 2017 baseline. [...] Recycled fibers reduce consumption of virgin raw materials, and lower the use of chemicals, energy and water." (H&M Group Sustainability Performance Report, 2019 p. 40).

Gina Tricot

The issue about over usage of water and which actions they are taking to minimize it, are described. Numerical information is mentioned, such as the decrease of water consumption due to the usage of sustainable cotton (Sustainability Report, 2018). Additionally, they describe an initiative taken in order to broaden knowledge about major water-influencing factors (Sustainability Report, 2018). However, no numerical information is included about the usage of energy in the production over time, nor any clear goals within the subject. Due to the information given in the report, Gina Tricot reaches score level 3 in this category.

Åhléns

Åhléns describes the challenges they face within production and transportation and presents numerical information from the two previous years regarding energy usage (Åhléns Hållbarhetsrapport, 2018). Åhléns describes the actions taken in order to decrease the excessive use of resources in production and transportation. Furthermore, future guidelines, goals and underlying intentions are described. Due to the information given in the report, Åhléns reaches score level 4 regarding information about resources within production and transportation.

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part regarding all of the studied companies within the category "Production & Transportation: Resources" are presented below:
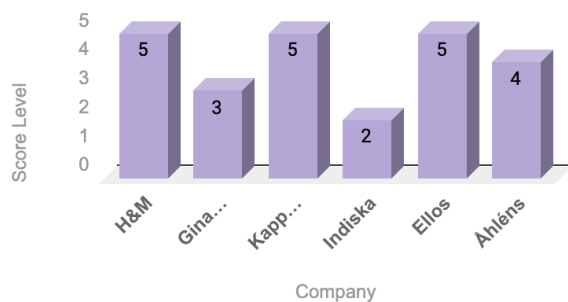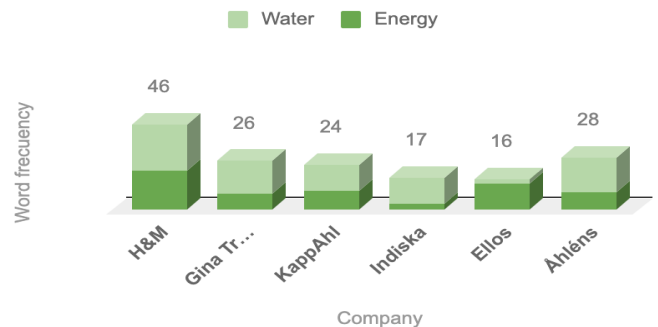
Histogram 2. Production & Transportation; Resources. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

H&M mentioned this category most times, followed by Åhléns and then Gina Tricot. Ellos mentioned the category least times.

4.3.3 Production & Transportation: Environmental footprint

/ In order to search for information on the impact the production and transportation have on the environment, the search words included in table 1 have been used. Only the search words that are presented in the context regarding production and transportation have been counted and analyzed. /

H&M & Ellos

The reports published by H&M and Ellos include both numerical and written information on how waste and emission from production and transportation are handled. Detailed tables presenting outcomes and results from previous years together with future goals, are included in these two reports. Therefore, H&M and Ellos reaches score level 5 when it comes to information regarding

the environmental footprint caused by production and transportation. (H&M Group Sustainability Performance Report, 2019) (Ellos, Extended sustainability report, 2018).

KappAhl & Åhléns

In the reports issued by KappAhl & Åhléns, the information presented on the results from the current year are clearly described in both numbers and writing. These results are compared with previous years, together with the differences in percentage. These reports provide a clear description of the current situation of how waste and emission caused by production and transportation are handled. However, the presented information is not detailed enough to reach a higher score level. Therefore, KappAhl and Åhléns reaches score level 4 when it comes to information regarding environmental footprint caused by production and transportation. (Kompletterande hållbarhetsinformation + Årsredovisning, 2019) (Åhléns Hållbarhetsrapport, 2019).

Example of information reaching score level 4:

Åhléns states the following; "A strategic initiative, made in 2019, was that Åhléns made decisions about an intermodal transportation solution for the shipping from Turkey. Thanks to this, the emission decreased with 60%" (Translation from Swedish, Åhléns hållbarhetsrapport, 2019 p.22).

Gina Tricot & Indiska

The information given in the reports issued by Gina Tricot and Indiska, explains how the companies proceed to achieve their goals concerning emission- and waste reduction. Outcomes from the current year are presented in both numbers and writing, however, no comparison with the previous years is made. Thus, the lack of detailed information on the outcomes from previous years prevent these two companies to reach a higher score level within this category. Therefore, the two companies reach score level 3 when it comes to information concerning environmental footprint caused by production and transportation. (Sustainability Report, 2018) (Hållbarhetsrapport för Indiska, 2017/2018).

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part regarding all of the studied companies within the category "Production & Transportation: Environmental footprint" are presented below:
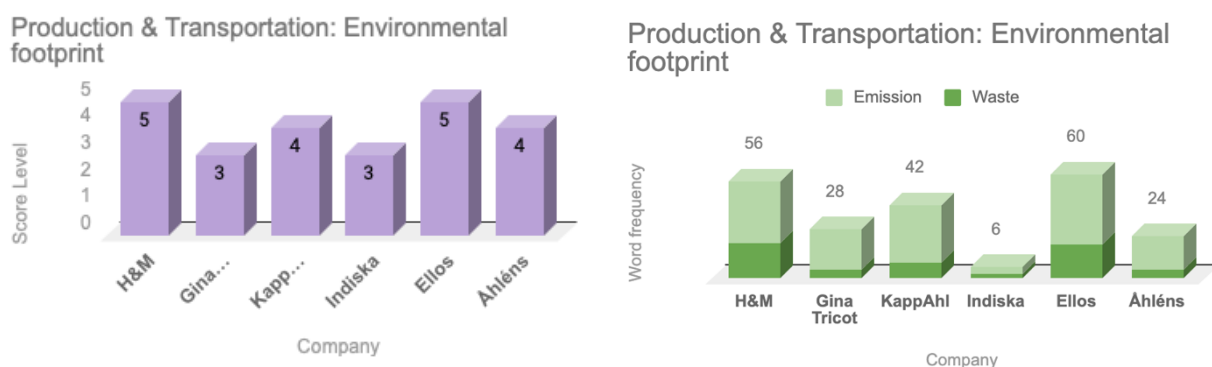
Histogram 3. Production & Transportation, Environmental Footprint. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

Ellos is in total mentioning the category most frequent, thereafter H&M. Indiska mentions this category least times.

4.3.4 Rental

/ In order to search for information about "Rental" the words described in table 1 have been used. When searching, all inflections of the search words have been tested in order to exclude missing sections describing the possibilities for rental services. /

Detailed information regarding the category "Rental" is not presented in the sustainability reports issued by the studied companies. Common among these reports are the lack of numerical information and comparisons with outcomes from previous years. Therefore, all of the studied companies scores below level 3 and will not be further explained.

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part concerning all of the studied companies within the category "Rental" are presented below:
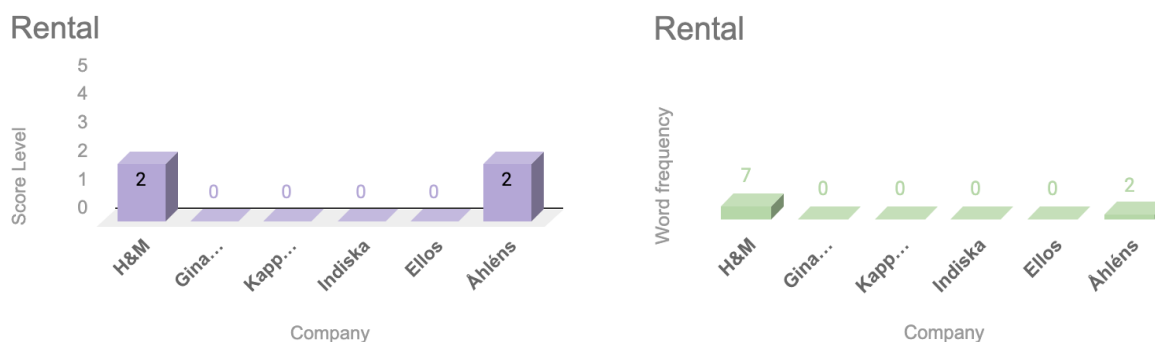
Histogram 4. Rental. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

Four out of six companies are not mentioning the category at all. H&M and Åhléns, mentions the category a few times.
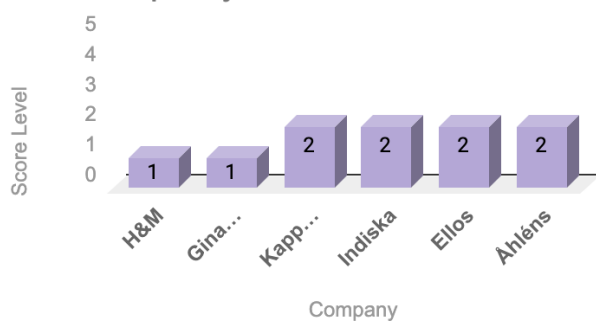
4.3.5 Product quality

/ In order to search for information about the quality of the product the search words included in table 1 have been used. Furthermore, only the words that are presented in the context regarding product quality have been counted and analyzed. /
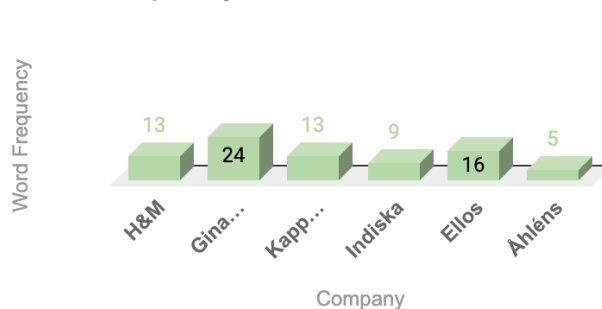
Detailed information regarding product quality is not presented in the sustainability reports issued by the studied companies. Common among these reports are the lack of numerical information and comparisons with outcomes from previous years. Therefore, all of the studied companies scores below level 3 and will not be further explained.

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part concerning all of the studied companies within the category "Product quality" are presented below:

Histogram 5. Product Quality. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

4.3.6 Repair

/ In order to search for information about "Repair" the search words included in table 1 have been used. When searching, all inflections of the search words have been tested in order to exclude missing out sections describing the topic "Repair". /

Detailed information regarding the category repair is not presented in the sustainability reports issued by the studied companies. Common among these reports are the lack of numerical information and comparisons with outcomes from previous years. Therefore, all of the studied companies scores below level 3 and will not be further explained.

The results from the qualitative and the quantitative part regarding all of the studied companies within the category "Repair" are presented below:
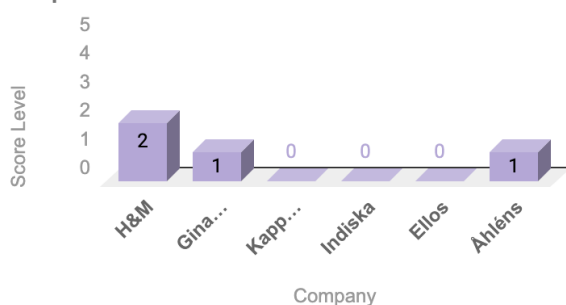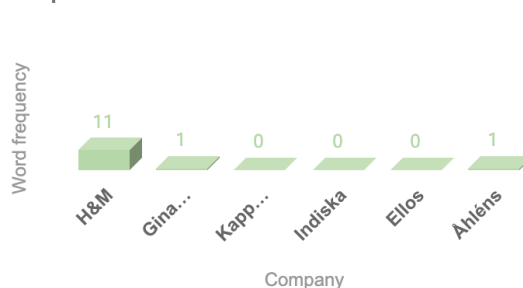
Histogram 6. Repair. The qualitative results are presented to the left and the quantitative to the right.

Half of the investigated companies are not mentioning the category at all. Åhléns and Gina are mentioning the category once and H&M mentions it several times.

Compiled information is presented below, in tables 4 and 5. These tables are created in order to provide an overview of the qualitative and quantitative results. The abbreviations presented in table 3 represents the different head-categories included in table 4 and 5.

PQ	P&T:EF	P&T:R	Rental	Repair	Recycle
Product Quality	Production & Transportation: Environmental footprint	Production & Transportation: Resources	Rental	Repair	Recycle

Table 3, Abbreviations of head-categories.

Company	PQ	P&T:EF	P&T:R	Rental	Repair	Recycle	TOTAL
H&M	1	5	5	2	2	5	20
Gina Tricot	1	3	3	0	1	3	11
KappAhl	2	4	5	0	0	3	14
Indiska	2	3	2	0	0	2	9
Ellos	2	5	5	0	0	3	15
Åhléns	2	4	4	2	1	3	16
TOTAL	10	24	24	4	4	19	

Table 4, Qualitative findings. Score level.

As stated in table 4, H&M scores the highest levels in total, followed by Åhléns and Ellos. "Resources" and "Environmental footprint" are the two categories in which the companies score the highest levels in total, followed by "Recycle". Since, some of the companies did not mentioned the search words within the category "Rental" and "Repair", they score level 0 in these categories.

Company	PQ	P&T:EF	P&T:R	Rental	Repair	Recycle	TOTAL
H&M	13	56	46	7	11	80	213
Gina Tricot	24	28	26	0	1	26	105
KappAhl	13	42	24	0	0	34	113
Indiska	9	6	13	0	0	13	41
Ellos	16	60	16	0	0	37	129
Åhléns	5	24	28	2	1	25	85
TOTAL	80	216	153	9	13	215	

Table 5, Quantitative findings. Word frequency.

As presented in table 5 H&M, in most cases, most frequently mentioned the categories. Thereafter Ellos and KappAhl. "Repair" and "Rental" are the categories in which some companies never mentioned the search word. H&M and Åhléns mentioned every category, while the remaining companies missed out on at least one category. In total "Production & Transportation: Environmental footprint", is the category with the highest word frequency, followed by the category "Recycle" and "Production & Transportation: Resources".

4.4 Findings from customized survey about consumer perception

/ A customized survey was created with the aim of gaining understanding on consumer perception regarding the information presented in each sustainability report issued by the studied companies. The findings from this survey are presented in both text and pie charts. /

The questions asked in the customized survey are presented in the headlines for each head-category below. The respondents were asked to answer according to their individual belief and impression. The answers were automatically put together in histograms, by Google form, where the histograms represent one head-category each. The results from the survey is presented in six different pie charts, representing each head-category. In the pie charts, there are 8 different parts which constitutes one answer alternative each. The part that was largest, is separated from the remainder

of the chart to clarify. Furthermore, the division of answers within the different categories are presented. The focus in these results is on the head-categories and the consumer perception towards the aspects related to these categories. Histograms with all data from the customized survey can be found in appendix 2.

		Disagree	2	3	Partly agree	5	6	Fully agree	No Opinion	

Table 6. The answer alternatives in the survey.

Table 6 illustrates the answer that the respondents could choose when answering the customized survey. The numbers in the table represent an opinion in which the respondent was in between either disagree and partly agree, or partly agree and fully agree.

In the following section, the questions asked in the customized survey are presented, together with pie charts compiling the information regarding the outcome of the respondent's choice of answer.

1. *Rental: The company offers rental services of clothes.*

Rental

- Disagree: 41%
- 2: 2%
- 3: 1%
- Partly agree: 2%
- 5: 1%
- 6: 0%
- Fully agree: 4%
- No opinion: 51%
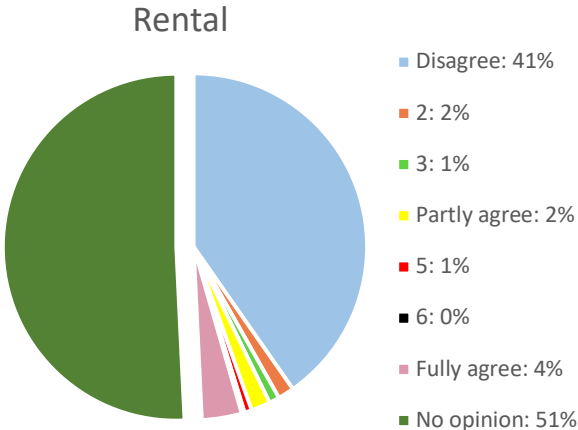
Pie Chart 1. Representing the answers in the category "Rental".

In this question, the majority of the respondents answered that they lacked an opinion.

2. *Repair: The company offers repair services of my clothes if I would like to.*

Repair

- Disagree: 41%
- 2: 3%
- 3: 1%
- Partly agree: 4%
- 5: 1%
- 6: 2%
- Fully agree: 2%
- No opinion: 46%
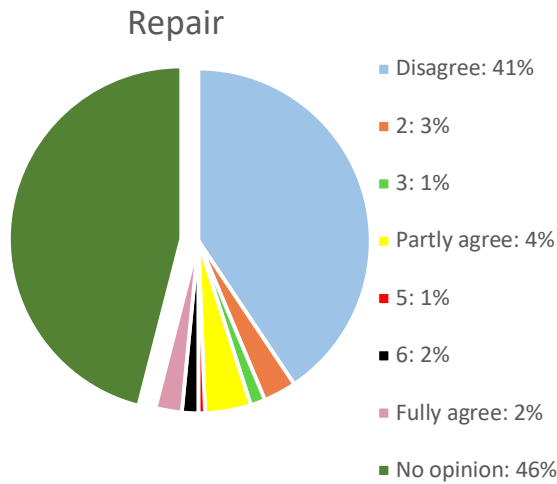
Pie Chart 2. Representing the answers in the category "Repair"

Most people had no idea or did not agree with this question. The majority answered that they had no opinion, secondly that they did not agree.

3. *Product quality: The company offers products of good quality and can therefore be used during a longer time without getting damaged.*

Product quality

- Disagree: 12%
- 2: 14%
- 3: 12%
- Partly agree: 25%
- 5: 7%
- 6: 5%
- Fully agree: 4%
- No opinion: 21%
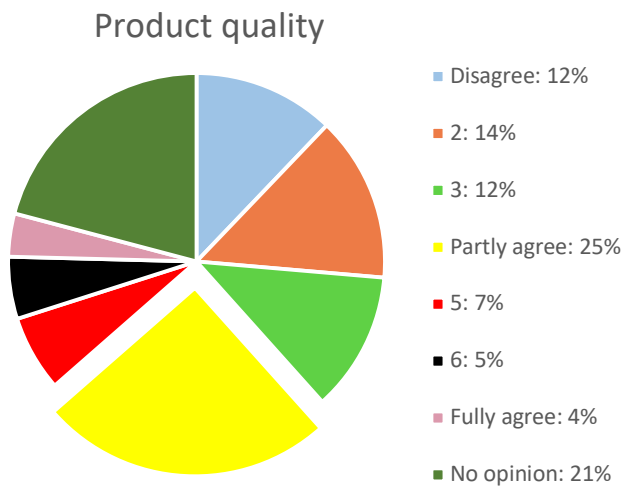
Pie Chart 3. Representing the answers in the category Product quality.

In this question, most people did partly agree within the question. Followed by the option, "no opinion".

4. *Production & Transportation, Environmental Footprint: The company manage waste from the product well and work to reduce emissions.*

Production & Transportation:
Environmental footprint

- Disagree: 5%
- 2: 5%
- 3: 6%
- Partly agree: 8%
- 5: 4%
- 6: 1%
- Fully agree: 4%
- No opinion: 67%
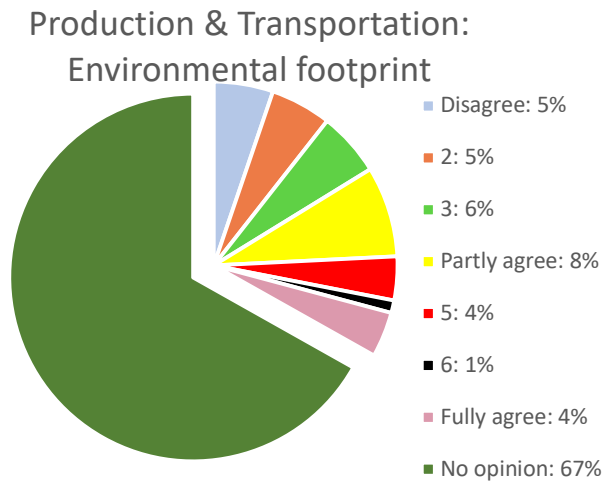
Pie Chart 4.   Representing the answers in the category "Production & Transportation: Environmental footprint".

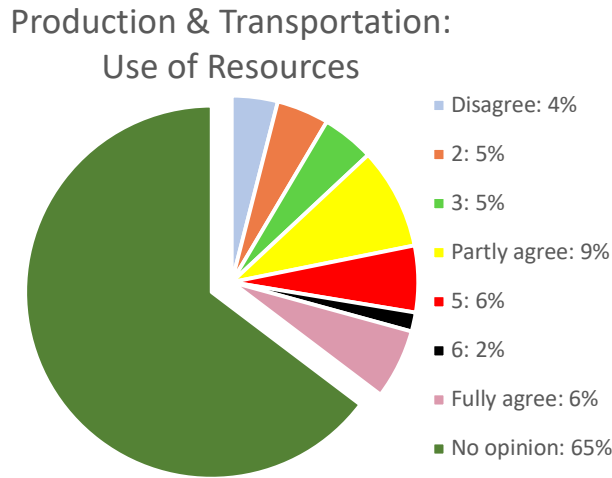The majority of the respondents answered that they lacked opinion regarding the question.

5. *Recycle: The Company is actively working to improve recycling and recycled products.*

Recycle

- Disagree: 4%
- 2: 4%
- 3: 6%
- Partly agree: 11%
- 5: 6%
- 6: 5%
- Fully agree: 6%
- No opinion: 53%
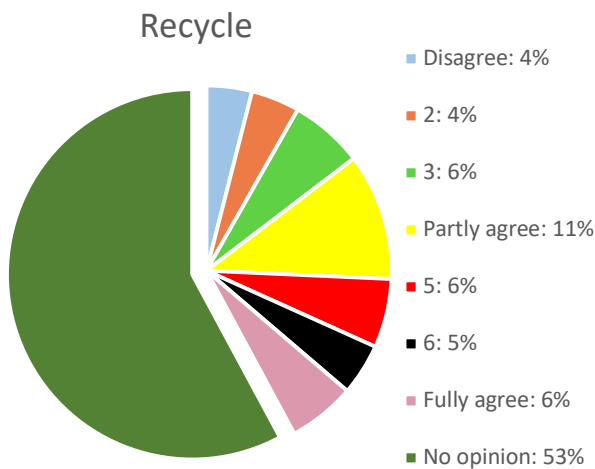
Pie Chart 5. Representing the answers in the category "Recycle".

The majority of the respondents answered that they did not have an opinion regarding this question.
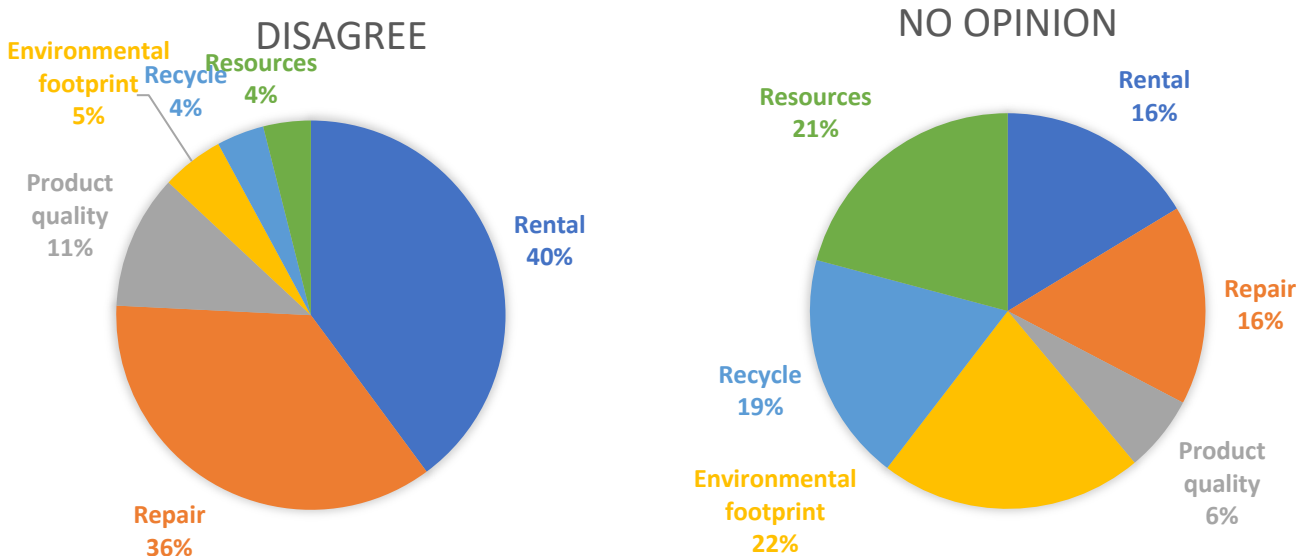
6. *Production & Transportation, Resources: The company works actively to achieve a sustainable production through less usage of resource.*

Production & Transportation:
Use of Resources

- Disagree: 4%
- 2: 5%
- 3: 5%
- Partly agree: 9%
- 5: 6%
- 6: 2%
- Fully agree: 6%
- No opinion: 65%

Pie Chart 6. Representing the answers in the category "Production & Transportation: Resources".

In this question, the majority of the respondents answered that they did not have an opinion about the question.

From the pie charts describing the consumers perceptions concerning each question related to the categories, several findings have been made. The alternative that was answered the most are "Disagree" and "No opinion". Furthermore, the distribution in percentage between the different categories, that was represented by the questions, are compiled in the pie charts below. The questions related to "Production and transportation" within both "Environmental footprint" and "Resources", are the ones where the majority of the customers lack an opinion. Furthermore, the questions related to "Repair" and "Rental" are the ones where the majority of the customers disagrees.

DISAGREE

- Environmental footprint 5%
- Recycle 4%
- Resources 4%
- Product quality 11%
- Rental 40%
- Repair 36%

NO OPINION

- Resources 21%
- Rental 16%
- Repair 16%
- Product quality 6%
- Environmental footprint 22%
- Recycle 19%

Pie Chart 7. Representing the distribution in percentage between each category in which the answer alternative "Disagree" or "No opinion" was chosen.

5. Analysis & Discussion

In this chapter, the empirical findings are discussed and explained together with the information presented in the literature discussion chapter. The analysis is divided in two different sections according to the research questions. The analysis is conducted in accordance with the illustrated model in the method chapter (see figure 2).

Section 1:

- *How are consumer preferences regarding environmental sustainability issues reflected in the sustainability reports issued by companies operating in the Swedish fast fashion industry? Can any patterns be identified?*

Similarities between the studied companies regarding their response to consumer preferences towards environmental sustainability issues can be distinguished from the content analysis. The studied companies tend to provide information concerning the majority of the different aspects of the environmental sustainability issues demanded by the customers. However, the amount of information provided differs between the different areas and between the different companies included in this thesis. Furthermore, deviations have occurred regarding the two areas "Rental" and "Repair", in which no information, or only to a certain degree, has been provided by the companies studied in this thesis.

The fact that the companies studied in this thesis respond to the majority of the areas demanded by the customers shows their attentiveness towards the market in which they operate. This finding contradicts the arguments stated by Park & Kim (2016), regarding the discrepancy between customers' and companies' perception of what it means to be sustainable. Instead, this thesis indicates that companies realizes the importance of listening to the customer demand, and that they fight to retain their customers and to defend their market position in the fast fashion industry. In addition, the legitimacy theory provides further explanation on how the responsiveness to the market creates a competitive advantage against other companies operating in the same industry (Deegan, 2002). This, since according to Deegan (2002), it is crucial for companies to adapt to the environmental standards and societal norms in order to be considered as acting in the correct way. Thus, creating legitimacy is a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining a strong relationship and brand loyalty with the customers. The fact that the consumers' demand on environmental sustainability issues are reflected in the sustainability reports may indicate that the companies are transparent in accordance with what Fernandez-Feijoo et al,. (2013) states about the improving effect by societal pressure.

When searching for patterns between consumer preferences and the information provided in each of the studied companies' sustainability reports, differences between the qualitative and the quantitative findings can be found. Within the area concerning "Product Quality" Gina Tricot had the highest word frequency in the quantitative part, but together with H&M, received the lowest score in the qualitative part. This finding could indicate that Gina Tricot are aware and listens to the market's prevailing consumer demand. However, the company do not turn their words into action, which in turn is damaging for the creation of legitimacy towards the customers. In addition, the same tendency that the size of given space in the reports for a specific subject does not always match the degree of efforts spent on that area, this is proven by the two companies Åhléns and Indiska. These two companies had the lowest word frequency at the same time as they reached the highest score level, even if it was relatively low compared to the remaining companies.

These findings are in line with the studies from Frostenson et al,. (2011), concerning the non-correlated fact of increase in sustainability communication and actual actions taken by companies. Moreover, further explanation regarding differences in the findings from the qualitative and the quantitative part can be established from the same authors who argues that a wider communication can be an attempt to protect the core business from external pressure when adapting to societal norms. Therefore, the rapid increase in consumer demand for transparency regarding sustainability work might affect the published information. However, it does not have the same effect on the actual outcome which describes the observed discrepancy between the findings from the qualitative and the quantitative parts (Frostenson et al,. 2011).

Within the area "Recycle", H&M stands out with the highest word frequency, while the other companies held a lower and more equal frequency in terms of mentioned search words. Furthermore, this finding is reflected in the score level, as well, within this category reached by each company in the qualitative part. Generally, "Recycle" is the area with the highest total word frequency among all the studied companies compared to the other categories. This indicates that the studied companies keep track of the consumer demand and are aware of the image media portrays of the fast fashion industry. As stated in Veckans Affärer (2019), the fast fashion industry is identified by a "wear and tear" type of culture, therefore, it is in the companies' best interest to provide information, through communication channels as sustainability reports, regarding the strategies towards changing the image of this industry. Since recycling, in all its forms, can be motivated as the opposite to "wear and tear", it is the most suitable action to use in order to reduce the prevailing negative image of the industry. Further explanation can be given by using the two interconnected theories; stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory. Whereas, the previous one explains different stakeholder groups' influence and power on companies and the latter one emphasizes the importance of creating trustworthiness through actions (Clarkson, 1995) (Deegan, 2002). In addition, Fernandez-Feiijoo et al,. (2013) findings about societal pressure on transparency within the sustainability reporting, contributes to the understanding of why companies put effort into actions demanded by external parties, although the actions are non-profit making. As stated in their paper, societal pressure improves the quality of transparency in sustainability reports (Fernandez-Feiijoo et al,. 2013). Therefore, high word frequency and high score level proves that the aspects demanded by the consumers gives effects on the actions taken by companies.

Regarding the area of "Production and Transportation" connected to the environmental footprint there is a difference in frequency between the different studied companies in this thesis. Within this area, Ellos and H&M are the two companies receiving the highest word frequency in the quantitative part, followed by KappAhl. According to the CONI-model, this finding indicates that the category "Production and Transportation" connected to environmental footprint can be assumed as important by the company behind the issued report. (Beck et al,. 2010). This finding also reflects the score level reached by the same companies in the qualitative part. Which can be considered as evidence for the arguments stated by Beck et al,. (2010), since a high score level can be regarded as an indication of actual actions taken by the issuing company. This since detailed information in both writing and numbers, together with comparisons from previous years are provided.

In the remaining part of "Production and Transportation", i.e. the category referring to the usage of "resources", H&M is the company mentioning this search word the greatest amount of times. However, Ellos have decreased the word frequency due to barley mentioned the search word; "water". Thus, Gina Tricot and Åhléns catches up, due to the high frequency in both search words included in this area, i.e. "water" and "energy". Furthermore, KappAhl, Ellos and H&M are the companies reaching the highest score level in the qualitative part within this area. This finding

indicates that although the word frequency of a certain search word is low, the information given can still be detailed and contribute to the transparency demanded by the consumers, such as the case for Ellos. This finding is contesting Beck's et al,. (2010) theories about word frequency. The finding does not necessarily contradict Becks et al.'s theory, however, this indicates that an area considered as non-important, due its poor space within the report, can in practice be an area given a lot of effort to achieve sustainability.

Further explanation of the findings from the section regarding patterns between the information given in the sustainability reports and the consumer preferences, can be given by Vehmas et al,. (2018) clarification of the current sustainability trends. In the paper, the authors state that consumers have started to demand more concrete information concerning the environmental effects caused by the fashion industry (Vehmas et al,. 2018). This, once again, indicates that the consumers put pressure on companies to provide information and be transparent in certain areas concerning their sustainability work.

In summary, it can be stated that the studied companies operating within the Swedish fast fashion industry tend to provide information on the areas demanded by their customers. Furthermore, the two areas, "Rental" and "Repair", in which the information flow is poor applies to all investigated companies. However, there are major differences in the amount of information provided about the different areas between the studied companies. These findings can be explained by various theories and previous research. For instance, the fact that all of the studied companies use the Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI) standards as a framework for their sustainability reports can explain why the content included in the reports issued by the selected companies tend to resemble each other (GRI, 2020). On the other hand, the use of the GRI standards is voluntarily and the users themselves choose which standards to use when compiling their reports (GRI, 2020). Therefore, although they all clarify that GRI has been used as framework, the content included in the different reports may differ between the companies (GRI, 2020). Furthermore, institutional forces impact the actions taken by the studied companies since they are operating within the same industry and are affected by the same external pressure and legal constraints. The three different isomorphisms consisting of the imitating-, coercive- and normative forces, included in the institutional theory, provides valuable insights to this observation (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009). Moreover, the insights of this theory are highly relevant when trying to gain an understanding of the prevailing patterns in the sustainability reporting within the fast fashion industry. The institutional theory argues that companies operating in the same industry tend to become more homogeneous as they achieve growth (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). More particularly the imitating force implies the fact that companies operative within the same industry tend to imitate each other as the achieves growth. Whereas the coercive and normative forces, implies that the prevailing laws and norms within the market and the borders of the country, in which the company operates, effects how these companies design and emphasize the information in their sustainability reports (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009).

Section 2:

- *How do consumers perceive the information included in the sustainability reports issued by these companies?*

From the customized survey on consumer perception regarding environmental sustainability, certain discrepancy can be found between the content of the sustainability reports issued by the companies and the consumers' actual perception about it. For most questions, the majority of the respondents answered that they lacked an opinion. This may reflect the irrational attribute of the consumers when making high demand for sustainability actions, but do not allow the published information to affect their decision making in the end. This hypothesis is, in one way, supported by the findings of Parks' & Kims' (2016) study in which they point out a lack of understanding about the discrepancy between consumers' perception regarding fashion company's sustainability work and the consumers' actual behavior towards these companies. Furthermore, McNeill and Moore (2015), argues that the desire for the latest fashion can make, even the most sustainability aware consumer, to engage in consumption of these fast fashion products. However, another explanation to the phenomenon could be that the companies either fail to reach out with their information to their customers or fails to achieve enough credibility to create legitimacy. The failure of creating legitimacy is, in turn, impacting the perception the customers have towards these companies.

Reaching a high score level in the qualitative part of the CONI-model indicates that a high information quality is reached (Beck et al., 2010). For the reader, this enables possibilities to gain a holistic view of the prevailing situation. Thus, a company's action can be put into perspective by comparing outcomes between different years and with other companies. Therefore, achieving high information quality, i.e. reaching a high score level, could be assumed to match to the creation of legitimacy. Yet, since Clarkson (1995) states that by showing awareness towards the prevailing consumer preferences, strong relationships with the customers will be created. However, the findings from the customized survey on consumer perception points to a contradicting statement.

Finally, a comparison of the received answers from the mentioned survey and the qualitative score levels reached by each company, provides interesting findings. The survey questions asked related to the three areas that received the highest total score in the qualitative part are the same questions that received the highest proportion of the answer alternative "no opinion". Whereas the survey questions related to the areas which received the lowest total score level in the qualitative part, are the questions in which the respondent had an opinion. This may indicate that the companies have failed in their attempts to create legitimacy, causing a non-trustworthy image regarding the information (Deegan, 2002). Which, according to this finding, can have an on the impact the consumer perception.

6. Conclusion and Further research

This final chapter summarizes the discussion and answers the two research questions in this thesis. In addition, the contribution of the thesis as well as recommendations for further studies are presented.

According to the results found in the qualitative and the quantitative parts of the analysis method, the studied companies operating within the Swedish fast fashion industry are, in most aspects, reporting in line with the prevailing consumer preferences regarding environmental sustainability issues. Therefore, these companies can be considered paying attention to the consumer preferences. This may be due to the company's ambition to act in accordance with society's norms and expectations and through that attain legitimacy. Moreover, the stakeholder- and societal pressure towards environmental sustainability compel the companies studied in this thesis to adapt in order to retain their customers and defend their market shares. Nonetheless, conforming to the prevailing sustainability trends are crucial to possess the long-term competitive advantages needed to survive in an already highly competitive industry. As previous research has implied, the increased interest in sustainable consumption has created a higher demand for information regarding the environmental effects caused by the companies in fashion industry. In turn, the institutional forces may be perceived as more powerful by the companies, causing increased motivation towards accomplishing sustainable development.

The fact that the investigated companies target the same customer segment and is affected by the same societal and institutional pressure, can explain why the content of the reports covers the same areas. Thus, the decision of reporting with the global reporting initiative as framework effects the design of the reports, and therefore also the similarity them in between. However, since the use of the different standards included in the global reporting initiative framework is not mandatory, individual customization is possible. This may be the explanation for why differences occur regarding the extent of information provided by each company. However, the fact that the companies mentions the majority of the customers' demanded areas is not always reflected in the qualitative score levels, i.e. the quality of the sustainability information provided by the same companies. Furthermore, this may indicate that the companies use their sustainability reports to show awareness, and answer to societal pressure, however the actual reason is to protect the actions taken in the core business. With the aim of achieving legitimacy. Hence, there is an industry specific characteristic regarding which preferences to prefer when deciding what content to include in the reports. Yet, which to exclude or at least provide less room for. Similar decisions about the included content may be impacted by the imitating forces, making companies imitate successful competitors to achieve legitimacy.

Regarding patterns between consumer preferences and the information provided by the studied companies further conclusions can be made. Firstly, based on word frequency and score level obtained, a clear division of the categories have been observed. The categories, i.e. the areas concerning "Production and Transportation related to the usage of resources", "Production and Transportation related to environmental footprint" and "Recycle" are the ones achieves the highest total disclosure quality and word frequency. Furthermore, the three remaining categories have in total achieved a much lower word frequency and reached lower score level. The previous mentioned finding is useful as starting point when explaining how consumers perceive the information provided in the sustainability reports issued by the investigated companies. The consumer perceptions towards the different companies tend to resemble each other. However, the word frequency, reached score level and consumer perception does not match. In contrary, the three

categories that distinguished the best in both disclosure quality and word frequency, where the categories in which the customers expressed themselves lacking an opinion. Furthermore, the three remaining categories where the categories in which the customers had an opinion, although sometimes negative. This may indicate that the required level of legitimacy has not been reached, since the consumers have not perceived the company's awareness needed to enhance a strong relationship to the company. However, this is an interesting finding but unfortunately cannot be certainly determined due to the limited scope of this thesis.

6.1 The contributions of the thesis

This thesis contributes to an understanding on how consumer preferences are reflected in the information provided in sustainability reports issued from companies in the Swedish fast fashion industry. Additionally, it contributes to explain in what extent different environmental issues demanded by customers are included in the reports. Finally, it points out the discrepancy between the information provided in the sustainability reports issued by the companies operating within the Swedish fast fashion industry and the consumer perception of this information.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings of this thesis, new research areas have been opened to further research. Furthermore, it would be of interest to investigate the reason why the observed discrepancy between consumer perception and the information provided in the sustainability reports occurs. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate to what extent the information included in the issued sustainability reports reaches the customers, either through media or other information channels.

This thesis investigates a relatively small number of companies and it would be of interest to investigate a larger sample of companies, in order to receive a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, this would increase the ability to make general conclusions of the industry and its sustainability reporting. In addition, a deeper more qualitative study would be needed in order to increase the significance of the collected data to draw any deeper conclusion about consumer perceptions.

Finally, it would be of interest to implement a similar study in a foreign country in order to investigate whether the consumer preferences, reporting and consumer perceptions resemble or differs from the situation at the Swedish market.

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Appendix 1

Head-Categories	Definition
Rental	A services offered by the company, where the customer is able to rent och hire clothes in some extent
Repair	A service offered by the company, where the customer is able to get their damaged clothes repaired. This inlcudes sew-services.
Quality	Quality refers to the quality within products the company offer. This also inclues material used when producing clothes, to increase the quality
Production & Transportation: Environmental Footprint	Environmental footprint refers to residues that often comes along with production and transport, such as waste and emission. The word is counted in the CONI-model if it is mentioned in the described coherence.
Production & Transportation: Resources	Use of resourses refers to the usage of consumables, such as water of energy. The word is counted in the CONI-model if it is mentioned in the described coherence.
Recycle	Recyle refers to the coherency where raw materials or products are used again, thus recycled. This category also refers to when material is collected in store, where customers can leave their used clothes for recycling.

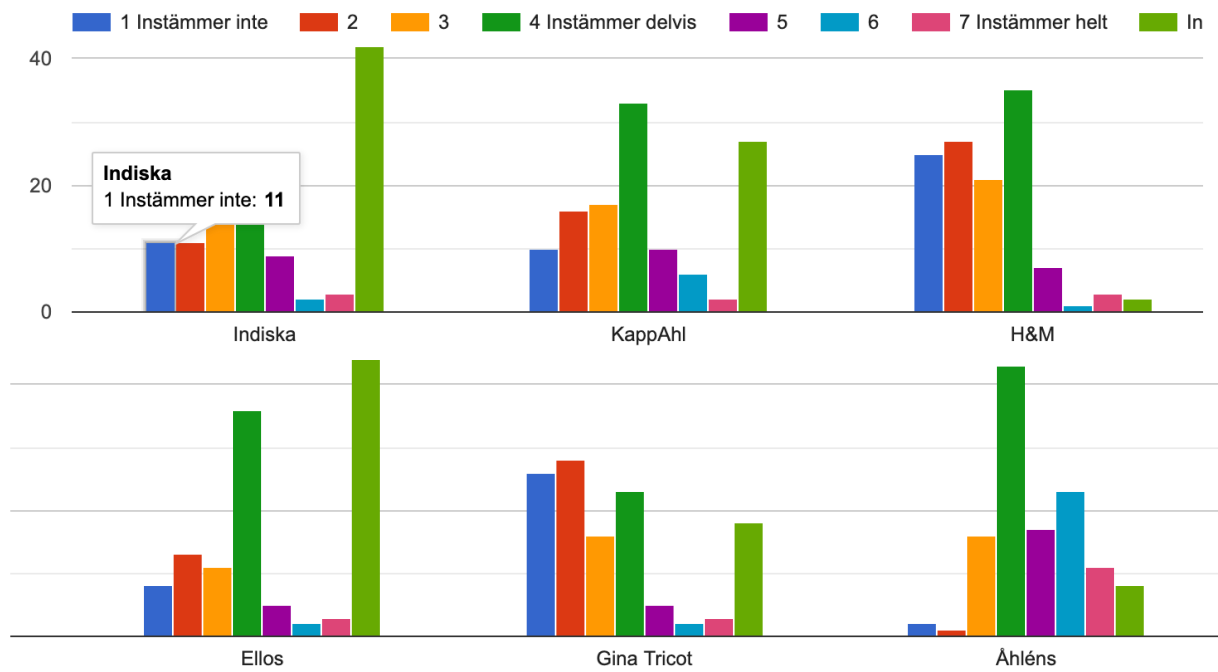# Appendix 2

Question 1: Rental
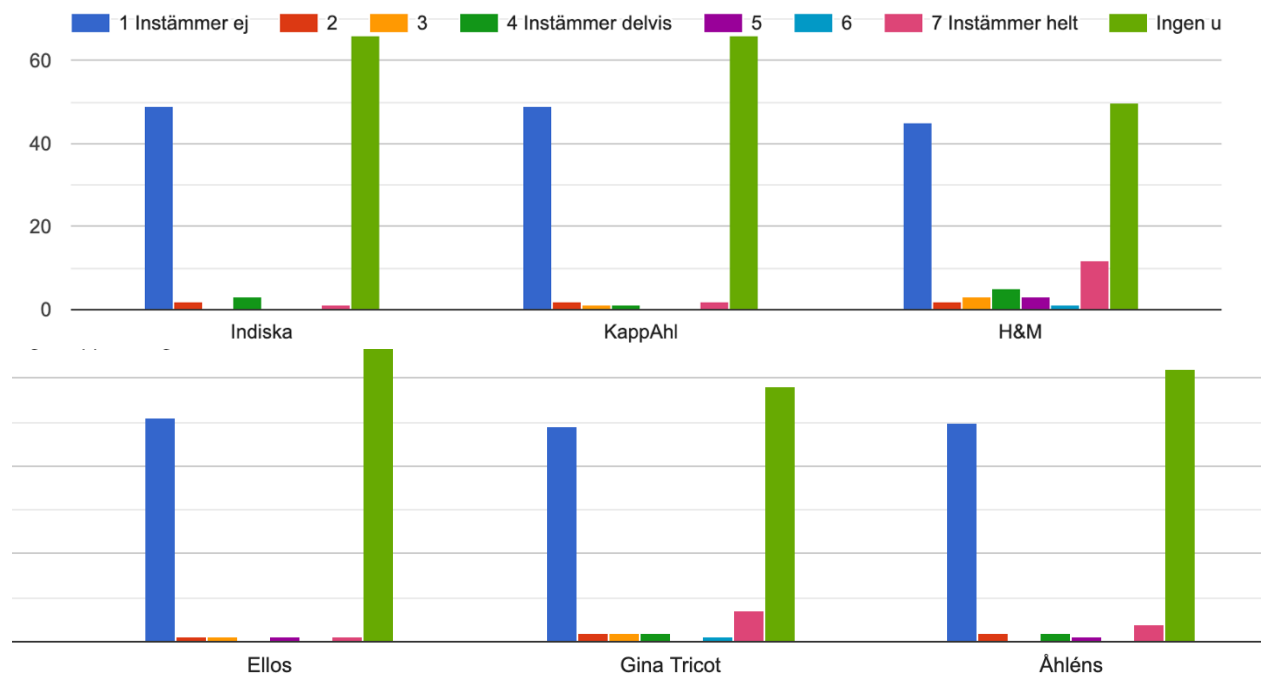
Question 2: Repair
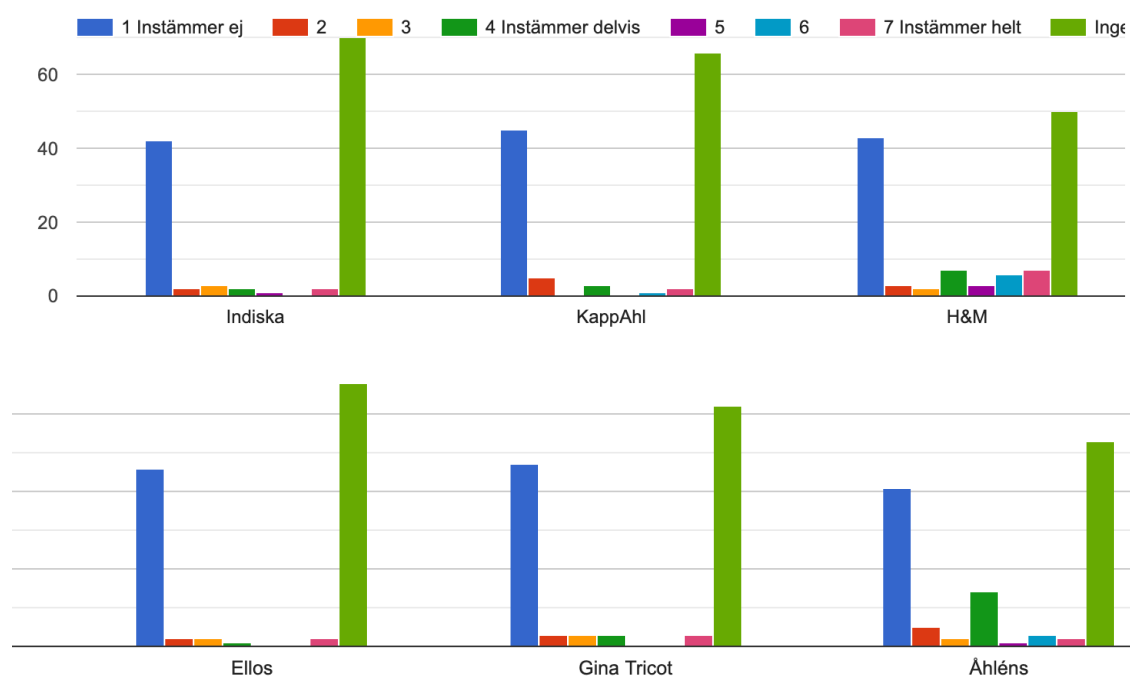
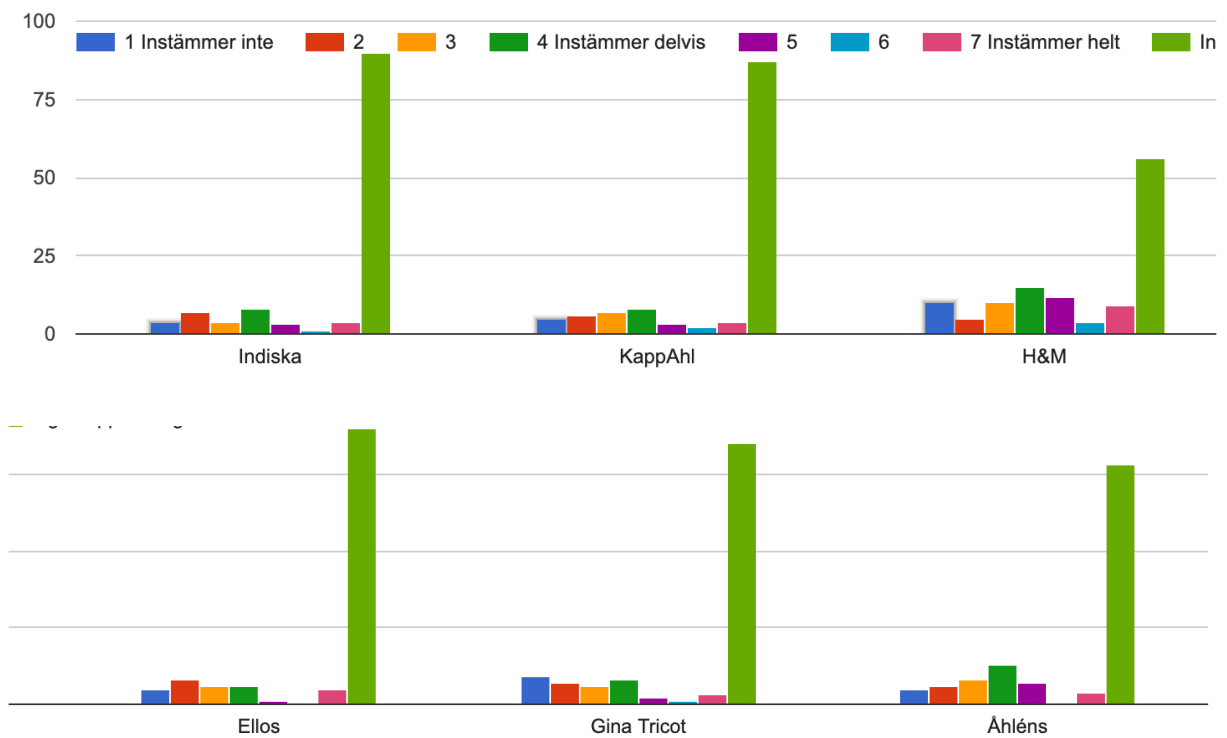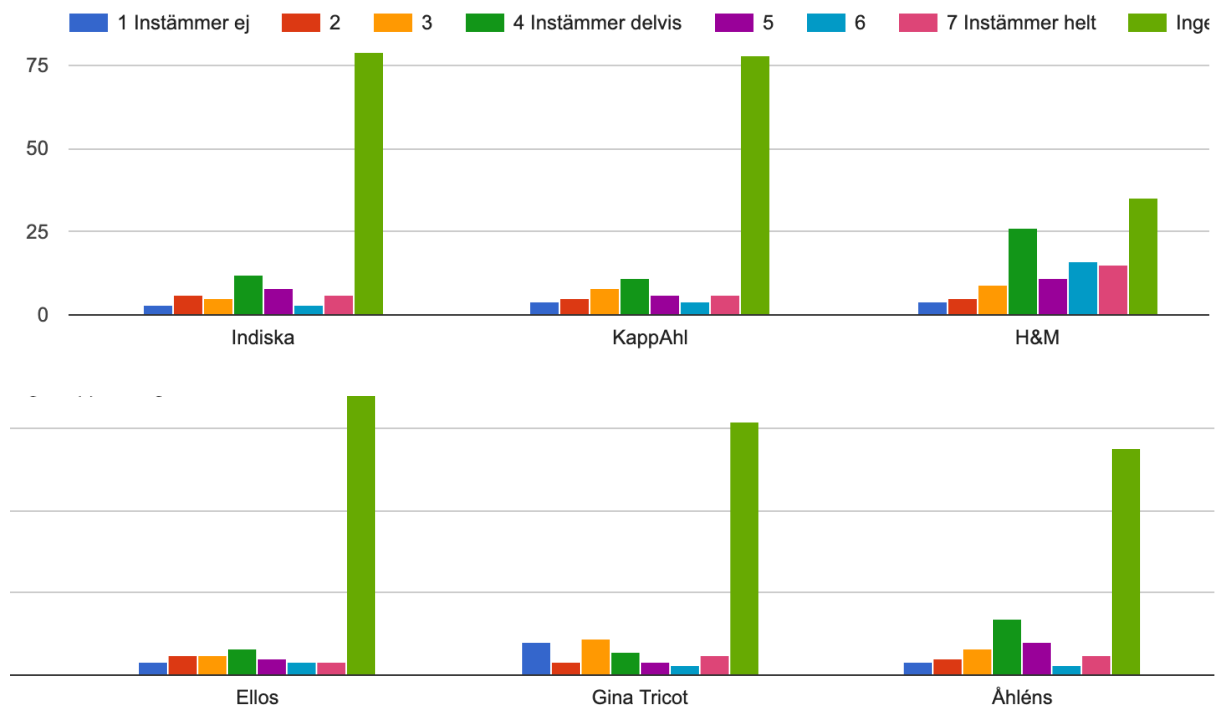## Question 3: Product quality

Question 4: Production & Transportation: Environmental Footprint

Question 5: Recycle

Question 6: Production & Transportation: Resources