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Changing Consumers' Minds

*Overcoming the Fashion Industry's Fundamental Challenge
Towards a Sustainable Future*

Master Thesis | MSc Sustainable Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Although sustainable fashion companies aiming to disrupt their industry exist, consumers still fail to make sustainable fashion choices. Yet, for these companies' vision to succeed, they need sufficient consumer support – else, the overarching fashion industry has little incentive to implement more sustainable practices in the future.

Therefore, the question arises which barriers sustainable fashion companies face when trying to influence consumers towards sustainable consumption – and how they try to overcome these barriers? To answer these questions, this study draws on the experience of six sustainable fashion companies located in Europe with semi-structured interviews.

Overall, sustainable fashion companies still lack the necessary resources to influence a wide range of unconscious consumers. Nevertheless, sustainable fashion companies contribute to a behavioral change in consumers who are partially aware already. Eventually, the question remains how effective sustainable fashion companies' actions are in making the fashion industry and consumers' choices environmentally friendly in the long-term.

“Everything man does creates more harm than good. We have to accept that fact and not delude ourselves into thinking something is sustainable. Then you can try to achieve a situation where you’re causing the least amount of harm possible. That’s the spin we put on it. It’s a never-ending summit. You’re just climbing forever. You’ll never get to the top, but it’s the journey.”

Yvon Chouinard, Founder of Patagonia (Beer, 2019).

INTRODUCTION

More than ever, consumers hold pro-environmental attitudes and even claim to be willing to pay an extra premium for sustainable fashion. However, only a small number does so regularly (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015; Morwitz, Steckel, & Gupta, 2007; Todeschini, Cortimiglia, Callegaro-de-Menezes, & Ghezzi, 2017). Yet, in the face of the climate crisis, the need for sustainable consumption behaviors could not be more urgent: the fashion industry is not only responsible for global emissions that outweigh the carbon footprint of international flights and shipping combined (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) but also for 20 to 35% of microplastic flowing into the ocean (Boucher & Friot, 2017). The fashion industry and consumers' consumption behaviors are, in short, a severe burden for the environment that needs to change fundamentally (United Nations, 2018).

Today, most mass-market products do not meet the standards of sustainable fashion. However, a rising number of sustainable approaches exist that show what the future of a sustainable fashion industry can look like (Goworek, Fisher, Woodward, & Hiller, 2012). Still, striving for sustainable business models alone will not be enough to solve the current situation of overconsumption and overproduction (McNeill & Moore, 2015; United Nations, 2018). Sustainable fashion companies can only have a scalable impact if people realize that their consumption choices have a decisive influence over production practices within fashion that will persist in the future (European Commission, 2019; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015). Therefore, sustainable fashion companies not only need to convince consumers of their products but also need to swiftly become serious competitors to fast fashion companies (European Commission, 2019; Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016). Otherwise, the fashion industry has little incentives to become more sustainable.

In terms of research, consumers' behavior has been subject to literature for decades (i.e., Stephens, 1985) and sustainability research with a focus on the fashion industry has recently addressed consumer behavior as well (i.e., Hiller Connell, 2010; McNeill & Moore, 2015). Also, strategies that companies can pursue to alter consumers' behaviors have been explored to a certain extent (i.e., Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016; Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, & Mair, 2016). What is missing, however, is the understanding of the circumstances sustainable fashion companies face before they can apply such strategies. To claim that sustainable fashion companies need to champion the transition of consumer awareness without exploring the

barriers they face will most likely lead to failed suitable solutions for changing the fashion industry. Moreover, the understanding of why consumers are not displaying sustainable consumption behaviors yet can be improved when the role of sustainable fashion companies is examined. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question:

Which barriers do sustainable fashion companies face when trying to influence consumers towards a more sustainable consumption behavior – and how do they try to overcome these barriers?

For this purpose, six semi-structured interviews with European fashion companies that aim to contribute to a more sustainable industry have been conducted. To link the consumer and company perspective, it is crucial to understand what factors influence consumers' choices in fashion before explaining what companies can do to approach them as effectively as possible (Harris, Roby, & Dibb 2016; McNeill & Moore, 2015). Therefore, this study will discuss the relevant literature on consumers' behaviors first and only later analyze the possibilities that give sustainable fashion companies the chance to make consumers' behaviors more sustainable. Afterward, the methods that are applied for this study will be explained and the results of the interviews will be summarized and explained. Lastly, the implications of this study are discussed before closing with practical recommendations within the fashion industry as well as future research.

THEORY

Understanding Consumers' Behavior in Sustainable Fashion

Consumers' choices are complex and influenced by different, mainly demographic aspects, for example, age, level of education, cultural differences, or gender (Stephens, 1985). Likewise, the motivation and habits of consumers to buy fashion differ individually (Hiller Connell, 2010). In order to understand consumers' behavior regarding sustainable fashion better, the concept of McNeill and Moore (2015) will be the leitmotif throughout this study.

Customer Categories

McNeill and Moore (2015) divided fashion consumers into three categories: the 'self-consumer', 'social consumer', and 'sacrifice consumer'. Self-consumers see fashion as a way

to express their identity and use often-changing trends for this purpose (McNeill & Moore, 2015). They pay little concern to environmental or social issues (Birtwistle & Moore, 2006) and consequently do not consider sustainability when it comes to fashion choices. Because they prioritize style and price over environmental, social, or ethical concerns, self-consumers are unlikely to be persuaded by marketers for sustainable fashion (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Social-consumers however, have a certain awareness of sustainability-related issues in fashion already. Still, this awareness has not translated into changed purchasing behaviors yet (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015; Todeschini et al., 2017). Over the past decades, research has explored several explanations for this deviation of mindset and actions, also known as the Attitude-Behavior-Gap (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016; Hiller Connell, 2010; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Stephens, 1985). For example, consumers tend to have the misconception that sustainable fashion is not widely available (Hiller Connell, 2010). Also, Greenwashing incidences lead to a lack of consumers' confidence in sustainable fashion options (McNeill & Moore, 2015). To bridge this Attitude-Behavior-Gap, social-consumers can be targeted through opinion leaders, for instance so-called 'influencers' or celebrities, as they are concerned with how they are perceived by their peers (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Overall, social-consumers are the likeliest to improve their consumption choices to more sustainable ones (Hiller Connell, 2010; McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Lastly, sacrifice-consumers are the most alert group regarding environmental and social topics in sustainable fashion. They not only hold a negative attitude against fast fashion but also refuse to purchase products from such companies (Kozinets & Handelsman, 2014; McNeill & Moore, 2015). Because sacrifice-consumers are reluctant to buy impulsively or follow the seasons of fashion, they are not easily influenced by marketing approaches of sustainable fashion companies (McNeill & Moore, 2015). However, sacrifice-consumers' trust can be gained by disclosing extensive information or external audit reports about the companies' production, because they are "*active information searchers*" (McNeill & Moore, 2015: 10). Nevertheless, the tension between wanting to look fashionable and simultaneously reducing consumption overall remains for sacrifice-consumers (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Internal and External Influence

Apart from McNeill and Moore's (2015) concept, other factors exist that make consumers reluctant to buy sustainable fashion. For instance, Hiller Connell (2010) distinguishes between

internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to consumers themselves, whereas external factors are independent of the beliefs held by consumers (Hiller Connell, 2010).

Internal factors are, amongst others, the desire to use fashion as a way to express one's identity within the bounds of social norms (Max-Neef, 1992; Murray, 2002), or limited knowledge about the environmental impact to produce and consume fashion (Hiller Connell, 2010; Kim & Damhorst, 1998; Stephens, 1985). Further, a long-held perception that sustainable fashion is unfashionable (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009; Tomolillo & Shaw, 2003), or the perceived time and effort associated with sustainable fashion, can impede sustainable fashion choices (Ellen, 1994; Lipsey, 1977).

External factors, on the other hand, include consumers' limited financial resources (Hiller Connell, 2010) and the thereto related higher price point of sustainable fashion (Hines & Swinker, 1996; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). Additionally, missing infrastructure and retail environments (Hiller Connell, 2010; Lipsey, 1977), or the smaller selection of looks and sizes make sustainable fashion less attractive to consumers (Hiller Connell, 2010). Lastly, social and cultural norms, such as the societal pressure for frequently updated fashion, contribute to unsustainable consumption behaviors (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). In sum, consumers are influenced by diverse personal and economic considerations when it comes to fashion choices (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016).

Influencing Consumers' Behavior – Strategies and Tools

So far, research has explored consumer behavior comprehensively. Building on this, literature also brings certain strategies and tools forward that companies can pursue to influence consumers' considerations more towards sustainability.

Driving Positive Social Change – Deep- and Surface-Level Strategies

One of the main contributions in literature on the topic of driving positive social change comes from Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, and Mair (2016). The authors distinguish between surface-level and deep-level strategies companies can pursue. Surface-level strategies see targets (in this case consumers), as entities that react to altered decision-making contexts. These include, for example, nudges (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), or extrinsic motivators, such as financial incentives, or social pressures (Stephan et al., 2016). Surface-level strategies can be implemented fast and are effective in changing the behavior of many consumers quickly. Their

impact, however, is likely to last only for as long as particular contextual conditions are present (Stephan et al., 2016). Hence, deep-level strategies are needed to create long-lasting changes in behavior that consumers internalize.

When pursuing such deep-level strategies, companies need to engage with consumers closely because the goal is to change their behavior through altered beliefs and attitudes permanently. In order to do so, the intrinsic motivations of consumers need to be addressed (Stephan et al., 2016). Besides, companies need to support consumers to change their behavior by creating empowering opportunity structures (Stephan et al., 2016). For example, some consumers are not motivated to buy sustainable fashion because the products are initially more expensive (cf. Hines & Swinker, 1996; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). Here, companies can show consumers that sustainable products often last longer compared to fast fashion products and are cheaper throughout their lifecycle. To help consumers understand this assertion, companies can display how much money consumers will save by buying one high-quality product instead of multiple low-quality products over the same time. By researching and preparing data consumers do not have access to or the motivation to do so, companies can support consumers to change their beliefs. Additionally, companies can offer a monthly pay-off to lower the resistance of consumers who are used to pay much less for a product at once. Thereby, companies can create empowering opportunity structures as well as address the motivation of consumers (Stephan et al., 2016).

Overall, deep-level strategies are portrayed as creating long-lasting and embedded social impacts that will evolve slowly over time (Stephan et al., 2016). Whereas surface-level strategies are likely to need fewer resources and stay within organizational capabilities, deep-level strategies require more resources and are likely to go beyond the organizational setting (Stephan et al., 2016). Therefore, it depends on the context, aim, and resources of companies which type of strategy they apply (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010; Stephan et al., 2016).

Communication Tools

Regarding concrete communication tools that sustainable fashion companies can use to engage with consumers, previous literature suggests either consumer-focused marketing or behavior change approaches (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016). Consumer-focused marketing is based on commercial marketing techniques that show an understanding of customers' needs, their consumption behavior, and what is influencing them when making consumption choices (Dibb,

Simkin, Pride, & Ferrell, 2012). This approach is, for example, suitable when pursuing surface-level strategies (Stephan et al., 2016).

Behavior change approaches, on the other hand, involve social marketing campaigns that attempt to challenge social norms (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016) and are more aligned with deep-level strategies (Stephan et al., 2016). In this regard, the role of media (Birtwistle & Moore, 2006) and the way of providing information are important (Carrigan & Attala, 2001). Although this has not been addressed by literature yet (except for McNeill & Moore, 2015), the European Commission (2019) has found out during expert interviews that social- and mass media play a key role in enabling the change of consumer behavior towards sustainability. Especially, raising awareness and educating consumers on the social and environmental impact of fashion can be stimulated by media outlets or celebrities, as they are perceived as role models by many consumers (European Commission, 2019; Birtwistle & Moore, 2006).

Barriers of Communication

Literature has provided substantial information about factors influencing consumers' consumption choices, and which strategies companies can pursue when trying to make consumers' choices more sustainable. However, only Harris, Roby, and Dibb (2016) have so far identified barriers that sustainable fashion companies encounter when trying to communicate the benefits of their products to consumers.

First, the authors argue that sustainable fashion companies are unsure about how to describe the complexity of sustainability in fashion to consumers and which communication medium will be the most effective one to use. Second, companies often do not have full transparency in their supply chains and are, therefore, less confident to communicate about them publicly (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016). The third barrier Harris, Roby, and Dibb (2016) identified for sustainable fashion companies is consumer skepticism. In this regard, it is perceived as challenging by sustainable fashion companies to build a trustful relationship with consumers, as consumers are increasingly suspicious about greenwashing practices in the fashion industry (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016).

In sum, the barriers companies face when trying to influence consumers have not been addressed by research sufficiently in comparison to consumer behavior and company strategies. Moreover, the connection between unsustainable consumption choices and the

strategies companies apply to change them has not been made yet. Thus, it seems reasonable to address this gap by analyzing the barriers and resulting strategies from the sustainable fashion companies' point of view.

METHODS

Research Methods

As elaborated earlier, the topic of how companies can influence consumers' consumption behavior towards sustainability is a relatively new field (Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016). Consequently, less-researched information and little data are available, and qualitative research and specific interviews can address topics of interest effectively (Wilcox, Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 1985). Moreover, this study is guided by a research question of open-ended, exploratory nature, which can be approached best by a qualitative method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gephart, 2004).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews belong to inductive approaches, as they provide data that has been theorized from a real-life phenomenon (Yin, 2014). This applies to the case of consumers' unsustainable consumption behavior in fashion, and sustainable fashion companies' barriers to change this behavior. Therefore, semi-structured interviews allow to describe and explore different perceptions within the companies and to understand better how the interviewees interact with these (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). Besides, conducting interviews in a semi-structured way leads to a relatively open conversation with space for further insight (Breidenstein, Hirschauer, Kalthoff, & Nieswand, 2015). As such, this method holds the highest potential to contribute to the understanding of how sustainable fashion companies can drive a more sustainable consumption behavior in consumers.

Data Collection and Procedures

To gain an in-depth insight into the chosen topic, six interviewees were chosen. These individuals founded or work for companies in the fashion industry that aim to include the triple bottom line approach in their business models and comply with the definition of sustainable fashion of Goworek et al. (2012). Thus, the companies consider aspects of social and environmental sustainability in fashion, such as Fair-Trade manufacturing or the use of organically grown raw material (Goworek et al., 2012).

As especially the small and micro-businesses with less than ten employees are recognized as key players within the European sustainable fashion industry (European Commission, 2019), the companies have a comparable firm size. To achieve a similar contextual setting, especially in terms of cultural imprints and sustainability awareness, the companies are located in Germany and the Netherlands and sell exclusively online within Western Europe. To draw on the companies' experiences, qualified experts within the companies were selected with the purposeful sampling method (Bryman, 2008). Thus, only participants who could provide knowledgeable answers with regards to the research question, such as founders, marketing-, or corporate responsibility managers were contacted via email or business platforms such as LinkedIn. More detailed information about the interviewees is displayed in the table below. The data was collected through online video call interviews during April and May 2020. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in a verbatim manner (consult Appendix B to G for the transcription of the interviews).

| Company* | Product | Focus | Country | Position | Interview duration |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jeans | Circular Jeans | Circularity and Leasing. Men & Women. | Netherlands | CSR Manager | 50:29 Minutes |
| Basics | Sustainable Basics – | Low Price Point. Men & Women. | Germany | Founder & Marketing Manager | 39:44 Minutes |
| Capsule | Capsule Collection | Local Production, Made to Order. Women. | Germany | Founder | 01:03:17 Minutes |
| Workwear | Business Dresses | Ethical Production, Local Impact - Women. | Germany | Founder | 55:43 Minutes |
| Online Shop | Curated Online Brand Shop | Selected Mid- to Premium Styles Women. | Germany | Founder | 42:37 Minutes |
| Styleguide | Online Style guide & -shop | Selected Premium styles Women. | Germany | Founder | 01:40:40 Minutes |

*Table 1 Details of Interviewees / *Company name altered to ensure confidentiality.*

The interview questions were derived from the reviewed literature and were structured similarly (consult Appendix A for the interview guide). The interviews began with general introductory questions, such as the companies' mission and operations, and their definition of sustainable consumption behavior in fashion (cf. European Commission, 2019; McNeill & Moore, 2015; United Nations, 2018). Further, the level of consumer awareness and the perceived barriers and risks of consumers in the opinion of the companies were discussed. This

was important to form an idea about how companies see the current state of consumers' consumption behavior and their level of awareness towards sustainability (cf. Birtwistle & Moore, 2006; Hiller Connell, 2010, McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Afterward, the interviewees were posed questions about the different strategies they apply when trying to influence consumers towards more sustainable fashion choices. Here, the focus lied on whether and how companies follow deep- or surface-level strategies (Stephan et al., 2016) and how they translate these into their business and marketing activities. Finally, challenges and possible opportunities encountered related to influencing consumers' consumption behaviors were discussed (cf. Dibb, Simkin, Pride, & Ferrell, 2012; Harris, Roby, & Dibb, 2016; McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, each transcript was coded in Microsoft Excel. To describe themes that were identified related to the research question, descriptive labels were used (Ruona, 2005). This implied three coding phases: open, axial, and selective coding. The first step, open coding, was used to identify relevant topics within the material and made the different data sets more comparable to each other. The second stage, axial coding, made it possible to extract the gained information from their chronological order and to reorganize them in themes. Thereby, new links between previously unrelated data could be created. In the third step - selective coding- results were compressed in core categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the extensive version of the coding results, consult Appendix H to L.

In addition to the interviews, triangulation of sources was used (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). The independent research of the activities and backgrounds of the companies (i.e., their websites, articles, or former interviews), as well as the analysis of secondary data, such as documents provided by the companies themselves, ensured rich, robust, and comprehensive insights (Baškarada, 2014). It was, however, the primary goal to draw on the experiences of the experts in the field directly.

FINDINGS

The main barrier sustainable fashion companies face when influencing consumers towards sustainable consumption choices is that different types of consumers demand different levels of communication. Whereas sustainable fashion companies believe that most consumers are not aware of the importance of sustainability in fashion, others seem to be experts in the field. For example, the Basics founder considers it as "[...] *the ongoing, ongoing challenge every day*" to bring the aspects of sustainable fashion across to different people. Thus, influencing the less aware consumers while satisfying the well-informed ones is perceived as difficult from sustainable fashion companies when communicating their sustainability approach.

Consequently, sustainable fashion companies target social- and sacrifice consumers instead of self-consumers. This has mainly two reasons: first, talking about sustainability in fashion to social- and sacrifice consumers seem easier for them because these types of consumers are already familiar with the topic. Therefore, the need for education and deep-level strategies that go beyond the sustainable fashion companies' settings is less necessary compared with self-consumers. Second, sustainable fashion companies have limited resources and seem to face a certain misfit of running a sustainable business within an economic system based on growth and fast consumption. Thus, targeting self-consumers effectively exceeds most of the sustainable fashion companies' capabilities. Consequently, a 'one solution fits all' approach for the range of self-, social-, and sacrifice consumers (cf. McNeill & Moore, 2015) is perceived as not effective, nor feasible for the sustainable fashion companies.

All findings that are evaluated in the following are summarized in a process illustration at the end of the findings section (see page 17). It unites the companies' perspectives on the barriers they perceive when interacting with different kinds of consumers as well as the strategies the companies, consequently, follow.

Self-Consumers

Self-consumers are seen as leaving the most room for improving their fashion choices. However, sustainable fashion companies report to face the highest barriers when trying to reach them for multiple reasons.

First, self-consumers prioritize style and price over sustainability aspects in fashion according to all sustainable fashion companies. Because sustainable fashion is still a young field, the companies find that sustainable selections and styles are not yet as wide and diverse as self-consumers are used to. Additionally, sustainable fashion is more expensive compared to fast

fashion. Because self-consumers are perceived as not having the mindset of buying less but better-quality products, it is difficult for sustainable fashion companies to convince them to invest in their higher-priced sustainable clothes. Thus, self-consumers demand is still best met by fast fashion companies.

Second, the companies feel that the infrastructure of sustainable fashion lacks convenience in comparison to fast fashion. For example, the Workwear founder states that *“it requires definitely some ... a little bit of proactiveness to find it, to search for it.”* Also, the companies see that sustainable fashion is not sufficiently present on high streets or in major online stores, because the sustainable fashion companies have fewer resources compared to fast fashion companies. As a consequence, the ways of self-consumers and sustainable fashion companies do not cross often enough, as self-consumers do not find viable sustainable fashion alternatives automatically, nor search for them proactively.

Third, the companies see that fashion is not the most popular topic among sustainability discourses yet. Therefore, self-consumers will probably not be confronted with the topic unless they are intrinsically motivated to learn more about it on their own. This is, however, rather unlikely, because most of the companies perceive a general resistance in self-consumers to change their consumption behavior. For example, the Online Shop founder thinks that *“[...] a lot of humans, in general, don't like to see changes in the way they live.”* Thus, sustainable fashion companies see little chance to convince self-consumers by explaining the benefits of sustainable fashion to them. Attempting to educate them is even seen as counterproductive by some companies, as they are afraid to make self-consumers feel criticized about former unsustainable fashion choices. Therefore, most of the companies do not see themselves in the position to raise awareness towards self-consumers.

Rather, some of the sustainable fashion companies see it as the responsibility of other actors within the fashion industry to address self-consumers. For example, the Style Guide founder states that *“For me, it's a triangle, it's really top-down. We need regulations because often [...] I think a lot of people need to be educated because they simply don't know.”* However, most of the companies acknowledge that individual actions of entities, such as opinion leaders, the government, or fast fashion companies, will also not change the behavior of self-consumers effectively. Consequently, it is argued that an interaction between all key players is necessary to push the fashion industry towards a more sustainable standard.

Social- and Sacrifice Consumer

Most of the sustainable fashion companies face similar barriers when engaging with social- and sacrifice consumers as they do with self-consumers, albeit on a less significant level. Besides, social- and sacrifice consumers need to be approached differently. It is, therefore, perceived as challenging by the sustainable fashion companies to convince social-consumers while fulfilling the expectations of sacrifice-consumers.

Here, sustainable fashion companies face different barriers based on the characteristics of social- and sacrifice consumers. Social-consumers are perceived as equal price and style-driven as self-consumers but see sustainability aspects as an added value. This can also be observed in the feedback the companies receive, as customers mention the comfort and style of clothes often, but less the ethical or environmentally friendly production. Sometimes, however, the companies note that customers comment on the positive impact of the companies' production standards and therefore become returning customers. Nevertheless, the companies doubt that social-consumers would buy products because of ethical or environmental aspects only. In this regard, the Online Shop founder has learned that “[...] *there are very few people who are idealistic enough to buy something that is not in line with how they want to be seen.*” As a result, social-consumers prioritize style and price before sustainability aspects when buying fashion.

Furthermore, the companies agree that the negative impact of fast fashion is a complex topic which also social-consumers are more likely to ignore than confront it. Additionally, most of the companies think that an overwhelming amount of information on sustainable fashion is available, and it is difficult for social-consumers to differentiate trustful sources. As a consequence, many of the companies notice that social-consumers do not place high importance on the details or standards of their production, but rather want to trust the companies in what they are doing.

Besides, some of the sustainable fashion companies face barriers from their convictions when engaging with social-consumers, too. As social-consumers face the decision between fast and sustainable fashion, branding and marketing are essential tools to influence them. However, some of the companies associate marketing with increasing consumption, which stands in conflict with the sustainable mission of their business. For example, the Style Guide founder explains that “[...] *the sustainable world has been afraid of connecting it to branding or marketing for a long time because it's money and that's capitalism. [...] So, I think they are*

also the ones to blame that it's not moving that fast.” Also, the Workwear founder states “[...] *that's what I find really hard because I am in general, not a person who says, you know, buy buy buy and I don't want to.*” For this reason, some of the sustainable fashion companies feel to not be able to promote their products noticeable enough to social-consumers. Consequently, the process of reaching and enthuse social-consumers about sustainable fashion is likely to be slower as it could be.

In contrast to social-consumers, most of the companies notice that sacrifice-consumers see sustainable standards as imperative when consuming fashion. The companies report, however, that the standards for sustainability in the fashion industry are not uniform yet. Therefore, the companies notice that fast fashion companies exploit this void by engaging in greenwashing practices increasingly. Because of this, sacrifice-consumers become more and more skeptical and demand extensive information about sustainable fashion companies’ production. Some of the companies report that it has been especially difficult to gain sacrifice-consumers’ trust when they were still in the early stages of their businesses. For example, the Basics founder recalls *“But when we were smaller, we received a lot of questions, if it's sustainable, etc., does it work [...]. And this really changed. And I think people are now really believing it so to say.”* Thus, if the sustainable fashion companies openly disclose information about their operations and become more professional over time, they can decrease sacrifice-consumers’ skepticism and win them as loyal customers.

Deep-level and Surface-level Strategies

The majority of the sustainable fashion companies face barriers when trying to influence social- and sacrifice-consumers. In order to effectively approach the former and simultaneously satisfy the latter’s’ expectations, many of them pursue surface- as well as deep-level strategies.

Surface-level Strategies

Many of the companies apply surface-level strategies with instant visual impact. For example, all of the companies create modern styles which are more expensive but still affordable to meet social-consumers’ demands. Also, some of the companies try to make their online shops look like regular fashion online shops by not emphasizing sustainability aspects in an obvious manner. Moreover, all companies want to make the decision-making process for consumers as easy as possible by providing a high level of convenience in their online shops. For instance, the Online Shop founder states that “[...] *we invest a lot in tech. So, we're trying to make the platform as convenient as possible.*” Similarly, most of the companies try to overcome the

prejudice that sustainable fashion looks unfashionable or ‘eco’ and want to make it a more appealing alternative for the style-driven social-consumers.

Another tool some of the sustainable fashion companies use is certifications (e.g. Global Organic Textile Standard). Thereby, the companies try to reduce extensive communication about the sustainability standards they meet, for social- and sacrifice consumers alike. For instance, the Basics founder recalls “*What helped is also really, really the certification because a certification is so strong, it really answers most questions for people*”. Besides, some of the companies feel that they benefit from the credibility associated with these certifications and minimize the effort to prove that they do not engage in Greenwashing. Thus, certifications are perceived as a help to gain trust from social- and sacrifice consumers quickly.

Deep-level Strategies

By contrast, deep-level strategies affect mostly the sustainable fashion companies’ way of communication. Principally, all companies try to communicate positively and simply. For example, the Circular CSR Manager thinks that “[...] *it's so overwhelming the information that's out there to be a sustainable consumer, so what we try to do is, yes, empower them, share information, but do so in a simplistic manner.*” Thus, by communicating information about sustainable fashion simply, the companies want to make the topic more approachable and less complicated for social-consumers. In this regard, also the Online Shop founder mentions that “[...] *we're trying to be very positive about everything and not preach it so that people feel more empowered about shopping sustainable fashion rather than you have to do it.*” Thus, by so-called ‘*positive activism*’, many of the companies want to avoid blaming social-consumers’ former choices and give them a mere positive feeling about choosing sustainable fashion.

Accordingly, many of the sustainable fashion companies understand the importance of storytelling when trying to make social-consumers interested in sustainable fashion. For instance, The Online Shop founder thinks that it is a way to give consumers “[...] *the kind of narrative to get excited about it basically.*” Whereas the companies exclusively operate online, many of them experienced that it is easier to provide information about the benefits of sustainable fashion in person. For example, some of the companies had the chance to explain their story, how they achieve a positive impact within the fashion industry, and details about their products to consumers directly at their pop-up stores. The companies feel that through personal dialogue, the sustainability aspects became a convincing argument for social-consumers to favor sustainable fashion over fast fashion products.

Moreover, the companies agree that media cooperation plays an important role when rising awareness towards sustainable fashion. To challenge existing social norms (e.g., the need to update a wardrobe every season or that sustainable fashion is unfashionable), some of the companies partner with opinion leaders, because these individuals have the reach and credibility to target a high number of consumers. According to the companies, ‘influencers’ are perceived as role models for consumers when it comes to a desirable lifestyle. Certain ‘influencers’ also have an educational role because they research and share information about the conditions of the fashion industry. Thus, the sustainable fashion companies notice that influencers support them to gain legitimacy as well as to achieve a desirable status within consumers’ lives.

Last but not least, most of the sustainable fashion companies see a certain level of education as part of their job, too. Whereas some of the companies try to educate consumers directly, others try it more subliminally. For example, the Jeans CSR manager reports that they hold webinars for their customers, whereas the Online Shop founder states that they “[...] *want it to do it a bit more subtle, so we're an online shop, we're not an education platform.*“ Either way, all companies provide facts and figures transparently about sustainable fashion in general or their operations on their websites. On the one hand, the companies want to satisfy sacrifice-consumers who are interested in the details of their production by doing this. On the other hand, the companies aim to provide guidance for social-consumers and empower them to make more sustainable fashion choices in the future.

The findings are summarized in the illustration below.

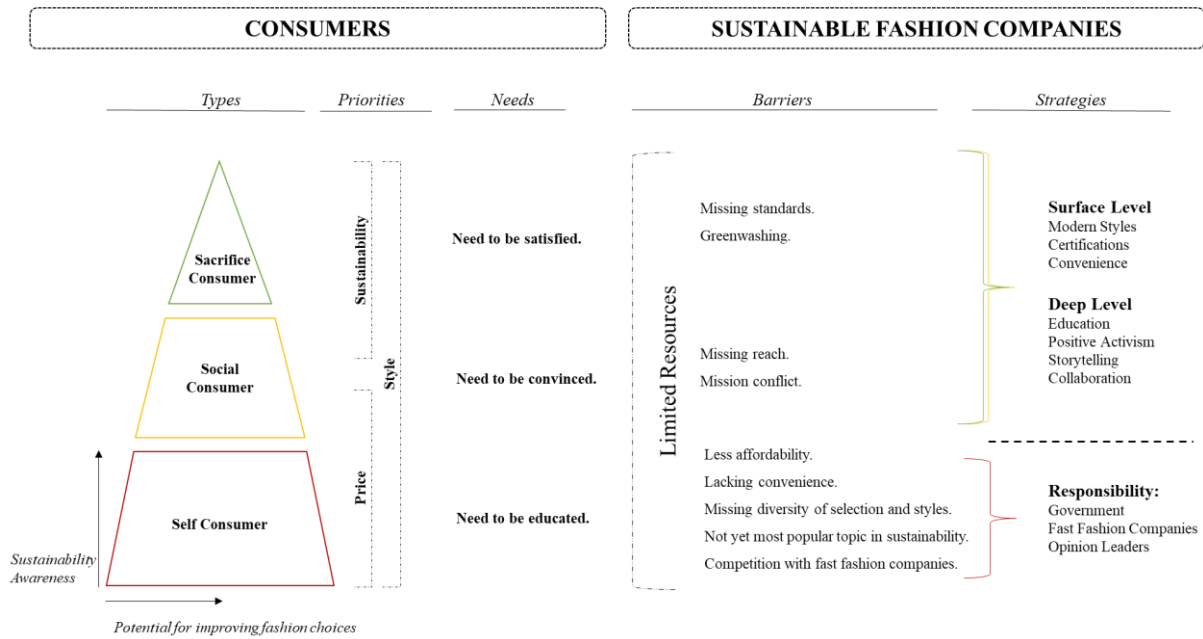


Figure 1 Link between Consumers' Characteristics and Sustainable Fashion Companies' Barriers

The purpose is to visualize the process that the sustainable fashion companies pass when trying to influence consumers' fashion choices towards sustainability. By starting at the consumers' section on the left and continuing towards the right side of the illustration, it becomes clear that each type of consumer has different priorities and needs that must be fulfilled to make sustainable fashion choices. However, sustainable fashion companies are often not able to fulfill these needs due to their limited resources as well as additional barriers faced. Consequently, they disregard the self-consumer group, although these individuals hold the highest potential for making more sustainable fashion choices. Alternatively, the sustainable fashion companies engage with social- and sacrifice. Finally, the companies follow deep- and surface-level strategies, depending on the barriers they face with each group.

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

This study posed the question of which barriers sustainable fashion companies face when trying to influence consumers towards a more sustainable consumption behavior, and how they try to overcome these barriers. In light of the question, it can be concluded that overall, sustainable fashion companies are not yet in such a strong position that they can influence consumers' unsustainable purchasing behaviors sufficiently. The barriers on an industry, business, and consumer level alike are too high still for several reasons.

To begin with, fast fashion companies' cheap and diverse offer made an unconscious purchasing behavior the norm for consumers over the last years. The priority of style and price is too enshrined within consumers that it is difficult for sustainable fashion companies to redirect their focus on sustainability aspects. In line with this, Bray, Johns, and Kilburn suggest that "*Ethics might have some influence . . . but color, style, etc. are likely to be more important*" (2011: 600). Consequently, the approach of sustainable fashion companies to slow down their collection cycles and to emphasize an environmentally friendly as well as ethically fair production does not match the demand of self-consumers yet (cf. McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Moreover, sustainable fashion is a relatively young field that lacks uniform standards, so that greenwashing practices increasingly develop. Additionally, the importance of sustainable production standards in the fashion industry is not part of the public discourse often enough. In this regard, sustainable fashion companies lack the reach and resources to set related topics on the public agenda or to demand higher industry standards (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). Therefore, it is unlikely that self-consumers awareness will increase at the pace that NGOs and science demands (cf. United Nations, 2018) unless these individuals are seeking out information on sustainable fashion themselves.

Whereas sustainable fashion companies do not try to enter a dialogue with self-consumers on purpose, they try to circumvent barriers to influence social-consumers with tools that lie within the companies' capabilities. This has less to do with lacking ambition from the companies' side but more with maximizing their audience with the resources the companies have. The strategies sustainable fashion companies pursue are similar to deep- and surface-level strategies described by Stephan et al. (2016). Here, the overarching objective sustainable fashion companies pursue is to empower social-consumers that they can make informed and sustainable choices on their

own. In contrast, surface-level tools, such as nudges or financial rewards (cf. Stephan et al., 2016), are misaligned with the message of conscious consumption and do not achieve a lasting positive impact. Hence, sustainable fashion companies neglect using these short-term tools and are more likely to use visual tools to attract consumers. Besides, visual tools also serve a long-term aim, as they combat prejudices against sustainable fashion. For example, modern styles challenge the idea of unfashionable sustainable clothes (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009; Tomolillo & Shaw, 2003) or certifications minimize the effort to find trustful brands (Ellen, 1994; Lipsey, 1977). As a result, this form of surface-level strategy is more compatible with sustainable fashion companies' missions.

Apart from that, the effects of deep-level strategies on consumers cannot be evaluated as comprehensively as the effects of surface-level strategies yet. Because most sustainable fashion companies have been established relatively recently, the only indicators these companies can consult at the moment are customer feedback and the number and characteristics of new or returning costumers. Therefore, the question of whether sustainable fashion companies' long-term focused actions have a strong enough impact to change social-consumers' minds permanently remains unanswered.

Eventually, this study broadens the understanding of the barriers faced by sustainable fashion companies first introduced by Harris, Roby, and Dibb (2016). More importantly, it maps the connection between these barriers and the strategies sustainable fashion companies consequently apply – overarchingly presented by Stephan et al. (2016). Having taken all these factors into account, convincing social-consumers is an important first step towards a more sustainable fashion industry, but the highest potential lies in the self-consumer segment. Until now, sustainable fashion companies have rather followed the demand of consumers than they have created it. However, proactively creating demand for sustainable fashion is not only important to make their sustainable business approach matter on a system-level but also to build pressure within the fashion industry to set ambitious sustainable standards. Thus, to wait for self-consumers to become more aware of their own, or for other actors to take on responsibility, is an unfavorable position for sustainable fashion companies. Nevertheless, these companies contribute to providing trustworthy and well-researched information and show best practices for production within the fashion industry. Consequently, sustainable fashion companies play a small, yet crucial role in the sustainable development of the fashion industry as well as consumers' fashion choices.

Recommendations

The strategies sustainable fashion companies apply are a logical response to the challenges they face. Therefore, the topic of this study is not only theory- but also practice-orientated. In order to make sustainable fashion companies' efforts matter on a wider level, additional opportunities, and actions that can be exploited are recommended.

First, the sustainable fashion companies mentioned the need for governmental action and regulations frequently, for example, to prevent greenwashing practices or to set stricter environmental standards. But instead of waiting for these actions to happen eventually, sustainable fashion companies themselves can become politically involved. Because these companies follow best practices in the industry already, demanding stricter regulations can even become a competitive advantage for them. Nonetheless, it is difficult to undertake such endeavors alone because advocacy work is likely to be time- and money-intensive for sustainable companies (Pacheco, Dean, & Payne, 2010). Therefore, a collaborative approach between companies that aim to make the fashion industry more sustainable would be beneficial to lower the risks involved.

Second, sustainable fashion needs to become a viable option for as many consumers as possible (European Commission, 2019; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015). In this regard, not only the offer of sustainable fashion must become more diverse, but consumers must also be able to find sustainable fashion brands without much effort. Therefore, sustainable fashion companies should invest more resources into their online- and offline presence and ensure high convenience during the purchasing process. In this regard, an increasing offer of sustainable fashion brands in city centers or high streets could help to make consumers more aware of the existing alternatives. However, only a few sustainable fashion companies are currently big enough to afford such positioning (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015). Thus, many sustainable fashion companies use social media collaborations to increase their prominence already (European Commission, 2019). Nevertheless, their SEO performance and online-shops are still lacking professionalism compared to fast fashion companies. For these reasons, many possibilities exist to facilitate sustainable choices for consumers still.

Third, designers should not only be educated on how to create fashion but also on how to build sustainable business models. The fashion industry is based on a conservative economic system that requires fast production and fast consumption (United Nations, 2018). Therefore, sustainable fashion companies find themselves in the paradoxical situation of promoting the

message of 'buy less' while being dependent on product sales. To survive in an environment that demands rapid rather than conscious growth, business models that are sustainable in themselves, such as circular approaches, become important (European Commission, 2019; United Nations, 2018). However, the focus should not only lie on the environmental and ethical pillars of fashion businesses but also on the financial one. Amongst other things, designers must learn how to decrease their supply chain costs to either increase their profit margin or make their sustainable clothes more affordable for consumers. Thereby, they not only become a viable alternative for an increasing number of people but also stronger competitors for fast fashion companies. Consequently, to include topics such as sustainable business modeling in designers' curricula will make it easier for sustainable fashion companies to promote their products without contradicting their sustainable mission.

Finally, implementing the suggested recommendations take time, as their success is dependent on various actors. Not only governmental reforms are generally adapted slowly, but also educational matters and a change of society's perception of consumption are gradually evolving processes. Thus, a steady continuation of collective efforts within the fashion industry is needed to change the way consumers will make fashion choices in the future.

Limitations

It must be acknowledged that limitations within this study exist. To begin with, results cannot be generalized per se, as the data stem from a small sample of six companies. Within the companies themselves, it was only possible to investigate a single perspective. Therefore, the collected data could not only vary across different companies but also between employees within the same company. Thus, the research is limited with regards to the method and data collection respectively (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thompson, 2011).

Moreover, the companies that were interviewed for this study are only based in Western Europe, whereas the consumption of fashion takes place all over the world (United Nations, 2018). It must be considered that not only the perspective on sustainability but also consumers' behavior as well as the meaning and value of fashion in this study are restricted by a Western-European perspective. Therefore, this study displays a limited view of the research question, as opinions could vary in other countries or cultural settings (Polonsky, 1998).

Lastly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to hold the interviews in person but via online video calls only. Thus, the replies are likely to be shorter and not as elaborate as they would have been in a personal setting. Also, the expression via body language could not

be noted as detailed as in person and the analysis has been, therefore, limited to words and intonation. However, online interviews provide a comfortable situation for interviewees, as they can stay in familiar surroundings (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). Therefore, studies that use online instead of face-to-face interviews are likely to reach a similar level of informative value (Sullivan, 2012).

Future Research

Given the limitations described and the nature of the research question itself, there are multiple ways to conduct further research. First, the sample is limited to a small number of sustainable fashion companies that mostly target women. Consequently, approaching a similar research question with a quantitative research method will allow to study a larger and more diverse sample of sustainable fashion companies to gain further insights (Morgan, 2014). For example, one participant observed additionally that consumption patterns between men and women vary. According to him, men buy less often and in a conservative manner, whereas women tend to do so more frequently with different styles. Thus, such specific observations, such as perceived differences in consumer characteristics (i.e., gender, education, or demographic factors) could be addressed by a quantitative method more broadly.

Moreover, sustainable fashion companies pursue certain strategies, but their long-term effectiveness has not been evaluated yet. To be able to research whether certain strategies achieve a desired behavioral change in consumers over time, longitudinal research is likely to be the most effective method. Thereby, patterns of such slowly evolving processes can be detected best over a longer period (Ruspini, 2002). Besides, including other perspectives will contribute to a more complete picture (Bocken, 2017). For this reason, conducting future research also with other stakeholders within the industry, such as the government, fast fashion companies, or opinion leaders, will benefit to identify further barriers, as well as more opportunities to work towards a sustainable change in fashion together.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

- Introduction of the researchers' background - everything that feels important to the person.
- Explanation of the research topic:
 - It is confidential.
 - It will be recorded.
 - What will be done with the data afterward?
- Explain that there are no right or wrong answers - specifically care about the interviewee's point of view and their experience.

Introduction

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?
 - a. Who are you?
 - b. What is your position in the company?
 - c. What is your motivation to develop/resell sustainable fashion?
2. What is your business about?
 - a. Since when does the company exist?
 - b. How would you describe what you do exactly?
 - c. What is the purpose/ mission of your company?
 - d. How does your business create value?

Consumer Awareness Towards Sustainable Purchasing Behavior

1. How would you define 'sustainable purchasing behavior'?
 - a. Do you think that consumer awareness of sustainable fashion is changing? If so, what leads you to that impression?
 - b. Where do you see the most potential in consumers applying a more sustainable purchasing behavior and why?
2. What do you think consumers are considering most when purchasing fashion?
 - a. Do you think that consumers face barriers when aiming to buy sustainable fashion?
 - b. If so, which ones?
3. How would you characterize your main customer group?
 - a. How would you describe the level of awareness of your customers towards sustainability related to fashion?
 - b. Are there different sub-groups you can distinguish in your customer base?

- c. What do you think matters most to them when purchasing from your company?

Strategies Applied, Challenges and Opportunities

1. Is there a long-term strategy you are following concerning consumers' purchasing behavior? If so, can you tell me something about it?
 - a. How does it differ from the short-term strategies of your company?
 - b. Does it happen that the two stand in conflict with each other? If so, how exactly?
2. Do you consider these strategies as a burden or as an opportunity for your business? If so, why?
3. How do you communicate a sustainable purchasing approach (or *eco-conscious apparel acquisition*) to consumers?
 - a. How do you use (social) media for this purpose?
 - b. What main message(s) do you try to get across to consumers?
4. How effective do you think your communication of sustainable consumption to consumers is?
 - a. Do you use different strategies for different kinds of costumers (in terms of awareness towards sustainability)?
 - b. If so, why and how?
5. Do you face any challenges when trying to bring the message of sustainable purchasing across?
 - a. What do you consider as the main barriers?
 - b. Is there something that did not work out as intended?
6. How would you describe opportunities to overcome these challenges related to influencing consumers' purchasing behavior towards a more sustainable one?
 - a. What have been key successes?
 - b. Is there something that you did especially well?

Outlook

1. Who would you identify as the key players to drive the change towards sustainable fashion consumption in the future?
2. What advice would you give someone who wants to start a sustainable business with regards to changing consumers purchasing behavior?
3. Are there any unspoken thoughts? Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B: Interview 01 | Basics Company

Interview Date: 16.04.2020

Interview Duration: 39:44 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: Founder and Marketing Manager

Marike [00:00:00] OK. I think we're just going to start. So I'm just going to tell you a little bit about myself. So I wrote I'm studying Sustainable to finish up at the University of Groningen. We need to do a qualitative research for muscle cities. And well, I'm currently in quarantine, like everyone, back in my hometown. But I'm moving to Berlin next week. Yeah, we've found a flat, fortunately. And so I'm doing this research about, well, fashion because I'm really interested in the topic and how you can do it more sustainable. And you know, everything around that and I come across actually that, you know, many people want to shop more sustainable or, you know, they have already the minds and everything, but they don't show it really when they go shopping for clothes. And so it's just like this background of where why I chose this topic. And I want to know, you know, the challenges and barriers you actually face as somebody who works for a company that supplies sustainable basic actually. Hmm. So, yeah, so everything is confidential. And yeah, I really care about your point of view and there's no right or wrong answer. So just talk whatever you think comes to your mind. That's very important. So can you just tell me something a little bit about yourself, what you're doing, what's your job in the company and so on.

Basics [00:01:52] Yes. I'm [Insert Name], I'm actually also the owner of Basics and founder. But yeah, I mainly do the marketing at the moment. So we just have a small team of freelancers. That's also why I work from home usually. We started two years ago, 2018. And it's been growing very very fast. And so ... what else can we say? So the idea behind Basics is to make simple fashion affordable for people because I was working in fashion before at Zalando. And at some point ... I was working in fast fashion for Zalando, but I wanted to do something more sustainable. So that's where the idea for Basics came from. But yeah, when we were researching it in the beginning, we really saw that, you know, there's fast fashion which is very cheap and then there's a sustainable fashion, which is usually quite expensive to produce what you're going to produce or whatever. And, you know, 40 EUR for a T-Shirt vs. 8 EUR for a T-Shirt. And we thought to really make it more interesting for people or a larger amount of people, not

just people who are going to spend 40 EUR for a T-Shirt, that the price should go down and it should be much closer to fast fashion that it is at the moment.

Marike [00:03:53] Great! What do you think consumers are consuming most when purchasing fashion?

Basics [00:04:01] I think that price is a very very big factor. I mean, when you ask people, probably they will say sustainability is very important and I think that there are more and more people, thankfully that think sustainability is important. Of course, fashion is a part of it, however...Yeah, I think this is more also, if you can split between women and men, then I would say that men definitely are more traditional in the sense that they buy less. They buy more ..like 5 t shirts and then a woman would buy a new t shirt every season. Of course, there's a difference but I think that women are a bit more fashion aware and a bit more into this. But ...So what was the question again?

Marike [00:04:49] What do you think consumers are considering most when purchasing fashion? So you already said like price and maybe fashionability.

Basics [00:04:57] Fashionability, yes. I think that sustainability is more important. I don't think... I mean for Basics it's clear what we do. But I'd say more and more brands, more and more companies, have to incorporate sustainability in the coming years. Otherwise, they will be left behind.

Marike [00:05:16] And do you think that consumers face barriers when aiming to buy sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Basics [00:05:25] I think the biggest barrier for sure is that the offer is not so wide and also not so deep. So in Europe, there's lots and lots of fashion out there, so many brands... For example, on Zalando you can find 10,000 different T-shirts for women. And for sustainability the offer is still very small. So, this can be challenging. And then the price definitely also. And also, I think it sounds bad but I think that when we go to Neonyt, the sustainable fashion fair that's here in Berlin every six months or something. Then usually it's very specific, so for example only for some people, for example, you know, women who like flowers on their dresses and they do it very well, but that's for the normal consumer I think there's something missing. Anyway, this is what we're trying to change.

Marike [00:06:30] Yeah, I get it and I think it's true. And how would you define a sustainable purchasing behavior?

Basics [00:06:55] I would say it's mainly the intention then from people to buy something more sustainable instead of something that they know is not so good for the planet, for people that are working on it, etc.

Marike [00:07:10] And do you think that, you know, the consumer awareness toward sustainability and fashion has developed over the last years?

Basics [00:07:21] Yes, definitely. Definitely. I mean, also I think ... we just started two years ago but in these last two years, a lot has changed. So people, consumers are a lot more aware. I think there are a lot more consumers looking for sustainable fashion also. So to say that sustainability is so much more out there at the moment, so many more people are vegan, so many more people are conscious about what they do. And I think consumers have like a switch in their minds, like I want to live more sustainable because bla bla bla and very soon they realize that sustainable fashion is a very big part of it or the opposite, that fast fashion is really a big part of what's wrong with this situation so to say. So then they move I think. And I think every company is doing something in terms of sustainability but on many different levels. So some are doing a little bit, some are doing a lot. But this has also changed enormously.

Marike [00:08:42] Well, where do you see the most potential consumers supplying more to say to purchasing behavior? And why? ...And if there's still, you know, a big like a real potential where people can actually be more sustainable in their purchasing behavior when looking for fashion.

Basics [00:09:26] Yeah. Well, yeah, I. Basically in everything. Or maybe all the people that are still buying PRIMARK, H&M, these kinds of things, that is just very, very destructive for the planet and also very bad for the people that are working on it. In Bangladesh, India and China, wherever. So to switch away from this, I think this for sure is a big change. And second, also, that even if you buy a sustainable fashion people really should buy much less, much, much, much less than they buy. This is, of course, tricky for me to say because we are very dependent on, you know, t shirt sales. But yeah, overall, I mean, people have so much clothes. If you see the graphics also, you know, like versus how much they had in 2000 and how much they have now, 20 years later, it just doubled. So this is not very sustainable. Even if you buy sustainable T-shirts, maybe you don't need five but maybe two.

Marike [00:10:25] Yeah. So how would you characterize your main customer group?

Basics [00:10:33] Yeah, I would say so people like us basically, between 20 and 40. Definitely interested somehow already in sustainability, maybe not per se sustainable fashion, but general kind of awareness about sustainability. And yet... not extremely fashion forward, so basics, of course. What else? Basically that and yeah, also connected online. You know, the general people who are in our age group.

Marike [00:11:06] OK. So what you say that there are different subgroups who can distinguish in your customer base? Or is it that all the same?

Basics [00:11:16] Interesting question. Yes, definitely. I mean, see a buying difference between women and men. Like I said, like men, men usually come and they buy five white T-shirts or whatever at once. And women want to see something new and then buy one, you know, whatever. So I think women also definitely buy more clothes. You know, and this is interesting. We don't really distinguish. Well, it's interesting, I think for you to see there is this ... somewhere on the Internet, not sure exactly what it's called. But this is a research that was done, I think five years ago, 10 years ago about the adoption curve that people have into sustainability and something there's also something called the green gap, which is what you mentioned earlier, do you know about it already? So that everybody says, you know, everybody says they want to be green, but not everybody is doing it. Yeah. So this and there is something, for us it's quite interesting, so there's the Super Green, which would be like around 10 percent of people who are super convinced, like the Eco Warriors, plastic free etc. And these these are not so much our target group. But then after comes, you know, the early majority, I think it's called the middle greens or something like that...

Marike [00:13:12] Yes, I think I've read something like that. But it sounds interesting. You know, like actually seeing which group you can help.

Basics [00:13:19] Yeah, well, for us it's more from a marketing perspective. So we're not so much focused on the super greens who are already convinced and who don't mind paying 40 Euros for a t shirt. But we're more focused on this kind of early majority who really have the intention of wanting to live more sustainable, but now have this, you know, experience barriers, because...whatever. And we're focused on this group.

Marike [00:13:45] Well, yes, OK. What what do you think that matters most to them when they purchase from your company?

Basics [00:13:58] From us ... definitely the price is a big trigger ...to trigger people, also to try out. But then also if there is something with the quality, we get an email straight away. And then also the transparency ... I mean, it's in the name, but still, sometimes it's difficult to find the right balance between being honest and being too honest. But this is definitely it...

Marike [00:14:21] Is there a strategy you're following concerning consumers purchasing behavior. And if so can you tell me something about it?

Basics [00:14:33] I think the general thing is, I mean it sounds overly commercial, but to keep an eye on the price, to keep it a bit.. For example, now we are launching or we're trying to launch jeans and then be very ... how to say to... look out there at what's out there already in a sustainable world. What's out there in fast fashion, how is it all segmented the jeans market in terms of price. And then we yeah, we aim to be slightly above, well we cannot reach fast fashion prices, but we aim to be slightly above this, so very cheap in comparison to the others, and only slightly more expensive than fast fashion.

Marike [00:15:12] And when you talk about the aim of actually changing consumers minds, is there a strategy you're looking at? You already mentioned, for example, transparency and something like that.

Basics [00:15:28] Yeah the aim is also with what we do then is, I think in general to make it very big. To really show people that it is possible to make sustainable fashion, which is extremely sustainable, not sustainable as Armedangels is doing it or whatever, you know, the big ones, but to offer it at a price that everybody can afford. Yeah. If you are a student and, you know, just working on the site, whatever.

Marike [00:15:50] You think, you already mentioned it in that direction. But the same difference regarding, you know, the time horizons when you're going for a certain strategy. For example, you mentioned prices. So this is or it's something, I think very operational kind of, you know, short term. And the other one is by doing a bit more long term. But do you see that in your day to day operations that you really focus on, well, this is more now and this is more something we want to do overall later. You know?

Basics [00:16:28] Yeah, I mean, definitely in the sense that we are a very small business still and we can only grow so fast. For example, the jeans thing we've been trying for one and a half years but we don't have the money. We don't have the money. But by now we have this pre order purchase thing online. But that's in general, we can only grow so fast... we've grown super

fast already, last year, you know, we had three T-shirts online. And now it's already so much more but we should take it easy.. So, you know, take it easy now more organically, basically.

Marike [00:17:13] Okay. Do you consider these strategies or this approach to, you know, want to change consumers minds or make it easier for them as a burden or as an opportunity for your business?

Basics [00:17:26] Certainly an opportunity because. Because in the end, I mean the success that we have I mean, I mean it's not that big but when considering that we only started one and a half years ago it's going very well. So I think it's definitely an opportunity to look at the barriers that are out there for people to show sustainable fashion or whatever. And then to find your own kind of perspective on it.

Marike [00:17:57] Yeah. Especially when you look a little bit more in the future. So basically you need to have the legitimacy to do your business. And so sustainability will be part of that. So how do you communicate a sustainable purchasing approach to consumers?

Basics [00:18:19] Yeah, this is of course, this is the ongoing, ongoing challenge every day. So we've made some steps (or success) already there. I mean, it's all through the website and Instagram and that's it. And I feel overall, I don't know when it changed, but a couple of months ago, some of it changed for people, you know, doubting. But we were smaller, we received a lot of questions, if it's sustainable etc., does it work etc. because it's in Bangladesh and all these kind of things. And this really changed. And I think people are now really believing it so to say. So, we got a lot less of these questions. So this either means that the information on the website is better done or I think just we have reached some kind of awareness with the people, that they are convinced. **Marike** [00:19:08] Yeah. So your what is your main message? Your main message as you try to get across to consumers?

Basics [00:19:16] So in general, we always do want to show how the products are sustainable, how the production is sustainable. It's a bit of a fine line. We don't want to be like itchy. So it's very easy to go too technical and aboard. It's also very easy to go too negative, I think. Which many brands are doing you know. So our general approach is to keep it light and positive and present it as a solution, our solution.

Marike [00:19:45] Mm hmm. Yeah. You already mentioned so you use social media for this purpose or something else.

Basics [00:19:55] You know, yeah the main thing is sort of Instagram, Facebook sort of, likes and follows. What else? The website itself. I think this sustainability part is not very good, I have to say, at the moment. We really want to improve. And you know, we're trying now to start a YouTube channel to grow more in-depth on sustainability topics. So this is yeah, this has been my quarantine project.

Marike [00:20:24] Now what is also hard. I get it. I like to be, you know, you know all the things about it. And then you want to make it really like easy for consumers, for customers to get it and to, you know, to see that you're trying to become transparent and everything, but not too much. And, you know, it's really. Yeah. This compatibility is really hard to achieve.

Basics [00:20:46] Yeah. For example, like when we write this kind of stuff or e-mails that it should be you know, it should be as few words as possible, as many pictures as possible because nobody's going to read like seven pages on this topic or whatever.

Marike [00:20:56] Oh yeah. And how do consumers respond to this communication?

Basics [00:21:05] Overall, quite well yeah, they are really quite responsive, especially on social media, most people are sending messages and stuff, Oh, I really like it. Oh, I don't like it. It's a multiple, so. Maybe not so much on the sustainability topic, but more on that Oh, I love this new t shirt or I love this new, whatever. But I think in general... I guess some people are really following it quite intensively and commenting on everything.

Marike [00:21:37] Yeah, it's good feedback. And do you think that different types of consumers respond differently?

Basics [00:21:49] I'm not sure. Not sure. I really feel that the overall, the sustainability people you know that follow Basics and are involved somehow, are in general quite positive and quite happy. And it's increasing a bit but I guess as the general followers increase, but so far it's quite OK, quite manageable.

Marike [00:22:16] Okay. And do you face challenges when you already said it varied when trying to bring across a message or sustainable purchasing or what do you consider? It's like the main barrier.

Basics [00:22:54] Yeah. You know, it's a general thing like, you know, the attention span of people, but somehow I think it works quite well. I don't know, I saw how we manage... we don't actually get so many extra questions about it anymore. Somehow it's okayish.

Marike [00:23:15] Yeah. You incorporate not really some feedback so.

Basics [00:23:20] Yeah, exactly. It changed also over the last year.

Marike [00:23:23] Yeah. So you of course had a learning curve. Yeah.

Basics [00:23:27] Yeah. Yeah. It was like you know, like when we get lots of questions about, you know, in the beginning we got a lot of questions about the working conditions in Bangladesh. Then at some point, you know, we began to mention this differently or, you know, add pictures.

Marike [00:23:42] Yeah. Yeah. So you would say that this actually or did it not turn out as intended, for example, when you mentioned. You know, Bangladesh as your production location.

Basics [00:23:56] Yes. I think this is this was definitely, if you're asking about challenges, this was definitely the main one. This was the main challenge to say yes, it can be OK also, and this was the main challenge, which is just to make kind of like barrier also for people to see. What helped is also really, really the certification because a certification is so strong, it really answers most questions for people.

Marike [00:24:32] OK, so the certification was kind of a tool to communicate ...

Basics [00:24:37] Yes definitely, especially I think in fashion Germans love to see all sorts of certificates.

Marike [00:24:49] Yeah, I get it. Well, it's this long question, but how would you describe opportunities to overcome these challenges? You know, in relation to consumers purchasing behavior towards a more sustainable one.

Basics [00:25:07] So basically like what you said. I think the main things are basically for people in sustainable fashion is that the offer is not there or also not their taste, not fashionable. Or that it's too expensive. So if you somehow, you know, find your own angle... I mean, there are many other brands like Basics or something, they're of course super expensive. But the way they do it, everything together, I mean, they really find through their marketing their voice somehow. And I think we're also trying to find it, definitely. But if you can sort of find your own perspective on the issue, then I think actually consumers are definitely looking for it.

Marike [00:25:47] It's what would you consider for you yourself during the years, your key successes? What's something you did especially well?

Basics [00:26:07] Maybe just the basics that I do just stick to the basics. Because many people are like, oh, you should do printed T-shirts, you should do things with labels or whatever.

Marike [00:26:26] Would you say it again? I think my laptop...

Basics [00:26:30] Ah yeah no, just that we stuck to the basics and didn't go into like, orange dresses or whatever.

Marike [00:26:35] Yes. Yeah. And also, do you have the feeling that you actually had a key success when, you know, tried to change somebody's mind or being, you know, a more sustainable alternative?

Basics [00:26:49] Definitely, I think that we have... I mean we sold already to at least 5,000 people or more already. And many, many of these people wouldn't have considered buying sustainable fashion normally because of whatever reasons, because the price was too high or whatever. And I think that a large part of these people, we somehow have already convinced that it is possible to buy sustainable fashion also in their budgets or whatever. And we get lots, well not lots, but we get some thank you messages, you know. People are very happy and I think that we have shown that it's possible at almost fast fashion prices ... it's been quite a success.

Marike [00:27:30] Yeah. OK. So, you know, to sum it up a little bit...Who would you identify as the key players to drive the change towards sustainable fashion consumption in the future?

Basics [00:27:50] Key players... I think there are some very interesting brands already out there and of course, they're doing cool stuff. You know, like Armedangels, Organic Basics, all these guys. There are also quite some cool influencers that are... I think you know DariaDaria from Austria, Greta, of course, with her normal stuff, but I think that influencers, YouTubers have also... They have lots of influence and they can also use it for good.

Marike [00:28:19] So you would say basically more the small brands. And you know, already sustainable influencers on social media and stuff like that.

Basics [00:28:28] Yeah, because they have the credibility and I think most of them, they also have like... Especially Daria or these people that they actually do make their homework and then they educate people in a sense instead of, you know, screaming something which is really unfunded and then it's actually going the wrong way that people start believing that, you know, PRIMARK is sustainable or something, you know? And I think we have to be careful because,

lots of, you know, the ZARAs and H&Ms of the world, Zalando also, they know that sustainability works better, so they're also starting to do these kinds of things but often they are not as sustainable as you would want them to be. So I think that we're going to see that greenwashing or, you know, not illegal greenwashing but just like giving it a green shine, so to say. For example, I saw yesterday, my girlfriend got a newsletter, oh eco dresses for you, one was from Stella McCartney and then there were 12 other non-eco dresses in it. You know, it's a trick...but I think more and more brands are going to try to somehow use this and this is actually not a good development.

Marike [00:29:42] Yeah. It's not sustainable at the core. It's more like we do it also...but not entirely.

Basics [00:29:46] Yeah like we do it because more people click on eco than on not eco but yeah...

Marike [00:29:53] Okay. So what advice would you give someone who wants to start a sustainable business with regards to changing consumers purchasing behavior?

Basics [00:30:34] Yeah. For me. I mean, I really liked the entrepreneur kind of thing. It's like it's very, very difficult to start a business, I really underestimated it. You know, I was in a very cozy job at Zalando and you just think like ah this is nice also. But yeah, it's very, very difficult. And then the main advice I would give is to not so much focus on sustainability. Of course, it's a very important thing, but, you know, 90 percent of running a business is running a business. And it's not... It's not about making the world a better place, which is a sad thing but, so, be aware of this and to be successful-ish or have some form of success, you need to be... you need to run a successful business and not too much a sustainable business. So, you know, you need to think commercial in terms of prices, in terms of everything. In terms of not spending too much money and yeah.

Marike [00:31:30] So this romantic idea is kind of..you know, you get started, but then, yeah, it's kind of slowly but really fast also changing a bit more in basically the same thing just with a mission to be, you know, to make something sustainable.

Basics [00:31:47] Yeah, exactly. Yeah, exactly. I mean it's still definitely I think there is this part of, you know, making the world a better place.

Marike [00:31:53] Yeah.

Basics [00:31:54] I mean, it's just ... to not underestimate the reality so to say.

Marike [00:32:03] OK. So I think that's was kind of the last question. So are there any unspoken thoughts, anything you would like to add or...?

Basics [00:32:16] I would really like to read it once you're finished.

Marike [00:32:19] Yeah, sure no problem. But I think both some relevant literature ...sometimes it's really interesting what they, you know, research says about, about consumer behavior. What are the main challenges and things like that. So but I'd like to take this thing up.

End of interview.

Appendix C: Interview 02 | Jeans Company

Interview Date: 17.04.2020

Interview Duration: 50:29 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: CSR Manager

Marike [00:03:49] Hey, it worked. Very nice.

Jeans [00:04:02] Hi, how are you?

Marike [00:04:04] I'm good, and you?

Jeans [00:04:06] Good. So tell me a little bit about what you're working on. Is it for your thesis or your... Well, yeah. What is it for?

Marike [00:04:14] Yeah, exactly, it's for my thesis. So I'm studying at the University of Groningen. So I'm originally from Hamburg, Germany. But yeah, I studied there last year and I'm now about to finish my studies in June. So I'm right now, yeah, looking, you know, doing interviews for my thesis, which is about the topic of changing consumers' minds towards a more sustainable purchasing behavior. And so I'm interviewing actually very, you know, sustainable fashion labels that already engage a lot with, you know, trying to make it easier for consumers to consume less or consume more consciously. And I mean, I've met some of your colleagues also during Change Now in Paris.

Jeans [00:05:09] Yeah.

Marike [00:05:09] And I well, I know you because. Yeah. Some of my friends have some jeans from you and so that's why I reached out to you. And I think you're doing a great job. So. Yeah.

Jeans [00:05:24] Awesome. Okay. Well, I'll let you... Yeah. Look, I mean, I got your questions. I was just reading them now.

Marike [00:05:34] Yeah. I'm just guiding you through them. Just wanted to let you know that. Well, we weren't recording this because I need to transcribe it afterwards. It's confidential. And yeah, there's no right or wrong answer. So just speak your mind. Whatever comes to your, you know, comes to your mind. I don't know, you have half an hour, right? More or less?

Jeans [00:05:59] Yeah. I mean, if it goes for a little bit longer, I can do that. I just got a meeting after. But yeah, at three. That's my limit.

Marike [00:06:09] Yeah. Because I had a interview yesterday, which was like half an hour, today I had one which was like one hours, so it really depends on how much you talk, but I think we gonna be fine. So, yeah, maybe you can tell me a little bit about yourself, who you are, what you do in the company and you know, your motivation to develop or resell sustainable fashion.

Jeans [00:06:34] Sure. Well, you know, my name's [Insert Name], my role in the company: I'm a corporate social responsibility manager for Jeans. And primarily what I do is really everything from ... well I work a lot with a marketing team because we drive everything that is related to sustainability. So I do a lot of the work related to, well, even just calculating our CO2 water and then also trying to work on that continuous improvement. So where can we do more to reduce all of those factors. And then Marketing tries to communicate those in the best ways to consumers. So we always try to find creative ways to do that. But I have been for with the company very little. I just came in. I'm around six months here.

Marike [00:07:34] I think I've met the one who had your job before.

Jeans [00:07:39] [Insert Name]? Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So and yeah, my motivation for sustainable fashion has always been there. I feel that it's an industry where you can make actual change when it comes to environmental challenges. I mean, that's just my personal perspective. I worked previously in the U.N. in Rome, doing something completely different, working more on agricultural policy, also from an environmental perspective. And this is like I mean, I'm twenty-eight years old, so it was kind of like a career step by step objective. Right. How do I get to where I want to be? And I really just always felt that, well, I love fashion and I feel like the fashion industry has such a big impact, negative impact, on the environment. But simultaneously, it's just an industry that can have such a positive one to do things correctly, right? So and I'm a firm believer of that. And so, yeah, I'm super proud to work or Jeans, I think they're doing things so well. They don't pretend to be perfect. And, you know, they're so transparent with what they're doing, how they're trying to improve and really they're doing really, really well compared to what other companies are doing. I'm not just saying that because I'm working for Jeans.

Marike [00:09:07] No, of course, there's a reason why you actually chose them.

Jeans [00:09:14] Yeah. Absolutely. And you learn a lot and you realize, geez, like you really learn an eye for how companies are communicating it, and you realize very quickly how little they actually know by the way they are communicating. And what I mean by little, they know how little they're actually doing to understand their impact. So and that's just by making very blunt statements with no backup to what they're actually working on.

Marike [00:09:46] Yeah, that sounds really good. What do you think consumers are considering the most when purchasing fashion?

Jeans [00:09:58] Well, you know, when I read your question, and I was like uh, and I first went immediately to you know, well, sustainable consumers want this and this and this but I realize that's not what you're asking. You're asking just consumers in general, right?

Marike [00:10:09] Yeah.

Jeans [00:10:11] And I think, you know, people are still really interested in trends and deals and looking fashionable, and that's the challenge, especially because we live in a fast fashion industry. You can just really go to ZARA and get the latest, you know, looks and, you know, I'm even ... I used to do that. Before I even thought about, you know, I would go to Milan because I had family there and go check out all of the amazing shops in Gucci, Prada... Pretend, you know, that I could even shop there. No. I went in there to look at the colors and the cuts they had. And then I would go into ZARA and they had exactly the same stuff. Maybe just the colors flipped or whatever, you know. So I think that's still the behavior nowadays. But simultaneously, I do see this huge wave of people being more critical about what you're buying. And yeah, and that's when the conscious consumer comes in, right. And trying to build that... that behavior.

Marike [00:11:18] OK. So do you think that consumers face barriers when aiming to buy sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Jeans [00:11:30] Yeah, I think so, because even myself, before I jumped headfirst into this business of sustainable fashion thinking, etc. and trying to educate myself on the matter, I think it's extremely overwhelming if you are just a general consumer that wants to buy a T-Shirt. And I think that there either is a lot of information out there or you have to trust the company of what they're telling you, right? So I think there's like the type of consumer that will go in and ask a million questions and try to really dig into it. But not everyone is really like that. And

I think that is the biggest obstacle for consumers nowadays. If they go like OK, I want to be sustainable. But what does that mean? And I think that's really challenging because you have, again, ZARA's conscious collection and you think Oh that's fantastic. And in a way, it's good. I don't like to say, you know, they're making an effort, but you can be more critical of their actual effort. So I think it's really difficult. And then also, OK. I'm like, can I still buy leather? But if not leather, then it's plastic that doesn't biodegrade and what does that mean? You know, it just becomes really, really difficult and overwhelming to the point of you just go like, well, whatever. And I think those are the...if I would have to boot it concretely, it's that the obstacle is knowledge, but also trustworthy knowledge.

Marika [00:12:58] Yeah. To make a really good decision. How would you define sustainable purchasing behavior?

Jeans [00:13:10] Sustain - yeah, I remember you asked me this.

Marika [00:13:15] Well, you don't have to come up with a perfect definition. Some ideas you know, sometimes it's good to know what we're talking about.

Jeans [00:13:26] So when you ask me this and I just made some notes here, you know, at Jeans, we really do all types of tasks. So I am the CSR manager but then sometimes I can also do the intro mail. And there you really see the type of consumers that you have and you realize that the conscious consumer, again, it's out of range. You have people that really just want to send us back their jeans because you don't want them. They don't want that they end up in a landfill. And then you have the very critical ones that will ask you everything from the chemicals that we use, materials, where it's produced and I've even had one customer who was like, sorry, you guys produce in Tunisia - I'm not buying from you guys, you know. Super straightforward like system changing supplier. So and I think that's really the range that I've seen of those conscious consumers from, yeah, 'I know that I can do a little bit of impact' to 'I really don't want to interact with anything, any type of dirty business at all'. And, you know.

Marika [00:14:29] Yeah. OK. So but I mean, basically when we talk about sustainable, you know, purchasing sustainable, would you say that it's. Well, I mean, you have... at Jeans, you can lease your jeans, so that's already kind of a new business model which is out there. But I was more kind of looking at, you know, how to consume, like... Well, I mean, overall consuming less second hand, you know, these kinds of things. How do you think that, like this consumer awareness of sustainable fashion has developed over time?

Jeans [00:15:15] OK. So are you asking me how it has developed over time because previously you were kind of hinting at what I think sustainable consumerism is?

Marike [00:15:24] Yeah, and then how it developed over time. Yeah, maybe it was the first question and then the second one. Sorry. Yeah. OK.

Jeans [00:15:32] So, you know, I was listening to this Ellen MacArthur webcast youtube thing and like it was really interesting because they were debating how / what's the difference between sustainability and circularity. And then they went into saying, you know, one is being efficient, which is the sustainability aspect. And then the other one is really being effective. And that's circularity, right. And that's when you try to really remove waste from the equation. And I think that's what we are trying to do in our business model. And I think in my personal opinion, that is the best way to do sustainable or circular fashion, you are really solving the problem. Then there is sustainable fashion, which is what you tried to think about the type of materials and also maybe even think about using recycled products, etc, etc. So, when I think personally of conscious consumption. I think it's about thinking about your product, what it's made out of and what happens to it at the end of its life, I think those for me are the most important factors, right. It needs to be made out of a good product. For me, it needs to be made out of either cotton or something cellulose-based so that it can biodegrade, which is already challenging. I think there's so much polyester out there. And then you have to think about the end life of that product and what happens to it. And when you bring those two factors into it, that's what kind of drives conscious consumption. In my opinion, right, there's so much out there...

Marike [00:17:33] Yeah I know but I mean, it's always very interesting to hear, you know, the multiple answers to the same question. And you know, you again had some novel ideas. So that's nice.

Jeans [00:17:48] Yeah and I think it's just going beyond I mean just. Yeah. Like I think it's good to support a company that goes beyond just thinking, okay, at the end of this we're just going to recycle it and that's it. It's like, no but can we do something more with that, right? I think that's why Jeans, in my opinion, is so cool because it really tries to eliminate waste from the whole thing. And you as a consumer know that you are not impacting negatively through your consumption. And I think that really empowers the consumer, in my opinion.

Marike [00:18:20] Yes, I also think so. So what do you see the most potential at consumers applying a more sustainable purchasing behavior?

Jeans [00:18:34] Where do I see, say it again?

Marike [00:18:36] Like, where do you see the most potential? You know, in consumers actually - can be anything - like it's not really specific, but the most potential in, you know, the areas that consumers can actually purchase or adopt a more sustainable purchasing behavior.

Jeans [00:19:00] Well, I think it's with their everyday shopping in terms of clothes and just trying to moderate that, control that a little bit. You know, I can relate: I love fashion and I love to have the latest trends, but it's that challenge of trying to identify other ways to do that, whether it's borrowing or clothes swapping and just trying to extend the life of your closet. So. But if we're talking simplistically like a starting step, I always like to say start with the basics. So if you have solid basics of your jeans or T-shirts or things like that, and then you can build on that, if you have a solid sustainable basics wardrobe, then that's always a good start. And then if you crave that cursory heels. OK. I mean, we're not perfect, but I think that that already helps a lot.

Marike [00:20:02] OK. I think you already touched on that before, but how would you characterize your main customer group?

Jeans [00:20:21] Well, we call them the "culturally creative", so... And these are people that really look for meaning in life and work and they're obviously conscious about the environment, but then also have a very close connection to nature and tend to be quite critical citizens just in themselves. And those types tend to be the type of consumer that we have. We also know that they tend to be...Well, we did a survey and we found out that they have a large percentage of master's degrees, Ph.D.s, so really highly educated individuals. Which was interesting.

Marike [00:21:12] And so. OK. You already said like the level of awareness towards sustainability is there. But could you also. Well, can you differentiate subgroups in your customer base or is it more or less like one big group of the same or similiar individuals?

Jeans [00:21:39] Honestly, I don't know. Like I'm not marketing, so maybe I should ask the marketing...

Marike [00:21:48] No haha that's not needed but sometimes you also have some customers that you know, normally you shop at H&M but then you really want to invest in, you know, a good pair of shoes or jeans or whatever. But never mind that's fine.

Jeans [00:22:02] No, I can tell you a little. Like I wouldn't be able to say, oh, yeah, we have the data, we're saying these are the groups. I think one of the things that we are always discussing is, for example, the age group, because we don't say like it's between 25 and 35 or something like that, which is not the case. We have a range of people from 25 to 65. It's really funny, right? When it comes to marketing and communicating to those different groups: that's a challenge. So and yeah, the type of brand image. That's always a consistent discussion. No, we want the older generation no we're appealing to the younger ones. No. You know, so that's an ongoing discussion. And yeah. And that makes a distinction to make. What's important for them?

Marike [00:22:57] Yeah, exactly. What do you think is most important to them when they purchase from Jeans? What matters most to them?

Jeans [00:23:11] Well, I think the fact that it's a sustainable product, that they can give it back and it will just be reused to make a new pair of jeans that tend to generate a really good positive reaction. But I think also that's a high-quality product, long-lasting. And these type of things is what most of our customers like are telling us that they want. Yeah.

Marike [00:23:43] Well, you also already touched a little bit upon it. But is there a strategy you are following to you know, change consumers' minds or to push them a little bit more into a sustainable fashion purchasing behavior?

Jeans [00:24:00] Yeah, sure. So like very similar to the sustainability strategy that we have. There's something called "positive activism" and it's really aimed to raise awareness and educate people about sustainable...sustainability in general, actually. And circular economy more specifically. So we have a blog also and also in our social media, we really try to share information that empowers our consumers to make better decisions about their wardrobes, but also really just in general aspects of how to lead a sustainable life.

Marike [00:24:39] And is there maybe also a difference between time horizons when you're choosing different strategies, marketing strategies or something like that. Like, do you consider that?

Jeans [00:24:57] Again, that's a good point. I mean, we have I don't know what you you're asking, but obviously there are theme times like next week is Earth Day and there's also fashion revolution week. And for example, Black Friday, which we're totally against, but we make a campaign of how we're totally against that. In fact, we boost up our prices and say, you guys pay the difference. We will donate it to charity. Right. So but I think that's a very parallel to that original strategy of positive activism, but also sustainability sharing what we're achieving. How much to our products cost environmentally, so, CO2, water, that type of thing and sharing very much this type of efforts. Because even next week is again showing, hey, guys our pair of jeans, are whatever, you know, consume 90 percent less water than industry standard and stuff like that.

Marika [00:26:03] Yeah. So it's more maybe, you know, really substantially trying to change the idea. So you mentioned, you know, empowerment and these kind of things. So basically you're really giving information out to make them, you know, that you were doing your homework, but you also share it so that they can take it and do something really with it, instead of just nudging certain behaviors.

Jeans [00:26:33] Exactly, and I think that's also to do a lot with creating trust. You want your customer to trust you. But then simultaneously you build that trust also, by educating your consumer on the sense that they can trust what you're saying and then they can apply that to other ways of living, other things that they're doing. Because going back to my original statement, I think it's so overwhelming the information that's out there to be a sustainable consumer, so what we try to do is, yes, empower them, share information, but do so in a simplistic manner. And then we also have underlayers for people that are really like nerdy about sustainability. We also have our sustainability Website, right. They can go in there and really dig in and see our production techniques. And then we have our sustainability report where you can really, where we explain everything. And then we're about to release our lifecycle analysis report where we really talk about our entire supply chain and what with measure. So we will communicate all of those things at different levels and by different levels, I mean, you know, in a very simplistic manner. But at the same time, if you want more complicated stuff like it's there, you know. So, yeah, I was just trying to make it simple so people don't feel so overwhelmed. And I think and I think this is important, I think as an industry, as a brand. But also the industry carries a responsibility to make sustainable fashion accessible and easy and, you know, a simple choice, not a very complicated one.

Marike [00:28:19] Well, I think this is a little bit of an easy one. But do you consider these strategies more as a burden or as an opportunity for your business?

Jeans [00:28:27] Total opportunity. Oh, I think absolutely. Especially now. So to give you a little bit of an insight of what we're talking about right now at the company level is that obviously I'm sure you've seen, you know, all of these companies canceling orders and leaving their supply chain partners completely just with nothing. And we don't do that. And we can...I mean, first of all, we don't have any debt / dead? stock. We don't have any of that stuff. And the reason being is because we are a circular business. So it's for us, this is really cool. But obviously, we see it carefully "cool". We are happy to see that our business model is a good model and that it's working even in these really hard times because we have a very short supply chain. We have a very close relationship with our supply chain partners. We don't order. I mean, we have a very basics type of style. So we don't do seasonal stocking up. We don't stock up, what we do every month, we analyze our sales and we see what's selling and we order our new stock of those sales and that's it, right. So, and we see this really benefiting. The way that we're doing business, so, again, it's communicating those things and showing consumers, hey guys, we're doing the right thing here. And I believe that that's really empowering. And it's, it's a good thing.

Jeans [00:30:06] So that's a good transition because the next question is actually how do you communicate a sustainable purchasing approach to consumers? So what main message to you try to get across?

Jeans [00:30:18] Yeah, I mean. That's tricky. No, I mean, how do we do it? We do it through the leasing jeans model. So that's the main way that we communicate sustainable consumption. We say, hey, look, we will give you a jeans, we're lending you our fabric in the form of jeans. So we have this concept of we're leasing you this service in form of a jeans and give it back to us when you're done with it. Right. And we explain why that is important. And stuff like that. So that's mainly how we try to communicate.

Marike [00:31:02] So you're actually using your interesting novel business model to also spark interest and to give that the platform to start a conversation.

Jeans [00:31:15] Exactly. Exactly. I'm sure some people are like, what? Why on earth would I do that? I mean, there's a similar business I don't know at the top of my head, but they're also B Corp and they do it with headphones. Right. Because headphones are also, everyone throws

them away and stuff like that. So, they're also leasing them. And I think it's a great model because it takes responsibility away from the consumer, you know.

Marike [00:31:45] Yeah. Sometimes also, I think the first reflex you have is like, oh, but it's weird because I don't own them then, you know, it's never really mine. But I think that we also have to come a little bit to say goodbye to this feeling, to this attachment... but it's a mix. I think that because well, sometimes you feel that you don't care so much for things you don't really own. But at the same time, you can keep them if you want. So basically that's a really cool idea. So.

Jeans [00:32:15] Yeah, yeah, I think that's a hard thing to communicate what you just touched on. Right. Because. So you can lease a pair of jeans, you only have to pay like the first twelve months and then if you want to keep them for twelve years, like, they're all yours. We will not be like please can you send us back your jeans. But it's just that thing like once you're done with them, please send them back and even if you purchase the jeans, we will say the same thing to you. Right. And in my personal opinion - this was not by no means the idea behind the model - but I really think that it's what's sort of allowing as people that don't have the luxury to pay one hundred and nineteen euros in one go to buy a sustainable item. They can do it by paying seven years fifty a month. And at the end of that, it's theirs. I think it's even cheaper. Like their second jeans is cheaper than they would buy a second pair. So... and I love that. I love that we are empowering also people that maybe don't have that income to buy. I know we're not the most expensive, but it's an expensive product.

Marike [00:33:30] Of course, if you also compare it to fast fashion, of course. And then it takes a little bit the pressure out to say, or the argument out to say, yeah, I would like to be more sustainable, but I cannot afford it.

Marike [00:33:43] Do you use social media or media in general for this purpose? I mean, yeah, but like, how exactly do you do that? Well, which role does it play in your..

Jeans [00:33:55] Like in general or for..?

Marike [00:33:58] Yeah. So basically what role does social media play for you to - or media in general - getting your message across to consumers?

Jeans [00:34:11] Yeah, I mean, we use everything. Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and absolutely we use it to communicate facts and figures, but also to touch base with our customers. That's really where we can have a conversation sometimes with them and see their reactions to things. Yeah. More have like a genuine interaction with them, which I think it's very much this generation of people don't just want an ad, they want to have some kind of connection to the company. And then that also helps build trust and things like that, right? These are the things we try to do with our social media.

Marike [00:35:00] Well, how do customers respond to this communication actually?

Jeans [00:35:07] Well, I. Well, that's really not my role but I think, you know, I also follow Jeans on Instagram and I can see that in general, people are so motivated and curious and super supportive. And like we even get from an info mail just people writing to us saying, hey, we love your product. Thank you so much. I mean, simultaneously we have our challenges, people...wherever... there's some people that don't really get the concept, so they think that they can just return the jeans whenever they want and obviously there's people with some frustrations about that. But in general, yeah through social media, we try to build the understanding of sustainability, but also create that concept of relationship.

Marike [00:36:11] OK. Yeah. I mean, I know that you haven't been with the company for so long, but do you think that different types of consumers or your customers responded a little bit differently than others? Or engage differently, you know?

Jeans [00:36:26] Yeah, no, for sure. I mean, like I said, there's just different types of consumer. There are, from a conscious consumer perspective, I mean the large majority are conscious consumer perspective, others are just that Ok this is a cool concept let's try. But absolutely. There's different people, some like to email us, some like to just interact on our social media. Yeah. Oh, we also have the ambassador program. That's another way that we interact with. I mean, these are sometimes influencers but just people in general. Anyone can sort of sign up to it. There's different things that you can do. I think you need to take pictures and stuff like that but there we also interact with people that are genuinely interested to buy the product, understand it and understand what we're doing and things like that and support us, you know.

Marike [00:37:35] Do you face any challenges when trying to bring the message of sustainable purchasing across?

Jeans [00:37:44] Yeah, I mean, going back to the leasing sometimes, again, people don't understand the concept. Why are you doing this? OK, once a month at least. Can I just send it back after a few months, I don't want them anymore. And explaining that to them, it's sometimes challenging and also sometimes when they break their jeans. So that's another challenge. We do provide a repair service. Again, this concept of circularity and sustainability. But sometimes you feel just. Yeah. It's difficult. Like I'm sorry, you broke your jeans, it's been three years, we don't like the free service. These couple of things, you know. And it's a balance because you do want to encourage them to fix the jeans and keep on wearing them. And these type of things.

Marika [00:38:36] Yeah. Then again, you're a company. So. Yes. Yeah. I mean, that's sometimes the paradox of having actually a sustainable fashion label or company that, you know, on the one hand, you want to slow down the circles of time to actually, you know, the purchasing, spread the message of please consume less. And then again, you're really very dependent on sales. So, yeah, face many difficulties.

Jeans [00:39:09] I mean, these are costs, right? And you have to account into the business. Yeah. It's it's funny because in general, we're all just really nice people. So when people are nice, too, I feel like: sure, yeah! I think that's a balancing act that we have to always play a little bit with. And stuff like that. But yeah, it's going to your question. There's that but from a more general perspective where we do communicate about our sustainability efforts. In there I don't see much of a challenge. We do host webinars where we talk about our sustainability report and people are very interactive with that. And less critical. Sometimes they're critical, but like less like not like leasing, what is this? What's the point? Yeah. So. Yeah.

Marika [00:40:11] Well, here's the last question. One of the last questions, which is quite long. So I tried to reformulated because in the last two interviews people didn't really quite get it in the first place.

Marika [00:40:24] So, you've already talked about this telling just how to communicate and how to actually, you know, explain your business model and these kinds of things. But how would you describe actually the opportunities to overcome these challenges and have you had, you know, key successes? And was there something you did especially well, what you consider to actually see your impact on that?

Jeans [00:41:08] But again, so is it the opportunities that we've seen in this or?

Marike [00:41:12] Yeah. And what you do. You know, like a certain move or something like that where you've seen that work really well and you actually applied. I mean, of course, you've just been recently with the business. But maybe there was something where you said, yeah, that really engaged our consumers.

Jeans [00:41:38] Yeah, I mean, again, I think that what we're. What really gets our consumers motivated is how we're trying to close the loop. And that's what I've seen, right. And I think that's what has been working and people get excited about it. The fact that they can send jeans and we will make new ones out of them and also just how we have tried to be very transparent with everything because we can, because it's a very small process. So we are really much like these are the people we work with. This is, these are the certificates we have and people have been very responsive to that. And that's what we're doing well and that's what we will continue to do and build on. So. There's that. And the way that we're building on that, is, for example, we are working on this project called The Road to One Hundred, where we're trying to make a pair of jeans that's 100 percent from recycled jeans. So that would allow us to really completely close the loop and not use any new fresh raw materials, which is really interesting because when we did our LCA, the majority of the impact was coming from agricultural impact, not so much production or something like that. Yeah, so that's that's kind of like where we've seen that it's going well. And that's how we're trying to build on that image and concept simultaneously through this project, we're also able to kind of mix or drive innovation through mixing, both mechanical and chemical recycling, which to our knowledge, we haven't seen any other company doing that. Right. To generate material that contains both aspects. And yeah. So that's kind of. Yeah.

Marike [00:44:03] Transparency, hard facts, and these kind of things where they really feel that, you know, you're very open and don't try to greenwash and these kind of things because you don't need to. And that yeah. Sometimes it's like too much information can be confusing, but actually like being very transparent and trying to make the effort to explain it. And, you know, maybe sometimes in easy terms and stuff like that. But at least also that while the information is there. So take it if you want.

Jeans [00:44:36] Exactly. Exactly. And I think it also helps that we focus on one product, jeans, right. And are nothing more, again, it's a concept of simplicity and not too overwhelming. I

think companies that have multiple products... I just think it could be more challenging to be very consistent with the information that you're giving.

Marika [00:44:58] Yeah. Okay. Then, you know, we're coming to the outlook a little bit. So who would you identify as the key players to drive the change towards the center of fashion consumption in the future?

Jeans [00:45:11] Oh, well, I think. I think it's definitely a push between industry and government policymakers. Right. We also work with or try to be involved in policy related projects because I think that's where they can kind of open that policy window of opportunity where as industry we can come in and generate those changes. I think it's a push from both. I am a believer that it's the industry's responsibility to make sustainable fashion accessible. That's my personal opinion. But I not I think they play a really big role in that. And also governments and industry. But for example, I think the Green Act, that's going to be super interesting. So really good opportunities come from there. But I mean, that does not say that consumer don't play a role, of course, right. But for the real shift, I think it needs to come from there.

Marika [00:46:20] I mean, in the end, it's a dialog. If you have consumers who want to consume and you have companies that actually cover this demand, then yeah it's kind of. Yeah. You have to educate to show from the consumer side that you want something else and then you have to have also the companies that actually make the effort to make it possible also. So yeah it's on both sides, true. But I also agree with you that you really have to have also the infrastructure and the laws and everything in place that also push, well, companies that don't have, you know, these practices in place yet, too. You also give them, you know, really. Well, that's not incentive, but like the hard facts or the road towards, you know what, that has to happen because otherwise we don't have enough time to make it until 2030. Yeah. And then like in 10 years.

Jeans [00:47:25] No, totally. Exactly. Exactly. And I think, you know, with this argument, you want to make a distinction between some change and really big, in fact, impactful change. I think consumers have demonstrated that they have the power to make significant change and they have done it. I mean, there's that's why Zara and H&M have these conscious collections, because they know that there is a significant increase in consumers here. Else they wouldn't do it right. But then simultaneously, like you said, they're still consumers don't give a crap. But that's where the government needs to regulate that and make that easily accessible in a real manner where it isn't just saying, oh, this is cotton, so it's sustainable. No, you can only say it's

sustainable if: ...you know. Things like that. So and that's what I mean. I think we've gone a long way. But really, to hit the big numbers, we just need to shift from some governments and that industry to listen to some of these tasks, you know, objectives.

Marike [00:48:36] Good. So do you have any unspoken thoughts? Anything you would like to add?

Jeans [00:48:43] Well, all good.

Marike [00:48:46] That's fine. Yeah. I just I sometimes think people want to add something because then can I don't have any more questions, but I have really enjoyed talking to you was really interesting.

Jeans [00:48:56] And likewise. And to send over your thesis once you're done with that. I always love the reading for people.

Marike [00:49:04] Yeah. You can do that. It's going to be finished in like a month or so, like the end of May. It's not going to be super, super long, but at least you can read into it if you like. And then I'm just going to send it along and see maybe there's some level. Maybe not. But researchers like. Yeah, they as I have to say, like on this topic, it's not super advanced yet, which is interesting. Like, there's a lot of information out there, you know, like how consumers actually, you know, face some barriers or what they consider when purchasing something or even fashion. But what strategies or which barriers small and medium-sized enterprises in fashion and in Europe actually face is not really on the agenda yet. So that's really nice that I can have some insights on that. So, yeah, let's see. OK. Yeah. See your next meeting is in 10 minutes, so I'm gonna let you go.

[00:50:09] I'll be chatting and. Yeah. Good luck. Great success. Hope you get a really good mark.

[00:50:15] Yeah. I hope so, too. Right. Yeah. All right.

End of interview.

Appendix D: Interview 03 | Capsule Company

Interview Date: 17.04.2020

Interview Duration: 01:03:17 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: Founder

Marike [00:04:00] So... We're recording this and I'm just taking the recording to do the transcript afterwards. So basically it's just easier for me because I'm writing English and then I just want you to know you to know that there really no right or wrong answer. So just speak your mind, everything. What comes you know to your mind, just talk about it. Don't think about what I try to get from your answers or something like that. It's just really interesting because everybody thinks you know differently about it as something different with a business. So yeah, maybe you can tell me something about yourself, who you are. You know what you are. What is your position, the company and what your motivation is to develop or resell sustainable fashion.

Capsule [00:04:46] Yeah, I'm [Insert Name] and I have studied fashion design and did a master's in fashion in textile management, and I've I have been working in the fashion industry over 10 years. I think it's 12 years now and I've been at different companies, at fast fashion companies, and also in traditional brands. And I've passed several departments from design to marketing and also e-commerce. So I had a broad background in fashion. And I've always wanted to found my own fashion brand. And we moved from Hamburg to Berlin three years ago. And when I started to look for a new job in the fashion industry here in Berlin, it was difficult to find a job which matched my expectations because since I've been working in the fashion business so long, my last job was in marketing. I had a good salary and was at Otto group, which is a very fair company in the fashion industry. And here in Berlin, it was difficult to start at a company where they could meet my expectations. And then I decided to found my own brand. And when I started thinking about what I want to do, what type of brand it should be, then it was clear that it had to be a sustainable brand, because already three years ago, I thought it would be nonsense to start a fashion brand like all of the brands that already existed. I wanted to bring value to the fashion industry and especially after having worked so long in this business. I I saw the development. I saw the negative impact in the industry, especially Rana Plaza, was some event which really had an impact on me because after that I didn't feel

so good working in fashion anymore. Because the way we were working in the fashion industry, it has always been like that but when you are in this industry it's like normal for you, you don't ask if that's right or not. But then when you see behind the scenes from your suppliers in other countries then I began asking myself if this is correct, the way we work. And so I decided to found a sustainable fashion brand. And I wanted to start to manufacture in Germany because I know when I want to produce abroad, I had to make sure that it's really fair. It would be a work with lots of traveling and lots of controlling. And for me, traveling, traveling a lot and sending fabrics and other things around the world isn't sustainable as well. So I thought about how to make the distances as short as possible. And so I thought producing in Germany would be the best. And yes. Then I started to a bit of my supply chain, fully sustainable supply chain with certified sustainable fabric. And I found a small manufacturer in Germany, it's one of the last once you still have here because lots of German brands, they outsourced their production because it's much cheaper. Yes. To be honest, it's very expensive because I know the prices abroad in China, Bangladesh and so on. When they told me the price in Germany, I was kind of shocked. But I thought, okay, let's try it. Let's see, maybe people would buy fashion with good quality that is fairly produced. And I launched my first collection in August 2017. And I make timeless fashion designs and we interpreted fashion classics. It's pieces like a capsule collection for women, which consists of pieces of which I think every woman needs in the wardrobe and they are timeless. They are easy to combine. And for me, it's very important that you don't wear them just one season, but that you wear them perfectly your whole life. And I invest a lot in quality fabrics and also in a perfect fitting, a perfect sizing because that's also an important factor towards wear your clothes as long as possible. And I wanted to start with four collections each year. But I realized that it's far too much. And my customers, they don't need so many collections. So I slowed it down to two collections in a year. And they are very small collections. This first collection had four pieces and now each collection has something like 4 to 6 pieces. So it's just like a very small capsule collection with specific pieces where you can combine the whole collection with each other. And they are also easy to combine with your own wardrobe.

Marike [00:11:21] OK. Everything is manufactured in Germany then.

Capsule [00:11:25] Mm hmm. Yeah. And two years ago I changed from - before I produced everything in advance -And after the first two collections, I realized that if it costs you, when you start a collection, you don't know what the customer would buy and you don't know which size your customer will buy. And so I realized that I. I still have lots of pieces on stock.

Although I don't produce huge amounts, I started with 50 pieces per style. Then I switched to a made to order collection. So when the customer orders a piece, then it will be produced here in Berlin within one to two weeks.

Marike [00:12:16] Oh yeah. That's nice. A little bit like. Yeah. That's really sustainable, so you only produce what is then also sold. So what do you think consumers, in general, are considering most when purchasing fashion like?

Capsule [00:12:36] I would say the majority in fashion is very price sensitive. Because it really depends. It depends on the country. But I think in general, the majority is price sensitive and fashion. I think that fashion developed itself with fast fashion. Fashion became something which needs to be trendy, which is something which you change very quickly. And it's, I think, the majority, still, shops like that. But there are already some customers who are changing their minds. They are fed up with clothes and their quality, which you really can only wear one season. And also they are not willing to wear fashion, which was produced under unfair conditions. But I think the majority still...I think fashion is still not the number one topic when you think about sustainability, because I think the first topic is food, because you eat food. And this is something that which most people connect with healthiness and with something which really has an effect on them. And fashion isn't, although they wear it on their skin, is somehow still too far away.

Marike [00:14:20] Yeah, maybe also a bit too complex. OK. So what do you think that consumers actually face barriers when aiming to buy a sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Capsule [00:14:36] Yes, I think the barriers, they were much, much higher three years ago when I started. Because when I started, there were already some sustainable brands, but not many. And I think since last year there were so many sustainable brands on the market. And also the fast fashion brands started to be more sustainable. They started to have a sustainable collection somehow and somehow it's more normal than before. It's still... I think if you if you want to buy real sustainable fashion, which is really with sustainable fabrics and also with which was produced under unfair working conditions. Because if something someone like Zara makes a sustainable collection, you still don't know what kind of people produced it. And also the fabrics they use. Maybe they use organic cotton, but it's not certified and you can't be a hundred percent sure. I think it's a good start to make the consumers change their mind, to make them realize that there is an option. But I think the barriers that are still barriers for people who

want to buy real sustainable fashion because it's still expensive, more expensive because sustainable fabrics are expensive because manufacturing sustainably is expensive and because it's still a niche. It's still a niche because when there are enough sustainable fabrics on the market, then the prices will become lower and so on. But also the customers need to realize or need to be used to that fashion can't be cheaper than I don't know than a bread, for example, when you go to PRIMARK, you can buy a jeans that costs as much as a coffee you buy in a coffee shop. And I think customers must realize that this isn't normal. So somehow they must accept that fashion must be more expensive because there's much more labor behind it. And I think they must also accept that, or they must be trained to...

Marike [00:17:20] So, the education is kind of ...Is missing or that it's really complex to grasp the whole supply chain basically.

Capsule [00:17:31] Yes. Yeah. Yes, that's. And they all say that many people don't know how to look for quality. They don't know what criteria they need to look for. And lot of people even don't know what to check in the supply chain to know if it's really sustainable or not. So I think it's information. There's already lots of information but I think it still... doesn't reach the right people. Or it needs to be more easy to get. And it's I think sustainable fashion is still a niche. It needs to be more reachable for the majority.

Marike [00:18:20] Yeah. One second. Because you already know so much that I'm asking double questions. OK. How would you define a sustainable purchasing behavior?

Capsule [00:18:35] I would say it's just buying what you really need, which is very difficult because our whole society, they educated us to buy more and more to feel happy. And I think people who are real fashion victims, I was somewhat like that, too. I bought fashion because it was fun to buy fashion, it was fun to try new trends, to try new pieces. And I think it's important to really buy just the things you really need to know your, how do you call it, to know your "Bedürfnisse"?

Marike [00:19:23] Yeah, well, get only, what you said, that what you need or actually what fits you, you know, what your situations are. Yeah. I think what I hear is more like the less consumption overall.

Capsule [00:19:43] Yes. Yes. And it's I think also to invest in less pieces but more quality. Instead of ..because you don't really need so many fashion pieces. If you have good ones you don't need to buy, I don't know, I think the average was 30 pieces a year or something like that.

I'm not sure. But you don't need so many new pieces each year. And if you invest wisely and if you think you can, you can buy some pieces which are more trendy or which a fashion to mix it with your basic wardrobe. But if you are always fetching the new trends, then, which you will throw away next season, then this is not a sustainable way of consuming.

Marike [00:20:41] I think you already said it also that has developed a bit over time, the consumer awareness, and where do you see the most potential in consumers applying a more sustainable purchasing behavior?

Capsule [00:20:55] The most potential, you mean in the area of fashion?

Marike [00:21:00] Yes. So I think we already, you know, talked about it, that there are some people who are super, super, you know, have already this really sustainable mindset and also, I don't know, live really like minimalistic and only have what they need etc. So these are actually maybe not the people. Well, these might be your customers, right. But there's maybe a lot more potential somewhere else, meaning that there may be some consumers who are kind of aware. There are some who don't really care. So what do you see the most potential still towards sustainable fashion, maybe also in the media or, you know, like really broad actually, like whatever comes to your mind.

Capsule [00:21:57] Yes, I think to reach those people, I think somehow you, it must be reachable for them. It must be very convenient for them to buy sustainable fashion. And there is this price point, I think and somehow you you'll need to meet not exactly the same price point, but I think you must get quite near to that because if someone buys fashion at H&M, you can't expect her or him to buy fashion, which is, I don't know, three or four times more expensive. So somehow it's the price point. And it must also be reachable because for me, it's the same when I want to buy sustainable fashion. It's not easy because I do lots of research online in the shops. You must know the shops and the shops, they don't have a large assortment and it must be... I think somehow it's also the task of the big brands to imply sustainability. That's because the people who buy at H&M, Zara and I don't know all these big companies, they don't have the time and they don't have the mindset to make the research because they are not really interested in it and it must somehow cross their way in their everyday life. So the way Zara and H&M are already implementing it is very good because they know, yes, there is sustainable fashion. But to be honest, it's greenwashing. It's not a sustainable fashion. And somehow they must also raise their standards. They must raise standards. And also the prices in order to educate the customer.

Marike [00:24:06] So basically what you're saying is that don't make it the task of the yet so aware or not so much caring consumers, but maybe more doing your own homework and then making it easier to just well, shop, but that you don't have to worry about that it is not a good quality, it's not produced in good labor conditions and so on. So maybe, the bigger potential is basically on the company's side.

Capsule [00:24:42] It must be both sides. Because if no one buys it then sure they won't produce something nobody wants to buy. I think it's both because if you don't offer it then there are not enough people who would make the effort to buy it because most people, they are convenient.

Marike [00:25:08] Yes, OK! I think you already said a little bit, but how would you characterize your main customer group? That's pretty short.

Capsule [00:25:20] It's women between 30, or the middle and end of 40s. Who care for their fashion, they buy fashion because they want to underline their personality with fashion. And they care for the conditions under which their clothes are made but I wouldn't say that they are hardcore sustainable customers. It's like they are implementing a sustainable way of life more and more in their lifestyle. It's those people who are ready to make this efforts to buy, because I'm a small brand and they must make the effort to find me. And I think it's people who are ready to change their life to make it more sustainable. And because they realize that the way we are consuming until now, that this is not the right way.

Marike [00:26:45] OK. So could you actually. ..so, it's not a big customer group, actually, it's really focused. So could you differentiate any subgroups still?

Capsule [00:27:02] In how far?

Marike [00:27:03] Maybe you know that you said, like OK, they're normally more already aware towards sustainability, but some maybe not so much. Could you also say that, I don't know, to not be leading, but like somebody who normally, you know, supports H&M but really wants to invest only one time in a really good T-shirt.

Capsule [00:27:27] I would rather say it's women because my my price point is a little bit higher. I try to meet the price point between, I think it's something between middle segment and upper segment. And it's women who don't shop at H&M but who have enough money to buy the High Street labels you know, it's like, for example, Sandro or Maje, something in this in this case, or Closed. Something like that. And I think also women who buy at Zara and H&M

and who want to invest in a sustainable piece of fashion. But I think it's rather the group of women who have the salary to afford this kind of fashion.

Marike [00:28:41] So what do you think matters most to them when they purchase from you?

Capsule [00:28:59] I think what lots of women tell me is that they like the design because it doesn't look ... in German, you would say "Öko" because sustainable fashion sometimes, or for some people it still has this image that it's how do you say English? Yeah. Not fashionable, hippie. And it's really modern. It's modern. It's a good design. And it's different from it's different from lots of other sustainable fashion brands. We have lots of streetwear and casual wear in the sustainable segment. But there are not so many brands yet that make fashionable fashion.

Marike [00:29:47] Is there a strategy you are following concerning consumers purchasing behavior. Basically, well, if you if you have like a strategy, how you want to change consumers minds.

Marike [00:30:13] Yeah, it's the mixture of education and meeting their needs. In my Instagram post, Newsletter and Facebook posts, my social media marketing; So it's a mix of ... I tell them why I use organic cotton or why I use those sustainable materials. Why they are good for the nature, for human and for them, for their skin. And I also imply things like stylings or like fashion topics that may interest them. So it's a mixture because if it would be just education, it would be boring. And I try to meet them at topics which are interesting, which may be interesting for them.

Marike [00:31:11] Maybe also a different kind of time horizon you're looking at. So, you know, for example, you mentioned education. So that's actually kind of, you know, long term thinking, maybe changing their ideas and so on. Or, you know sometimes that might be also different for you because you're running a business. Right.

Capsule [00:31:36] I started to I started to collaborate with other with other brands from different areas and also lots of fashion, of course, accessories, shoes and so on. And I started to implement brands from your everyday life that are sustainable because it's also my task to make it easy for them to implement a sustainable way of living. And I collaborate with those brands and promote them to them so that it's easy for them to reach those goals. So it's me who must make the research and not them. And so in that way it's like, it's also like an education. So that they see are also other things which can bring more sustainability in my life, like, I

don't know, furniture or food and so on. And to make it easy for them to implement holistic, sustainable lifestyle.

Marike [00:32:42] Do you consider these strategies as a burden or more as an opportunity for your business?

Capsule [00:32:52] I would say it's more an opportunity. It's somehow a burden because it's not easy. It's lots of work. It's lots of work. Because somehow it's like a pioneer path because you must... it's not difficult. It's difficult to find all those suppliers who are sustainable, to check if they are really sustainable. And to balance this, because pricing is also difficult because I don't have the normal margins you have in the fashion industry because if I would put the normal margins on my pieces, that would be so expensive that nobody can afford them. And somehow you could say that it's a burden, but for me, it's like an everyday challenge, I work to make a good product and to me to have a good service for my customers and for me, it's really more an opportunity because I think it's... For me, it's more interesting to try something new than going the path which has already been gone before.

Marike [00:34:05] Yeah. Yeah, I understand that. So how exactly do you communicate it? Well, you already said it, but a little bit more. How do you communicate a sustainable purchasing approach to your consumers? On what methods have you tried to get across to them?

Capsule [00:34:26] Yes, I think. And somehow I try to be like a role model. I often tell them my story, how I was a fashion victim and how I started to implement a sustainable lifestyle, what difficulties I have and how I'm doing it and I'm not perfect at all, I'm not vegan, and I'm not zero waste, but I try to implement that more and more in my life and I tell them what are the positive facts and how I do it. And I show them that it's not about sacrificing something or to compromise on something, but that it really brings quality in your life. And I think that's an important way to communicate, not like someone that tells them what they have to do. But it's like more telling them what kind of options they have and what kind of improvement it can bring.

Marike [00:35:42] That sounds really relatable, you know.

Capsule [00:35:48] And I work a lot with influencers and bloggers. I just promote modern brands, I don't know if modern is the right word but I think you know what I mean. It's to get away from this from this hippie image. And I work together with modern influencers and

bloggers to show them that living a sustainable lifestyle can be modern, can be cool. And to them, it doesn't have to be something about ... You don't have to miss anything.

Marike [00:36:34] Yeah. So you use social media extensively to engage with your customers?

Capsule [00:36:40] Yes. Yes.

Marike [00:36:41] OK. Well, how do customers respond to this communication then?

Capsule [00:36:52] It's difficult because I'm just an online brand. And I get some feedback, but it's very rare. Because online it's somehow very anonymous as well. Even when they send me pieces back, then I write an email and ask them what I like to know more about their behavior, why they returned it. You don't always get an answer but there are some customer who are really, really very nice. And they give me feedback that I can really work with. And there's also lots of positive feedback and lots of support. And I think, yeah, that's why I'm still working on it. It's because I see that I'm reaching someone that it's the way I'm going is the right way because there's much more positive feedback than negative feedback. And I had a pop up shop at the beginning of this year because for me, it's important to meet my customers in person. And I think it's actually easier to communicate with them and to get to know them when you see them in person. So I had this pop up shop and it was a great experience because next to my brands I had other fashion brands and accessories and we had events every day. Events about all kinds of topics across sustainable living like vegan food, yoga and so on. So it was to show the people a sustainable lifestyle. And then the feedback was very, very good, it was just positive feedback. And lots of people were very amazed how, yes, how attractive, how attractive a sustainable way of living can be and how good, how good sustainable fashion can look like.

Marike [00:39:02] Mm hmm. So basically two different types of consumers respond differently?

Capsule [00:39:15] Of course, the positive feedback I get is just from customers, which are my peer group, where there is a real fit. And yeah of course, I think there are also may be customers... Let me think about it. Sometimes I get the feedback that it's too expensive. Then I must honestly say, yes, I can understand that but then there's not a match.

Marike [00:39:52] Well, yeah, I fully understand. But then do you then also try to, you know, persuade them a little bit or do you say then, okay. Well it's not a match so maybe not.

Capsule [00:40:06] Yes. I also try to explain why I have those prices and I also have a blog where they can get a look behind the scenes. And I try to be as transparent as possible so that people understand why my fashion is so expensive. And yes, of course, I try to persuade them. It really depends. It really depends on the people and on the situation. Yeah.

Marike [00:40:45] Yeah, I totally agree. So do you face any challenges when trying to bring the message of sustainable purchasing across? And what do you consider as the main barrier?

Capsule [00:40:59] The main barrier, I think, is ...what lots of my friends tell me, they tell me it's if they say it's not convenient. I think the most ...especially women who have a family and also women who are working who don't have a family. It's not convenient, because you have so little time in your daily life to consume things. And fashion is not the number one, you'll have other things to consume and for them, it's not convenient because you must do the research. You invest the time and you can't just go out the door and find a sustainable fashion shop next next to your door. The main thing. It's not convenient enough. It's the first argument. And the second is, they say it's not fashionable enough. I would say it's convenience and the design.

Marike [00:42:04] Yeah. And maybe was there something that you did try to do and it didn't work out, you know, as you intended it to do?

Capsule [00:42:30] I would say yes, when I started I wanted to have lower price points. I had to raise them, especially with the made to order collections, because it's of course, much more expensive to make one piece after each order. And because I wanted to be reachable, not really affordable, but reachable. And I really wanted to meet the price point between...I wanted to be a bit more expensive than COS and & other stories that I wanted to be cheaper than Sandro and Maje and Closed and so on. And it's very difficult to realize that. But I had to raise the prices, which is very... I think that's the main thing that I had to change it. Still, I'm still working on it. I'm still working on it because there are different factors where you can work on to make the prices lower. But when you have the overall view on everything, of course, your business had to work. Because it can't just always be an investment. It started as an investment and now I must work on establishing my business.

Marike [00:43:55] Yeah. And how would you describe opportunities to overcome these tendencies you just described? Also related to influencing consumers purchasing behavior towards a more sustainable one. And have there been key successes, you know, like you already explained a lot, like how you tried to educate your customers and how you tried to... Sometimes

to explain why, you know, you do things as you do and maybe to, you know, people who are allowed to know your core customer group. So how would you describe these opportunities to overcome these challenges you are facing, obviously.

Capsule [00:44:40] I didn't understand it yet. Sorry.

Marike [00:44:47] So. Let me rephrase it maybe.

Marike [00:44:55] Well, first of all you said, you know, it's an opportunity to your business to actually have something to tell. Right. To tell your story and to tell how your badges on how to produce more sustainable and why it's good for, you know, yourself, the society, environment and so forth. And however you have you know, you face challenges trying to get this message across because, well, it's very complex and, you know, these kinds of things. And well, to overcome these challenges and also to engage more with customers who are not yet your customer. Right. What do you think are, you know, opportunities to or maybe not also now, but also in the future. And was there something for you which, you know, you did already especially well or, you know, try to imagine.

Capsule [00:45:53] I think that influencers play an important role. the influencers I work with are sustainable influencers but they are also fashion influencers who have lots of followers. And I think more normal people, normal influencers need to promote this message to reach the majority. Because if not, sustainability will always be a niche. I think the role models off the majority or of the normal people, they must promote this message.

Marike [00:46:48] OK, so we're coming to an end almost. Well, you already said it. But who would you identify as the key players to drive the change to a more sustainable purchasing behavior in the future?

Capsule [00:47:05] Yes, I think it's, as I said, the influencers of course. And also the big companies, I also see it's the task of them to do that. Yeah. And I don't know, maybe also the government in somehow, I think that somehow there must be a kind of pressure on the big companies or on the society to implement this. Yeah. You know, it's it's a whole network of different factors in our society which influences the way we live, the way we consume. And maybe it's something out of those three things like the governments and companies and also those influencers or the role models in society.

Marike [00:48:07] What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a sustainable business like yours, you know, with regards to changing consumers' purchasing behavior?

Capsule [00:48:30] I think I would say I would give them the advice to collaborate because I realized with collaboration you get much faster to your goals, to collaborate with different maybe influencers and maybe the government or other other organizations. And also with other entrepreneurs. I had a network of different designers and so on and it helps a lot to connect with them. I would say you must do social media these days, I think it's the marketing channel number one. And do you say you need a long breath?

Marike [00:49:29] Yeah. Don't give up.

End of Interview.

Appendix E: Interview 04 | Online Shop Company

Interview Date: 21.04.2020

Interview Duration: 42:37 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: Founder

Marike [00:00:11] OK. So I wanted to mention that it's confidential, that I'm recording this and so on and so forth. OK. And that there are no right or wrong answers. So I really care about your point of view and what you've experienced. And so I don't really I just don't think like, OK, what does he want to hear from me, but more what I think about it. So maybe we can start just by you. Tell me about yourself. You know what your position is in a company. But also, what is your motivation to develop a research sustainable fashion?

Online Shop [00:01:04] Yeah. I'm the founder of Online Shop and the reason why I founded the company is because I started to and look more into conscious living. And I guess I just never thought about it. But doing my research, I found that fashion is actually the most polluting industry after oil and I think the second part I really know that it's exploiting people on the other side of the world. And yeah, all the things I read made me not want to consume normal fashion anymore. So I started looking for alternatives and I quickly found that there are a lot of really cool modern brands out there that are affordable, at least from my budget at the time. But I couldn't find them in one place. So, you know, both offline shops and online shops that existed where either super "Öko" or they look like from the 90s basically and since I started a lot changed in the scene but at the time I thought OK, I can't be the only one who wants to shop fashion more sustainably and it has to be curated and presented in a much more modern and convenient way. And that's how I started Online Shop.

Marike [00:02:35] Yeah, that's good. So just also really short. So since when does the company exist and how does your business create value?

Online Shop [00:02:51] And so I founded the company 2018 and we basically create value by curating the products first. And so we're looking and really ensure that they're in the price segment and also kind of within the style preferences of our target audience. And then we invest a lot in tech. So we're trying to make the platform as convenient as possible. And we really strive to compete with big conventional fashion online players, we are still far away from that

but that's our goal. And lastly, we also look for the brands. So we synchronize the inventory of the brands. We are also planning to integrate fully with them so they don't have to leave their own online shop when they get an order for us. Because we think they should concentrate on making beautiful fashion and not on inserting their product into a different marketplace.

Marike [00:04:02] So what do you think consumers are considering most when purchasing fashion in general?

Online Shop [00:04:12] Style. I think style first and then price. Or a combination of the two. I think what I've learned in the last two and a half years is that there are very few people who are idealistic enough to buy something that is not in line with how they want to be seen. So you always... fashion is a way to express our personality. And people will never buy something that's less their style just because it's organic or sustainable or fairly produced. The same budgets. Very few people will buy stuff that's not in their budget because they think it's sustainable. So you have to hit to those two for people to shop.

Marike [00:05:16] Do you think that consumers face barriers when aiming to buy sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Online Shop [00:05:36] So, yes, I do. I think the first one is that ... So I mean we're talking a bit about people who want to actively buy sustainable fashion, right?

Marike [00:05:58] Yes.

Online Shop [00:05:59] Well, yeah, I think the first thing is still availability. I mean, if you google sustainable fashion, you probably find avocadostore and one or two big brands such Armedangels, maybe. What's their name ... in Hamburg. Lanius. Big ones basically. Or Jan'n'June. So those ones come up and I mean, for the brands, it's fine. I think Avocadostore is a bit like Amazon. So if you are already in the topic they're fine, you'll find what you're looking for. But when I started on the topic, Avocadostore completely overwhelmed me. Because they have such a big range of products and different budgets and different styles and a lot of different terms and conditions apply. So I was really like, oh god, I'll never buy new clothes again. So that's the first one, like really finding brands that have your style and your budget. And the second one is kind of trust because there's no strict definition about what's ethical, what's sustainable, what's fair, what's vegan. It's all within ... every brand can just say the vegan or they're friendly for the environment. And I mean, you see the big brands doing it all the time. And I'm sure they are good for the environment, whatever they're doing there. But it's very

difficult for a consumer to know when it's a marketing strategy. And when the whole DNA of that brand is really sustainable, and I think that's also what really shocked me at the beginning. The more you start reading, the more perfect you want products to be, so you forget that they also have a long way to go. And I mean that still part of this world and you can't produce at good prices, beautiful fashion and do everything perfectly. It just doesn't work. Our economy isn't made for it, so...I think those two.

Marike [00:08:33] I actually agree, but yeah. How would you define a sustainable purchasing behavior?

Online Shop [00:08:43] We don't call it sustainable, we call it conscious. Because I do think that the very first step is making an informed decision. So not just buying something simply because you like something, but always checking. I mean, it will be perfect to do a background check on the brand. Quick Google, just what are saying about themselves. But also really asking yourself, do you really need it? It's the easiest and strongest way to have an impact is to buy less and only buy stuff you like and you will wear for a long time and that suits you and fits in with the clothes you already have. So I think before you can, becoming an expert on sustainability and fairness and so on, the easiest thing is to just consume more consciously.

Marike [00:09:48] How has this consumer awareness of conscious fashion, sustainable fashion developed over time? What do you think?

Online Shop [00:09:59] Historically seen, or?

Marike [00:10:00] Well yeah, just like in recent years.

Online Shop [00:10:12] I actually read a book about it and apparently, we are in the third wave. So the first wave was in the 90s? Where "Die Grünen" were born and they were all running around, I don't know how to say it in English, in "Jutesäcken", Joschka Fischer etc. That was the first. And the second was sometime in the 2000s. I think it was with the ozone layer and stuff like that. So people started to be more conscious. And in both cases, also, big brands started to launch sustainable collections, but people didn't buy it. What I think is different now is that at that time, it was a few people that said we have to change the way we live. And they were very idealist and very extreme. So they couldn't win the majority of people for their cause, even though they were very loud. I think what has changed now is that even the broad majority sees that something has to change. And when we see climate changing from year to year, we're still lucky in Germany, we just get warmer summers and warmer winters.

But in some parts of the world, the forests are burning all summer. And you're really a victim of what we're producing here. And so I think the current trend is actually here to stay because the urgency is much higher. We can feel what's happening even if a lot of people still don't grasp this and there are so many new and cool initiative coming that I think will step by step, become more aware and find more brands that do have a purpose or an impact.

Marike [00:12:11] So it has increased to a certain extent, that's true.

Online Shop [00:12:16] Yeah. and it will get even stronger.

Marike [00:12:24] I hope so, too. How would you characterize your main customer group?

Online Shop [00:12:36] We're changing it a little bit at the moment. All right, it's going to be a mix. So I mean, sustainable fashion is not always, but in some parts still a bit more expensive. So it's not H&M but it's more, I don't know, COS and up. And so we are targeting currently only women, men are planned. We always say end of 20, 30 plus but I think it's more 30 plus who earn a good salary, so after this first or second raise. And that do have a certain awareness or consciousness towards the environment or sustainability issues. And if it's only following kind of the trend of first organic cotton and now more natural furniture in their home and so on. Who do like this idea of being a conscious consumer in a way...sometimes often also young mothers because becoming a mother, I see it with my friends is very strong...So it makes people very sensitive to the topic. And with the merger, we're adding an older target group now, so 40 plus who are really like foot down in their jobs, successful women that can afford nice fashion and that are saying, you know, if I buy a pair of shoes for, I don't know, 400 euros, the conditions of production should reflect that. And not it shouldn't be produced in like a factory by somebody earning less than they need for life. So, again, a bit of a different group, so, they're not kind of lifestyle inspired, but they're more like reasonable people.

Marike [00:14:48] So you already said it a little bit but how would you describe the level of awareness of your customers towards sustainability related to fashion?

Online Shop [00:15:02] I mean, I always call them low-hanging fruits, so people that are already super aware, but as they like nice fashion and until now took on the challenge of researching stuff they like, I think this is first obviously our key customers. For the other ones, I think it would be a bit more difficult. I think we have to get them through nice storytelling. And thankfully, a lot of the brands are really making beautiful fashion. So I think it's just a way of getting in front of them and then having a nice story to tell around it. Because I noticed also

with friends that as soon as you get people a bit sensible to the topic or like open to the topic by saying that brand is so cool, they produce in the slums of Mumbai with people, it's just one arm and half of it goes to charity. Then, you know, suddenly they like, oh, I want to be a fair consumer and I want to do more of this because of this cool story if somebody says, oh, your jeans are nice. And so I think it's giving them the kind of narrative to get excited about it basically. But it's not gonna be easy I think because it's so much easier to just walk in to COS and shop your favorite pieces and not think about where they're from.

Marike [00:16:42] So when we all talk about these consumers who are not yet well so aware or maybe they are aware, but they don't get to the point where they really follow through to shop consciously all the time. But sometimes still have this inner feeling of, well, I want to be sustainable on the one hand, but I also want to be fashionable. So, you know, here's the trade-off. So, OK, then...

Online Shop [00:17:11] And making it easy for people, I think. So we're trying to be very positive about everything and not preach it so that people feel more empowered about shopping sustainable fashion rather than you have to do it. Everything else is bad. So we want to be more like, well, great. You bought one pair of sustainable jeans. Don't worry about the jumper you bought at, I don't know, H&M. So It's about the little steps.

Marike [00:17:42] What do you think matters most to them when they purchase from your shop?

Online Shop [00:18:00] I think ... I don't know. Something we need to find out. I guess that you have the look and feel of a normal online shop. So we don't look super ethical. And we tried to have this conscious ... I always like to say this organic coffee vibe. So you can kind of have this feeling to feel good about yourself. I think that while still having all the comfort you normally have when shopping fashion. I mean, we want it to do it a bit more subtle so we're an online shopping, we're not an education platform. We want to like, yeah, make it easy for them and nice to shop sustainable fashion. And then maybe through emails, blog posts here and then say, OK, how do I shop more consciously or give them the tools to continue doing it.

Marike [00:19:14] Well, it there a strategy you're following concerning changing consumers purchasing behavior.

Online Shop [00:19:30] Yeah. We don't have a strict strategy yet. My vision is that long term... so we already created a questionnaire for brands to kind of find out how sustainable they are

and we want to develop that over time, so that probably will take a few years, but that at some point they actually have to put in the exact numbers of how much water went into one garment and so on. And we need a certain market power to do that, obviously, so that we can give the brands kind of an impact report at the end of a year. To say OK how much did you sell? And then our system kind of generates a similar report, we have a report and our customers will have a report as well. So it basically says, OK, thanks for your purchases at Online Shop this year, thanks to shopping with us, you saved twenty thousand liters of water, and you paid school fees for five children and so on, so they get a feeling for their impact which might make them make them more conscious and more aware.

Marike [00:20:57] Yeah. I think also what you mentioned before, like coming from the positive and not, you know, trying to educate them a little bit more subtle. You know, like making it easy for them, it's more I wouldn't say directly surface level, but a little bit like, you know, like giving them the hints and also making them a little bit more aware of the impact by informing, but also by encouraging. Well, this is a rather long term what you describe right now. But is there also a difference regarding the time horizons when you are, you know, choosing a certain strategy because of the end of the day you are still a business and you tried to enhance this conscious purchasing behavior. How do you match that?

Online Shop [00:22:05] I think if people want to shop, they will. At the moment, we're not at the point where we can be so radical that we were even talking about having like a pop up saying "do you need this?" kind of. And I think I mean, at the end of the day, for instance Patagonia does it. They tell people how to fix their clothes instead of buying new ones. And I think that if you have customers already interested kind of in the sustainability topic, I think that might even make them trust more. You know, if they have that feeling like, OK, they don't just want to sell us anything, they actually want us to make a difference. And so that's one idea I had, which would be quite extreme. But apart from that, we are actually creating content. I didn't know around organic cotton and when it's called fair and so on. So really to build trust with the people first and I think. You know, as I said, it's a journey. I think people will probably switch more and more to sustainable fashion first and maybe even go a little bit into vintage. And at some point, I mean, at some point you start noticing that you just don't need so much anymore. If you buy good quality stuff, you don't need a new jumper every year because it lasts for a long time. So I think the change in consumer behavior will also come maybe not as quickly and extreme as for somebody like me who really invests in the topic. But I think step by step

and hopefully, there will be a whole trend, maybe also already kicked off with Corona, that people just notice that they don't need that much to be happy.

Marike [00:24:27] So do you consider these strategies as a burden or as an opportunity for your business? And if so, why?

Online Shop [00:24:39] No, I think it's more an opportunity. I mean, if you do something radical, if we do something like, "do you really need it?" Check out. I'm sure it will bring us press and people will want to buy something and do that. So...no, I think it's an opportunity. It's also getting in contact with people, right. Normally you go to a website and you just shop. And suddenly there's a pop up saying, are you sure you want this? Or somebody saying and you know, the materials you're buying, there's actually not so good. And then get better informed. I think at the end of the day, it's a way of getting into contact with our customers and making them partners and not just consumers and I think it's nice. I think if they feel more like a part of a whole movement it will make them more keen to be really proud of it.

Marike [00:25:54] Yeah. You have something to tell basically, right? So how do you communicate this? Well, you call it a conscious purchasing approach to consumers?

Online Shop [00:26:19] Mainly through our blog and sometimes through Instagram posts on the topic. I also had some workshops like How to Consume More Consciously, which I'd like to do more often. But for the moment, that's it's.

Marike [00:26:40] OK. And which main message straight tried to get across when communicating?

Online Shop [00:26:58] Yeah, basically to think and to yeah, to not just say, oh, it's nice I'll buy it, but to think about it...I used to buy so much stuff I really didn't need. I never wore, I didn't feel comfortable in. To really first checking in with yourself if you're happy about it. And then if you want to go a step further, look at what materials it's made out of, if it's certified, do a quick read up on the brand if you like the company's purpose...I mean, they don't have to be super sustainable. It could also be an up and coming designer coupled with different backgrounds where you say, okay, that's cool, I like this story. But it's not just buying because of the product, but because of the whole package kind of.

Marike [00:27:57] Well, yeah to provide guidance more or less to make it easier to become more consciously or not shop at all or less or whatever.

Online Shop [00:28:10] And you have to care for the material. I mean, if you buy something out of silk and you don't even have an iron... Yeah. You will wear it once, right.

Marike [00:28:39] How do customers respond to this communication?

Online Shop [00:28:46] And yeah, maybe because my Instagram was done by interns for a long time we do speak to young people but also mostly the people that follow us, I think they really like it because so far we only get positive feedback in the workshops were always cool. And so it seems to strike a chord. And so I also wanted to have those blog posts because when I started on the topic, I had no idea where to start and everybody just told me what not to do. And during workshops many people said I didn't even know that it's that easy, you know, that you can start so easily and have an impact because they all thought OK so now I always have to do a huge research and five brands will remain. But that you can already have a huge impact simply by changing your purchasing behavior, and that applies to everything.... most people didn't think so. And I think it takes the fear and also the topic I always like to stress is there's so many aspects of sustainable fashion or eating or electronics and it's best to think about what you're really passionate about. And if it's animals, then maybe it's vegan for you, or if its environment or people then it's yeah, it's different stuff, or local production or whatever. And then you'll have much quicker, much quicker success with the whole thing because you can do one thing right. And then it's easier to become more and more sustainable at the end of the day.

Marike [00:30:38] And do you think that different types of consumers respond differently? Also, you know, maybe also in your private life, maybe not just your customers per se, but like in general, when you are telling your story or when you give your workshops and you know.

Online Shop [00:31:03] I mean, I have a lot ... Especially my friends, they say for example yeah, your Instagram is so beautiful, I really want to shop there (and then they never do). And then I have other friends that are more into the topic and they want much more information. So they want us to post much more facts and explain much more. So it's it's extremely different. Some people really just want to trust us that we ask the standard that we are doing our homework and for them fashion is first. And then others really want the story around it and want to learn and want to indulge themselves in the topic and start from there. So, it's...extremely, it's a fine line to not kind of lose the people who only want to buy fashion, because I think that's the majority. While at the same time entertaining the more idealistic people that are already invested in the topic.

Marike [00:32:12] Yeah. Yes. So kind of who you target with your posts and with your communication and your what you're putting on your blog and what you're telling the peoples is difficult because it's a broad audience. But what do you consider as the main barriers.

Online Shop [00:32:47] To getting the message across? Well, I think a lot of... humans in general don't like to see changes in the way they live. So I had a huge discussion about veganism with my dad over breakfast when he was eating his soy yogurt and drinking his coffee with oat milk. So he was eating completely vegan and was talking bad about vegans. And I think it's just because he doesn't like to eat his steak two times per week. My parents already really leveled it down and he doesn't want to be criticized. Right. And I think it's the same for fashion. We have to be super super careful... I already had a few people telling me, oh, if I shop on your website, I always have to shop on your website. No, because your impact is much bigger if you buy a jumper you really like on our website and then a pair of pants from a brand that's maybe not so sustainable, but that really fits you and that you'll wear until it falls apart. So basically, again, what I said before, we're a shop, people want to shop and we are not an educational platform. And I think walking this thin line of, like still making the people that are interested in it know that we're doing our job and really curating the brands by a sustainable standard, but on the other hand also making sure that if my friends, I don't know, Caro, wants to shop a nice t-shirt, she doesn't feel pressured to change her entire lifestyle because she's not ready for it. Again, this subtlety comes in that after a while, she'll probably get to it herself.

Marike [00:34:54] Yeah. So basically your main customer group is already well served with your shop because they know the topic, they know well, they know their way around, basically. But then if you want to go to a bigger audience and maybe also try to persuade some new customers to switch basically to a more conscious lifestyle or conscious purchasing behavior, and you want to give them the opportunity to make it easier for them to start somewhere, then it might be a bit difficult because that education is sometimes still a bit missing. What you mentioned like that they don't know how to know what is right and what's wrong.

Online Shop [00:35:38] I think a lot of people ask to change their lifestyle radically. And if they get the feeling that you want to force them to do it, they will feel hesitant to shop with us. So, yes, I think it's more like, you know, making it comfortable for them to shop with us, even though they don't want to live a conscious lifestyle or they're not ready for it yet.

Marike [00:36:21] Did you have something that didn't work out as intended?

Online Shop [00:36:27] No, so far not.

Marike [00:36:28] Fine. OK. And now speaking a bit more on a positive end. You know, you have some challenges we discussed. And but this also, of course, always an opportunity to tell you a story and, you know, to actually gain trust and so on. So have you had key successes in that maybe or something you did especially well or you have the feeling?

Online Shop [00:37:00] Not crazy successes... I think what works is always going out and talking to people. So I noticed that, and I think [Insert Name] as well, whenever we go out with the product and tell people about it, there's a much higher chance they buy from it because most people don't know the brands and we are a new Website. So I think personal selling is super important. I would say that Instagram looks well, too. But I could imagine that we're also losing potential buyers directly to the brands or going to Zalando because some of the brands are on Zalando as well. Simply because the shopping ...Yeah, it's more convenient there or they have more trust.

Marike [00:37:57] So we're coming to an end. One of the last questions is who would you identify as, you know, the key players to drive the change towards sustainable conscious fashion consumption in the future?

Online Shop [00:38:23] Well, I do think influencers, especially if they do it in a positive way, I don't know. What's her name again? Also from Hamburg...well, forget it. I guess if, you know, if people live kind of a desirable lifestyle, I think more people and, you know, are inspired by that. And that's also something I see with friends. But they follow somebody who's, I don't know, super sustainable and lives a very healthy lifestyle, they often want that, too. And I think it's nice. And obviously the brands making ehm..I mean, it's a bit of a pyramid, right, but you have the big number of brands that have to produce fashion that people actually want to buy. And they have to produce it obviously in a more and more sustainable way to make the point. And then you need to distribute it and I think we can be a big player in that just by giving them all a platform, so kind of a one-stop shop for all brands. And then as I said influencers or magazines that really have a huge reach and get it up to a lot of people.

Marike [00:39:55] Interesting, because influencers and so on were mentioned before also, and I also think that that's, you know, you have to have people or maybe already established customer base to make it just a little bit more normal and trustworthy to just, you know, make it live like a no brainer to make it, you know.

Online Shop [00:40:22] Yes and desirable. I mean, what influencers often do, I mean, especially kind of the lifestyle, fashion, beauty ones as they make beautiful pictures and very,

very yummy looking healthy food. And I think if they also promote sustainable fashion, it's a whole lifestyle package that looks nice. And then you want a part of it basically. So I do think they play a key role in it actually.

Marike [00:40:57] What advice would you give someone who wants to start a sustainable business with regards to changing consumers purchasing behavior?

Online Shop [00:41:13] Yes, I think you really have to go for the needs of people. For instance, I have an eco nail polish remover. And it just doesn't work. So I went even though the bottle is still pretty full, I went and bought the cheap working, not sustainable version. So you have to build real alternatives. I think people that have already gotten the message are already living a sustainable lifestyle. And now the question is how to get to the masses. And you only get to the masses if you present them with a product that is at least as good as what's already on the market. Unless you can produce it cheaper, then it can also be a bit worse. But, you know, paying for a nail polish remover that doesn't work where I can get one for 70 cents that works perfectly... It just doesn't make sense to me. So. Yeah.

Marike [00:42:22] Nice. Nice ending. So is there any anything you would like to add?

Online Shop [00:42:29] No. Thank you!

End of interview.

Appendix F: Interview 05 | Workwear Company

Interview Date: 29.04.2020

Interview Duration: 55:43 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: Founder

Marike [00:00:34] Hello! I'm happy that it worked out, actually. I was really looking for some interviewers who were happy to do that. So I'm happy you are doing this with me. Maybe I'm just going to introduce a little bit myself. So, yeah. My name is Marike. I'm originally from Hamburg. Or close to Hamburg. And I've lived there for a couple of years, studied there and now I moved to the Netherlands to study there for one year my master's in sustainable entrepreneurship at the University of Groningen. And. Well, yeah. Then Corona came and then I kind of, you know, left the country and went back to Germany. And it doesn't really matter because I'm really at the last months of my studies anyways. So there was no real difference to me. And yeah, now we moved to Berlin. And it's my first week here. So, I mean, I know the city, but yeah, we just moved in. We have now a new flat, so it was kind of busy now. But I'm happy to be here and, you know, settle a little bit and yeah. So I'm doing my last things for my thesis to finalize that. And it's about, I already said what the topic was, but it's about, you know, sustainable fashion and how small labels can actually do something against the fast fashion purchasing behavior of consumers and what strategies and what difficulties and challenges and everything around that they encounter. And that's my topic because I think it's really interesting, like sustainable fashion really interests me. And also, yeah, I just saw in my private life that, you know, everybody is really into sustainability. But then at fashion, it kind of ...not stops but it's not on the agenda. It's not the first thing and I wanted to know why. So that's why I came to this topic.

Workwear [00:02:48] So you mean, for example, like a lot of the mindfulness topics, like, for example, being vegetarian, there are things out there that are more yeah, they're more popular and sustainable fashion is still behind.

Marike [00:03:03] Yeah, that's true. I agree. Yeah. So that's, you know, a little bit from me. I just wanted to say that, you know, that's confidential. I'm recording this because I need to analyze the data afterwards. But I wanted to let you know that, you know, there are no right or

wrong answers. So everything I'm asking you just can you know, everything that pops into your mind, just speak freely and don't try to, you know, try to get, you know, think what does she want to hear from me.

Workwear [00:03:40] Sure. Sure. I'm always a very honest person, so don't worry about that.

Marike [00:03:47] So can you lend me a little bit about yourself? Who are you? What does a company about, you know, your motivation. And stuff like that?

Workwear [00:03:55] Yeah. I came to Germany in 2009. Before that, I was studying in England and I was actually born in Russia. But I am Armenian. So my story is very complicated. By the time I arrived in Germany and people would ask me like, you know, I was always like, ok, where to start from... But anyway, now I'm settled here, since 10 years, I studied psychology and marketing at the University in Bremen, so I was in the area a lot. So I also visited Groningen a lot because, yeah, this is the closest you can go from there. Well, after that I got a job here and in e-commerce marketing, that's exactly what I wanted always to do. And I developed there really fast. Things were going really well. And at just some point ...that something clicked in my head and I realized that... But there were a series of things that were happening kind of more like watching documentaries, reading a book, and then I started to kind of play more and more and more by the purpose of life. So that's how it started. And of course, I got super frustrated with the fact that all I was doing until now was helping Amazon, eBay, all the big companies to... I was doing marketing campaigns for them. So I was just helping them to make even more money. And of course, our company would not take on small businesses because they cannot pay. They have lower budgets. So in the end, I quit my job and after a few months, I came up with that idea of Workwear and since then I've been working on that. It's been. Well, three years, I think since I got the idea and 2 years that it's actually like really running it. For me, like well...So maybe in one sentence, Workwear is ethically made dresses - only dresses, it's ethically made dresses for work and after work. Anything, basically like versatile but so versatile that you can also go to work. And that's where I found the most difficulty with fashion. You know, there are so many women going working, including myself. I was always a big lover of dresses for work. But they were too uncomfortable to cycle, don't have pockets and all those things, you know. Also, just the fit of them that it doesn't seem so tight, I mean, there's always this concept of work dresses being like these body lines. And I really don't like that. I wanna look professional, but without all that showing of a body. So that's basically the idea. And then I focus... It's all made in Armenia, which is a very important

part. So one is to provide women with really comfortable, versatile dresses and on the other hand to make an impact in my homeland. So it was also part of me getting back to my roots because I haven't actually lived there, wasn't born there. So this is something... A challenge for me to do it. You know, I'm feeling that the mentality difference between that kind of second, third generation. It's been a tough beginning, but I'm now starting to more enjoy it. Now that things are a little bit more in the routine and a bit more easy and I found a really amazing factory there, it's a couple like younger than me, so they are much more modern thinking. So anyway, I'm sure you have other questions for me.

Marika [00:07:50] No, no problem, it's just to get an inside and why you're doing this. And everything around that, because I think it's really important, especially for small labels. You know, everybody has their own unique motivation and story and why they came to what they are doing now and how they approach things. So yeah it's important.

Marika [00:08:27] So actually we can just, you know, jump right in there to the real interview questions. So, yeah, I just wanted to start with what do you think consumers, in general, are considering most when they purchase fashion?

Workwear [00:08:51] I, well... Style and pricing.

Marika [00:08:57] So those two.

Workwear [00:08:58] Yeah, we more and more talk about fabrics and the importance of factories, but it's still not so.

Marika [00:09:12] And do you think that consumers face barriers when they aim to buy sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Workwear [00:09:30] Yeah...I think that ... the first one is that, of course, sustainable fashion is not as prominent as fast fashion. I mean, you don't have like them on every corner and you don't have them in big shopping malls where greenwashing and dirty buying happens. So that will be the first one for sure. It requires definitely some ... a little bit of proactiveness to find it, to search for it, even though, even if you Google sustainable fashion, you will find buying up hundreds of articles with links to different brands. That's definitely first. The second one is, yes, it is more expensive. I mean, there is a reason why it's more expensive. For some people, it's not so affordable. But then personally, I always think that. Well, don't buy two, buy one, but buy one that lasts. And, you will love it, you know. So, to be very honest, it's not a very good argument, in my opinion. But I think I do see why some people see that the clothing is

unaffordable. And of course, there are different prices. I mean, there are some... So I try to keep myself in a more affordable segment while there are some which, you know, 300, 400 euros. Yeah, I understand that. But I think overall they're definitely more fashion brands that providing some affordable alternatives.

Workwear [00:10:59] Yeah. I can understand what you mean. If you're looking for a special item and then you find something, I don't know, at the price of two hundred and then you go to Zara and see it in the same style kind of but for 50 EUR or so and then you're just, okay I'm just gonna go with that. But of course, you are not gonna keep it as long because the. Yeah. The quality is not the same. But I think that might be a bit of an educational mindset change thing that has to happen. But yeah I get that. How would you personally define sustainable purchasing behavior?

Workwear [00:11:43] Well, first of all, is buying when you need something that's very important. That's basically the way I also live since a couple of years. Not that I was always... I was before a big shopaholic. But now even more being aware of it So, first of all, buying when I really need something. If I buy then I at least try to buy something that has a little bit of a history, some meaning, some, you know, anything that ... I am trying to say but I can't remember what was the last thing I bought in terms of clothes. Having your own brand just solves the problem. I'm just wearing Workwear dresses 365 days and that's it. So, buy what you need, buying something that is really made to last, has a history, something that is maybe there that companies are donating money to organizations or a special program for women and yeah. Buying things that are made to last month included buying something that really...It's really hard to tell it's the first time you're buying from a brand. Right. And sometimes it can happen that one fabric is less made to last than another one even though you buy from the same brand that already proved. But still preferring, you know, giving your preference for those. Because for me, in the end, the more sustainable choice is the one that lasts longest.

Marika [00:13:48] Yes. So really investing in quality. High-quality product, then. And would you say that or how, you know, the consumer awareness of sustainable fashion has developed over time?

Workwear [00:14:36] To be honest, it's really hard to say. So before I started Workwear.. Before like I can't open my eyes to what's actually happening in the world. I was outside of this fair fashion bubble, you know, for me that fair fashion didn't exist. I knew what a quality pieces were, of course, and I was still buying them, but it wasn't my main go-to criteria to buy things.

So back then I thought that this is. Yeah didn't exist, so trivial and so tiny. Now I am in the bubble and I feel like this is the only thing. So it's really hard for me to judge overall. I have a feeling, of course. You know, I'm living and working the same bubble with all the other fair fashion brands, advocates, instagramer. And I feel like while we talk so much about it, people are really aware. But if I'd have to, like pour cold water on me, I think it's not really the case at all. Like, this is such, so many of my friends, even, of course, support me, support my brand. They maybe once a year they will buy a piece, something, you know, and they would say still, when I ask them, where do you buy from? They are like I'm sorry. I'm not there yet. I guess ...I don't know. It's really hard to tell.

Marike [00:16:16] So maybe it has a little bit entered more and more minds, but maybe not entirely so. Maybe more and more awareness exists but maybe not so...

Workwear [00:16:33] That there's action from this awareness.

Marike [00:16:40] So how would you characterize your main customer group?

Workwear [00:16:46] Well, pretty easy, actually. So it's women from twenty-five to forty-five. Although, according to Facebook, there's even 50 as well. And 55. Who are working and there's obviously demographic factors like education ...They're either at the entry-level career or like middle career and working in - I'm not really sure how to call them, but in industries that are other than like super consulting, you know, when really need to suit up. Although I do have one dress, which I have a few customers who work in consulting and where they wear it with a blazer on top but overall, my...

Marike [00:17:46] Yeah. Not like a super conservative but to be a little bit more creative with what you wear to work.

Workwear [00:18:03] Exactly. That's it, and I tried to do through collections, I have very, very small collections. There's always like four pieces in it. But every piece...I have a specific woman in mind, a specific kind of like environment in which I can picture her in. And that's how I ensure that instead of, you know, often people make 20 pieces and they all look pretty much the same or very similar. Just one has a long sleeve, one has a short sleeve. I tried to differentiate it by okay, I have one, but it's very different from the other models. And I can see a woman who is working in this industry or this environment wearing this. And then this is the other one, this one is more strict like it's like more rigid, more for sporty girls. And the other one is for a feminine girl.

Marike [00:18:54] So you try to cover different kinds of styles, OK. And how would you describe the level of awareness of your customers towards sustainability, related to fashion?

Workwear [00:19:13] To be honest, I really don't know. What I do is that. I use my email marketing to communicate to them about this topic. That's actually my...I'm using my marketing not as a, well, I don't have sales really, but I don't use it as a buy, buy, buy, but rather okay, this is my way to talk to them and that's where I raise all the topics I share with them information. I don't know really how many of them ...No, not don't know. Like, for example, last week with a fashion revolution, I wrote to them about the Rana Plaza and explained what happened and how we can improve and offer them...suggested to them to sign this petition by law. I don't honestly know how many of them...

Marike [00:20:11] OK. Yeah. And what do you think matters most of them when they purchase from you?

Workwear [00:20:36] Again, you mean what they like the most about me?

Marike [00:20:41] Well, like their motivation to buy from, you know?

Workwear [00:20:54] I'm not really sure. I think it's primarily the style. I'm 100 percent sure because I don't think at this point people really care so much that this has to be ethical. But when they're buying again because they're buying again, they already know that this is... Through my marketing and messaging to them, they know it's ethically made. They already love the fit. So that's I think that's... The ethical and the fit are the most important in returning customers, but the first...I wouldn't say that ethical or sustainable the number one. Actually, we had this thing running on the website, you know, these heat maps. Yeah. And I was really curious to see how many people are checking what the composition of the fabric is. One in six. It's insane!

Marike [00:21:59] And you make yourself, I guess, so many thoughts on this. Yeah. It's interesting because I'm always checking actually to have an idea what it is about how I have to wash it, how it will last, you know, like is it a composition of polyester with wool or something, or is it 100% wool, you know, like to get an idea of the quality of the clothes and stuff like that. But yeah, I mean, there's maybe also lacking a little bit of education again to say to... To judge, you know, if it looks good and you don't really care and it feels good, then whatever, you know, just wash it at 30 degrees and that's fine. But yeah. Interesting...I guess to have an idea because I mean, it plays a little bit in what you said before, you know, like to say okay style and maybe

also pricing and stuff like that, or quality is like one thing or the most important thing when you have an idea of purchasing fashion and then you see that, you know, they don't check your composition of the material. So it actually can be it's still, you know, fit and how it looks and then the other thing is maybe a nice add on or whatever, but you're not sure, of course, or if you don't have an exact tracking or if they give you feedback or something but yeah. Interesting. OK. Is there a strategy you're following concerning consumers purchasing behavior, you know, to make them more aware or something like that?

Workwear [00:23:56] Well, just trying to provide overall as much information as possible about the conditions in which ...how we make dresses. We did a movie as well when we last visited. When I ship the dresses I always include a little card with the information about how ...the best practices for washing something that will minimize the impact on the clothes quality and also on the fabric and also will save money on water and energy and things like that. No, I think just overall providing information through social media and a newsletter. So with the community for new people on the website and trying to educate them again through my big, long emails, sometimes I am like, are they really reading it? But then they click on the bottom, so they click right, to sign the petition.

Marika [00:25:07] Yah, that's good! Is there maybe a different time horizon you're keeping in mind? Because education seems to be more long term. But then again, you're running also business. So that might also be this short term component you need to cover, you know, like do you to differentiate a little bit or is it all kind of fluidly going into each other?

Workwear [00:26:19] Yeah. That's what I find it really hard because I am in general, not a person who says, you know, buy buy buy and I don't want to. I just...That's why I make them all very different. If one woman comes and out of four dresses, she finds one she loves, I'm happy. I don't need you to come back and buy another one. I mean, it would be amazing if you do and you love it and you wear it. So for me, I actually find that part really difficult how to exactly... Especially in times like right now when things are kind of really bad and for example, for me, the new collection that I worked on for like six months. So I didn't have an autumn collection, and I was just about to get finally finished in production. Our production is very slow fashion, there are only four women working. So it's really - and then the Corona shut down in Armenia started and happened. So all the pieces are still there. There is no cargo, nothing to ship it. And so it means that -'m already having the second month of pre-orders, for a collection of spring, which is almost over, you know. I had no idea. This is super weird. And

so I think the pre-order in general in Germany is not still very common, in America it's more... I think more common for people. Here not really. And so they are not buying until the products are here, which means like I don't know when and or if they will eventually. And so of course, I'm sitting here thinking I need to do something, I need people to buy, otherwise, there is a whole collection of 500...700 pieces which is staying here for another year. But at the same time, of course, I don't want to do that. So I - No idea, honestly...

Marike [00:28:19] So yeah, you're not trying to push like, please, buy, you know... That's a paradox also. But I think that every slow fashion brand has that, you know, that on the one you want to promote this idea of buy less and just buy what you need and invest in high quality. But then again, you know, you also need to..not get rid of your clothes but yeah, a bit promoting what you have and trying to get it across to your customer. Yeah, I get that. OK. Do you think that, you know, these strategies to communicate and educate and everything are a burden or an opportunity for your business?

Workwear [00:29:13] Well, I personally always look at these things as something... just an impact, a positive impact that I want to do. But then if I had to look at from that perspective, then, you know, it's an opportunity to make a change. And that's why I started the whole business because I wanted to make a change.

Marike [00:29:49] I mean, that you already said like how you tried to communicate a sustainable purchasing approach to customers. But like, what is your main message you want to get across to your customers?

Workwear [00:30:04] That they should wear their confidence. For me, confidence here has so much meaning. First of all, I'm like...One of the things is that ..it's very important because of my background and my work as well. That I've seen how not confident women are. And when I was working for the previous company before that. And so that's first of all, to be confident about yourself, saying it's like being confident about the way your clothes are made. So, you know, that there's no... Everything was, you know, no child labor, no violation, and everything is happening in healthy working conditions. So that's the confidence as well and of course that they also make a positive impact. Not only that you're confident about how they are made but also that they have some sort of impact on their communities around them and our whole planet. That's for me what confidence is, so that's what I try to deliver that message to wear your confidence.

Marike [00:31:15] That's beautiful actually, I like that. Do you use social media for this purpose? And how do your customers respond to this communication?

Workwear [00:31:33] Yes I use social media for the purpose. My community is very, very, very inactive. So when I started doing Workwear, I had this thought that my women are not going to be like a superstar, you know, I mean, successful businesswoman, you know, who have or not having Instagram, but if they have Instagram, they're probably not like super active on it and doing selfies. And then I started to have my first customers joining me on Instagram. And one after another, they were all private profiles. And that's exactly what I pictured Workwear woman to be like, more humble, you know, and not very active. I mean, following, you know, consuming, but not engaging on Instagram and. Yeah. It's pretty much a one-way communication. But I know they listen because they sometimes, you know, they like something or put this and that. Big input. OK.

Marike [00:32:40] So at least that's some positive feedback.

Workwear [00:32:43] Yes. Exactly. But other than that, it's really hard to say. Yeah.

Marike [00:32:49] But also when you think of, I don't know, if I think of myself it is also the same like, you know, you're not really super active and engage on social media. You're, you know, busy having your private life. So. Yeah, but yeah, sometimes some people actually, you know, really engage with the brand and I find it really interesting if you do that and you get an answer because you really see that private people are behind that, you know, so and they are really happy about your feedback or something like that. But yeah, I'm also really, you know, spare with my feedback to things I buy. I'm just like, OK, thanks and that's it. And if something was wrong, of course. But other than that, you're not like, OK, I'm giving you a recommendation or not or you know. But, you know, very interesting for you to know.

Workwear [00:33:40] Yeah that would be actually amazing. I received actually yesterday a postcard from one of the customers. It's nice to see and I put it on Instagram yesterday. These are the moments that make me happy. It's not the buying. But actually up to some months when they come back to me and they send me an email with a review or some feedback and they exactly tell me that they wear to work, I'm happy. Of course, there are women who also...a couple wore the dresses also to weddings and some special things. But my primary focus was to make it suitable to work and when women wear it there, ok good. Then I am, you know...my

product exists for the right reason. Otherwise, if you make something and then people do something else with it. A bit weird. So I'm really happy to hear that women I really like... And I guess it for me, like the workplace confidence is so important. That women work more and more and achieve more at work and I'm sure that many good things will come once we have more women in the workplace in important positions.

Marika [00:34:59] Yeah, true. I mean, we already touched upon this a little bit, but what do you consider as the main barrier when trying to bring the message of shopping consciously or sustainably across to your customers?

Workwear [00:35:34] Well, I'm not sure if it's the main one but the one that comes to my mind is the fact that there's just so much overall that people need to think about. For example, my god, this is too much actually I have to live zero waste and I have to be a sustainable fashion and I have to be mindful and meditate every day ... Yeah, I think that's part of it, to be honest. There is so much happening, even though that's actually sustainability, that's a really good overall example of how overburdened like everything is. Things are getting so complicated. Sustainability has so many aspects that you as a brand, you cannot fulfil every one of them, you have to start somewhere and then maybe start like adding more and more pillars to your framework. And that's what I feel for the customers as well, probably, there is just so much happening now.

Marika [00:36:34] Yeah. So that you're trying to not overrun them with all the information you have. And you know, I get it because I mean I study that now and you know, I'm so in the topic but again, it's so complex. And, you know, you always have to kind of like what is really sustainable, you know, like what is really sustainable in the end. Also, when you are trying to look at business models of companies or something like that. And you're like, OK, but, you know, I'm just overwhelmed with what should I do then or is it the best I just don't do anything at all? And then coming to sustainable fashion, of course, it's the same. Of course. It's great that they're, all these options out there but then again, it's the most sustainable to shop second hand or nothing at all. Yeah, it's a complex thing but I think that for especially when you're trying to produce and also want to tell your customers about, you know, we're using this material, we're having these conditions when working and the shipping is like this and we're not using, I don't know, plastic for our packages in these kinds of things. And they're just like, OK, yeah thanks. But I just want a nice dress. And you're just like, OK, well, at least the dress is fulfilling the

purpose and it's fine then it's already, you know, the first aim and the first goal. But yeah, I can imagine. Then you can make a choice that this is one of the main barriers because it's so, so big. And you don't want to push them away again. And you just want to engage more with a happy approach and a positive approach about this, but not about, you know, feeling bad or if you're making one bad choice.

Workwear [00:39:02] I'm just a bit afraid that at some point in your future, people are just starting to be like, oh, I'm just done with this. I have to be too cautious about everything I do. I either you just die or stop, you know, like completely caring and just become not caring.

Marika [00:39:21] Yeah. It's like this kind of becoming tired of, questioning everything you do. I feel the same sometimes if I'm trying to... best example now, like moving into a new flat and you need, you know, a new rack or something like that. And you're just looking and looking and looking and, you know, doing your research. And at a certain point time, you're just like, okay, no, I'm just going on Amazon and buy it there because, you know, I don't know what I should do. And then you need to know your way around a little bit and then. Yeah. Always invest some more effort and time. And at a certain point in time, you just may be tired of it or whatever. But yeah, I mean, we're all human beings. So, you know, it's a balance, but yeah, it's a barrier for everyone. Yeah. And what have been maybe, you know, key successes when you tried to bring this message across of a more conscious and sustainable approach with your customers. Something that comes to your mind, what you've done particularly well, let's say.

Workwear [00:41:02] I mean, for example, the other day I received customer feedback, an email from a woman who bought a dress from us a year ago, and she said that she really values... it touches her how like what I'm doing for Armenia and I - she's not Armenian, but she's just like for women there - is that the kind of example or?

Marika [00:41:28] Yeah, just go ahead. Don't worry.

Workwear [00:41:55] I don't know. To be honest, because most of the customer feedback I get is all ... It's all about the comfort of the dresses and the compliments they receive. Flattery, it's always about comfort and flattery, comfort and compliments, compliments, compliments. It's not that the customer is, you know, point out the ethical part or the fabric. Of course, they love it, but it's comfort. Put it's in that category.

Marika [00:42:26] But it's nice because, you know, the barriers out there. You know, according to theory, for sustainable fashion, is more like it has this image of not being super fashionable,

you know, not being very modern or more like very, you know, try as if you have like a potato sack on. So I think that it's a good thing to get feedback of it can also... Actually received the customer to say, hey, it looks super nice and very flattering. You know, it really looks good on you and other people also notice it and then you can say, OK, yeah. But, you know, it's not fast fashion. It's really super ethical, has a story and so on. And so that's I think it's ...I mean, of course, you're not, you know, changing the whole world with this, but one at the time. OK, so now coming to the last question: who would you identify as the key players to drive the change, towards sustainable fashion consumption in the future?

Workwear [00:43:56] Okay. I think the government should implement some regulations about it. The customers for sure or the audience overall. The brands need to advocate more for that as well, be louder. I don't know, I'm a bit to be honest with this whole affair... The certifications and these Fair Trade and Fair Wear Foundation, I'm a little bit skeptical about those. I don't know. This is the third ...in every industry there is something like this and it's a pure money-making business in the end, no. I don't know, I find that sad. Of course, of course, I think you need some sort of evaluation for sure, like not evaluation, but the kind of criteria for people to look, to judge, but then if in the end. Yeah, I don't know. So I'm not really sure. I don't really believe in them, although many people say that the certifications, that auditing company, you know, as well, they should do something. But no, I think just with the government, companies and well, fashion brands and of course, fast fashion brands, but I don't think the fast fashion will really move until we push them, so.

Marika [00:45:41] Yep. Yeah. Maybe they're in the end still super important to reach the overall mass who still shops there because it's convenient, it's stylish and, you know, very cheap. And I mean, they have their conscious lines. You can debate over how conscious or as they know that really is. But of course, it's a marketing thing. But it gives at least the message of, you know, it's also important and reach to people who are not, you know, not familiar or don't care at all about this. So that's at least something, you know. I mean, it's a little bit positive. But also, of course, it's just marketing. I know. I guess it has both sides of the coin. I know but I agree about the government part. And, of course, you know, you need the critical voices to push and push to make it more sustainable in the end. To change the industry towards a more sustainable standard. I mean, to be more open and transparent and to really, you know, hold people accountable for or hold companies accountable for what they are doing and how they do so.

Workwear [00:47:09] So you asked me what is the message that I wanted to get out and I said it's like wear your confidence, that would be for my customers. But I think overall in the whole if I had to create one message for the world, is just to keep pushing the message that your like, your money, your every cent counts like you know, everybody has money. Right. But like how you spend that money and then just give the money to those that, you know, you like, you favor, you know, like you go to the local cafe instead of the chains. Yeah. Things like that. So whatever it comes to, I think would be just so much better if we give such a huge support to all the small businesses if people were generally being taught okay don't buy, yes, the book will cost you three euros more but buy it from a bookstore and not from Amazon.

Marike [00:48:04] Yeah. To help the cultural diversity.

Workwear [00:48:07] And in the end, it gets to 10 percent of people who really live by that. It's already really huge help for small businesses. All those who are working on sustainability and fair.

Marike [00:48:33] What advice would you give someone who wants to start a sustainable business or professional brand with regards to trying to change consumers purchasing behavior?

Workwear [00:48:50] Accomplish one thing at a time. Sorry... Small - start with one thing and then develop it. Last year I was fair. I was not sustainable. My fabrics were not eco. I couldn't because I couldn't buy a thousand meters of a fabric. And I was sitting there thinking, okay. Either I start, you know, my first step or I don't make a first step at all. So I did it. Luckily the feedback was great from the dresses and I managed to make the next big step in buying more fabrics. Which means, of course, big investment. But at the same time, I can now finally purchase the fabrics with the certifications, etc.. the ones which were not available for me. So just start with one thing at a time, then it will be easier. Yeah, I'm sure Armedangels also didn't start all, everything at once. Or if they did I mean they just make super simple t shirts. Yeah. I like them, but I think it's always the same. Actually I was talking to stores a few months ago talking about maybe selling through them. And they were like Armedangels is great and everybody and many fair fashion customers ask for Armedangels because it's probably the most well known I think in Germany. But they were like they always have the same t shirts we are bored every year we have to sell the same things.

Marike [00:50:30] Yeah, that's true. I mean, they started like that. And I think now we're getting more and more, you know, fashionable pieces where you're just like, okay, that's cool

I actually like that dress. And maybe something with a print or, you know, these kinds of things. But of course, it's very basic, still. And the diversity needs to be a little bit more enriched. So that's nice. Yeah. OK. Are there any unspoken words? Anything you would like to add?

Workwear [00:51:06] No, no.

Marike [00:51:21] Great then, thank you.

Workwear [00:51:23] I mean, it was really interesting talking to you.

Marike [00:51:29] Yeah, I'm really busy now trying to finalize this and I'm happy that I could get your thoughts on the topic. And it was really interesting, especially because you are having like this different approach and specifically focusing on working clothes. Because that's also something which is super rare and sustainable fashion. Like you said, you have all those t shirts and stuff. But then you go to work and what do you wear? So, very, very cool and I wish you all the best also with the corona situation that it works out for your order there. But do you have the store or only online?

Workwear [00:52:33] I was planning to open on the 1st of April, my store. Oh yeah. And around the 10th I got the contract. And I think that was exactly the day when it was escalating in Germany, with Corona. And I was like well, I'm not signing a contract. I'm not. So actually, this is kind of a problem because I don't have a store now if the dresses come, I've no idea where to put them. I like it for me, it's really an important investment as well. That actually helped as well. By the way, last year I had an experience for a pop up store for a month and I had the first time experience with getting feedback from women directly. And that's where I realized telling them a little bit about the story helped so much. Yeah, they think it was... it would change the mindset considered to have a look at you. Well, for me, it was really difficult people... This is just very interesting to see that some people look at the price and they would go away because they would honestly say it's too expensive. It's not my budget. But other women would be like, OK, maybe I buy. But once you tell them the story, they would really like. OK. So that's what I also thought that maybe I could get my own small place. Yeah. So hopefully short story, hopefully I will have something, but I don't really know to be honest with you. Because with the corona development it would really make sense.

Marike [00:54:34] Yeah, at least you were lucky that you had the ...timing was OK to say no, it's not good timing right now and we postpone it. I mean, you will for sure, I mean, shops will open again. The thing is, of course, if people will buy, you know, going to a store. I mean, if I

look at me right now, like, I'm going to Edeka or something, but I'm not going to go shopping with the mask. So, yeah, maybe then next year or in the end or I don't know. But I mean, good for you. At least that's good. Well, then I'll let you go. Thank you for this time. I would say let's keep in touch. Yeah. Thanks for having this conversation is very nice.

Workwear [00:55:29] I enjoyed it. Good luck with your thesis. Thanks. Okay. Have a nice day then. You too. Bye bye.

End of Interview.

Appendix G: Interview 06 | Styleguide Company

Interview Date: 06.05.2020

Interview Duration: 1:40:40 Minutes

Position of Interviewee: Founder

Marike [00:01:18] Hey!

Styleguide [00:01:18] Hey Marike. So you're not Dutch, right?

Marike [00:01:21] No, no, no, I'm not. I just studied there at the University of Groningen. I know my name is misleading for some people sometimes, but no.

Styleguide [00:01:29] Exactly!

Marike [00:01:32] No, I just was there for it last year, actually, because many master programs there are, yeah, just for a year and it was quite intense. And then Corona came in then I needed to leave. Well, I wanted to, you know. But that was not really a big issue because it was, I think the last week of lessons, you know, anyways. So we only had our exams left and then it was over anyway. So yes, it was a disrupting event but still, it was fine, like we were almost done so. Yeah. But now everything is you know, online and I'm just working on my thesis anyways. So yeah I'm just gonna maybe introduce myself from the beginning. So, I'm originally from Hamburg. I studied there, I lived there for two years. I worked there and yeah. I studied industrial engineering actually and then worked as a project manager in a quite mechanical startup. And then I wanted to switch or add a little bit to the sustainability aspect. And that's why I studied then sustainable entrepreneurship in Groningen. So, I'm now in Berlin. I actually moved to Berlin because for the one hand my boyfriend studies here. So we said okay maybe then just for the last year, let's be here. And yeah, I mean Hamburg is also really, really great for sustainability start-ups and everything around that, but I think in Berlin, it's also a quite nice scene, also for sustainable fashion, so I thought it would be also nice - it's quite close to Hamburg anyways. So yeah. And so that's why I'm doing this research now. And I'm just gonna say it in the beginning. So it's confidential. I'm recording this because I need to have access on the data and what you're saying and so on afterward. There are no right or wrong answers and I really specifically care about your point of view and your experience. So just, you know, say whatever comes to your mind.

Styleguide [00:03:55] I think I have both, so I think it will work out - experience and a point of view.

Marike [00:04:02] Nice!

Styleguide [00:04:04] How did you find us or [Insert Name]?

Marike [00:04:06] Basically last year in November, I was in Berlin. And we went to an event from Plan A in the Betahaus. And she was one of the people who presented her company and what she's doing. And so afterward, I thought, OK, maybe it would be nice to ask her whether, you know, the topic I'm writing about would be also interesting for her. And she had also a lot of contacts. So that was really, really nice. And she helped me a lot. And then, you know, in the beginning of the year, we met and then she said, yeah, basically right now everything is completely, you know..

Styleguide [00:04:45] Upside down?

Marike [00:04:45] Yeah. Upside down. Like I don't know how it's going to be in the next couple of months. I can still help you, but let's see. And then she already kind of said that you were in contact and you know, and that's why she also asked you then. Yeah. And yeah, that's how I met her.

Styleguide [00:05:06] Cool - Well, sounds good.

Marike [00:05:06] Yes. So maybe you can just send something about yourself where you are. You know, what you did in your company and your motivation actually to develop or sell sustainable fashion and everything.

Styleguide [00:05:22] So to give you a bit of background, to understand where why I am here at this point at business-wise. So I am from the Netherlands. I actually live in Assen 10 years. It's not really ... well yeah, it's also North. It's pretty much near Groningen, so Groningen is definitely one of my favorite cities.

Marike [00:05:49] Oh, that's funny. Sorry to interrupt you because my campus was in Leeuwarden, so it's not very far.

Styleguide [00:06:06] Yeah true, there are like two, three corners in the North. Like Assen, Leeuwarden and Groningen. Everybody thinks oh you can just go by bike, but it's still it's not that close. But yeah, basically the north. I originally come from Rotterdam and I live in several places. I studied graphic design for well... To get into graphic design and that's how it started.

And in illustrating. And then I went to art school and that's where I did fashion illustration, where I really got in touch with more the drawing and the fashion part. So I worked as an illustrator and I did an internship at a forecasting agency where they of course set out trend books and prognosis or forecasting on how well, what will happen and what will influence fashion. That's basically what always has been my trigger, so to say, so not fashion as in really fashion fashion. Of course I like fashion, but not but really from your perspective, more from the people perspective, economical perspective, social, society. So what happens when and how could this influence what happens? Because it really, I think fashion is still, it shows how the zeitgeist is going. So that's what I always loved to do. And I actually did work as a graphic designer and brand strategist for over 15 years now because I kind of swopped away from the fashion parts because I actually really didn't like the whole fashion world. It was really not the habitat where I actually wanted to be. And so I focused a long time on branding, designing online, offline and work as an entrepreneur for almost 20 years now. But five, six years ago already, more six, seven years ago, through an assignment I got back into the fashion world because I had to make a style segmentation for Philips because I did assignments for bigger companies and then I dove in ...because I had to make a style segmentation for men to say, OK, why do they act as they do? What's their behavior and how could they make a choice as a consumer of what to do? And of course, what they wear, how they dress, what they buy, what they don't buy is, of course, a large part of lifestyle or fashion. And from this very moment, I got sucked into fashion world again and I thought, OK, this is actually way too cool. So I started...actually not not really professionally, but more for myself to see. OK, I'm going to find new cool labels who look really good. And I just make an outfit per day. So I didn't buy anything. I just collected online and I created or styled outfits where I thought OK, this is really cool. That matches the mood of the day. Yeah. And but actually very fast - sorry for the long introduction, but I think it really explains what's still my core perspective on sustainable fashion is because I soon realized, OK, if I even had the budget to buy all the stuff I'm finding online, I still wouldn't buy it. No matter how beautiful it is because A, I think it's way too expensive, really expensive. It's not hard to find beautiful things that really cost a lot of money. And B, and then I still actually don't know what to tell what the value is anymore because to ... I spent watching and I really read a lot and I thought, OK, this whole luxury world is collapsing and I think the value it once had is really gone. And so which brands are new still with high esthetics, but with better value. And that's, of course, what for me, sustainability in the core is. And then I will go fast forward, because I made these outfits and then I started searching sustainable brands. And I quite quick build up a whole network of sustainable brands through Europe. It

was really, really nice and stuff. And then people started asking, where can I buy it? And I said, OK, I'm not going to do an online shop because I hate having an online shop. But I ended up with having an online shop and a style guide online. That's the moment when I met [Insert Name]. And now we are trying to enhance it and elaborate it into a more accessible for more women hopefully platform.

Marike [00:10:56] Yeah, to make it kind of to join forces, make it bigger...

Styleguide [00:10:59] Make it. Yeah. To really I mean our core is... I really want to offer as many women as possible I very fine selection of beautiful stuff. And in the end, still. No. OK. I mean at least it's better, made. It's not harmful and it is treating people and the planet better. It's still the core of what we do.

Marike [00:11:23] OK. Well, yeah, quite extensive experience, but really interesting and also how you met her then. And that I think it has really the future like I think more and more people really want to, but they don't know how. And we gonna go into that later. But I think it's really also because, for example, me, I'm quite... You know, I know quite a lot about sustainable fashion and the brands and what I need to look for in the materials and all that kind of things. And even for me, it's so hard to be. Yeah. To shop consciously to find the right thing. I really want to have and to, you know, all this decision making around that it's still very difficult sometimes. And I think we need these solutions a lot.

Styleguide [00:12:18] Absolutely. Absolutely. Which is not that easy. But we'll come to that with your question. I think so.

Marike [00:12:26] Yeah. Okay. Let's start then. So. Yeah. What do you think consumers are considering most when purchasing fashion? The consumers in general.

Styleguide [00:12:39] OK. So you're talking to a trends analyst, so to be consumer in general is a very hard thing to grasp. Because for me.... So I can talk very generally, I think, to start, there's a huge division in consumers, people who are from the low segment and midsegment and high segment, that really defines ...I could answer your question in three levels. And of course, we are focusing on, it's a market term, I'm really sorry for that but it's high/ mid fashion. And the target group women actually. Of course I. Could answer the question, but it's still... So, in general, I do think that people do think it's too boring and that they think that's way too expensive.

Marike [00:13:40] No, no, no. I mean, when. Sorry. Maybe I just repose the question. I mean, of course, I know that there are many, many different kinds of consumers and as you said, different levels. But I'm just saying that, you know, when you meet whoever, who is not into sustainable fashion, when they go out and look for something to shop, what are they considering?

Styleguide [00:14:32] Because first is...It's I think we're still in the phase that it's about education. I could compare it with the best with the whole food industry. I still think that you have people who are aware and they read the etiquette on a bottle or they read about it and they know where to look for what they buy because it says organic or eco certified or whatever. And so they start buying it. And I think that's the same with fashion, but that's a very, very small group still. I think it's so young. It's still some people have to be a bit aware about that they want to buy something different. I think they are really being led by labels or descriptions. OK. Or colors. Like when it's green and it says it's better. And then people think, oh then it's sustainable, which is a massive greenwashing opportunity. t's actually a very good question. I ...because there has to be some awareness, right? We agree on that, because if they're not aware at all, they won't. They are not looking for something.

Marike [00:15:45] No, but the question is not if they are purchasing sustainable fashion, but fashion in general. Like, for example, if I think of my mom, like what she would consider most when purchasing or when shopping, you know what?

Styleguide [00:16:05] Well, from that perspective, I think in the end, people are looking for identity. They're looking for something that would fit them, not sizewise, of course, as well. But more in OK, this is my style. And how do I feel when I wear it? I think it's the most... That's the DNA of fashion, right? It goes from OK. I think it's very functional and I will buy it because I need a raincoat. Until I'm looking, I'm not looking for status, but if it has a certain name, then I buy status. People often don't realize. But that's basically what happens. I feel terrible in giving answers. I make it way too complicated.

Marike [00:16:48] No, it's fine, It's really. That's what I'm looking for, actually.

Styleguide [00:16:53] So we very first question, it's identity.

Marike [00:16:59] OK. Yeah. Do you think that consumers face barriers when aiming to buy sustainable fashion? And if so, which ones?

Styleguide [00:17:10] Yeah there are massive barriers. The price is one, for example, they can't rely on style only because until now, still a lot of frequently available sustainable fashion is not the most appealing.

Marike [00:17:29] Yes. Yeah.

Styleguide [00:17:33] So that it makes it harder, of course, because they have to buy something which is better, but I'm not even sure if it works for their identity instead of OK. I think it's better for the world.

Marike [00:17:50] I actually agree. I think that there are still massive barriers, as I said in the beginning. And I mean, they are really different for everybody. But as you said, also the educational part where to start, to have the knowledge to actually do your research and you know, you actually know what you need to look for. You had to see why you should... For example, I had also an interview with MUD jeans. Maybe you know them.

Styleguide [00:18:24] Yeah. And I know him personally. Did you get to that interview with Bert?

Marike [00:18:30] No, with the CSR manager. It was really interesting. She said that they did like an analysis of their customers actually, and saw that many of them had for example a PhD or master's degree. So they were very educated people. Yeah. So that might also be something.

Styleguide [00:18:59] Yeah. I don't even think we need research for that because actually it's the same with electric cars, or organic foods. I mean that's general, when you talk education and income. That's already a huge difference. Yeah.

Marike [00:19:22] That's true. And how would you define a sustainable purchasing behavior?

Styleguide [00:19:33] You have to be more descriptive with your question? It's still too broad.

Marike [00:19:39] The thing is, I'm not allowed to be leading. That's why there's several. You know?

Styleguide [00:19:44] OK. Well, ask it again. OK.

Marike [00:19:47] Again, how would you define a sustainable purchasing behavior with relation to fashion?

Styleguide [00:19:55] I am. So I think in the end, it's still. It's a very it's a very hard question. I don't know yet. I've done several pop up stores over the last two, three years where I am

mainly sell sustainable fashion or lifestyle products. And the communication is massively important because if it's too boring or it's too extensive information, people tend to just walk by because then they have to do an effort and not a lot of people... So in general, people don't want to do that. Neither do I. So you really need to... But of course, that's my branding strategy background, really think about how you can get them in as easy as possible and still provide a story because it's not the certificate or the label only, that it's... helps people. They need to have the story. So I think the story behind this is massively important and leading. I sold MUD jeans and I remember one woman coming in the store and she just bought jeans somewhere else and she came by and she was actually curious since she had time left. And I kept talking about all the brands I had and I then talked about MUD jeans and that it's recycled, partially recycled denim and how they work and how this whole philosophy is. And then she said, OK, I'm going to try it on. And if I like it, I buy it and bring back the one I just bought. So it's not just about, hey, I'm looking for sustainable jeans, that people... That's the educational part. So I see the educational part in a light way is very important when people buy or want to purchase sustainable fashion.

Marika [00:21:54] OK. And Do you think that this consumer awareness towards sustainable fashion has developed over the last years?

Styleguide [00:22:11] Yeah, I think it has. Yeah. I mean, in general, yes. And I mean, due to Rana Plaza for example, to a certain amount of people... And also a new shift of young designers who in general, want to be one to work more transparent. So they don't just buy something, they kind of want to know where it comes from. Or they want to work at a company that has a transparent business model. So in general also make them more aware of what they buy. So I think an upcoming of a new generation is there as well. I also think that although it's a very grey zone topic for me, but the conscious collection of H&M, they way of XX is building a foundation, which is all in essence good. I mean that's very good. But it's also it's not it's not a very thorough solution. It's a solution on one end, but it's not solving the downsides of the fashion industry... for me as a professional, because I don't think it's actually a solution, I think it's trying to sell in a different way and doing a good thing along the way, which is, of course, good. Nobody can debate that. But I think at the same time, it really helps us or me, the smaller upcoming businesses who want to do it one step more extreme to get the message over to the mass, because that's not what I am capable of doing and that's what they are doing. So at least they are kind of aware. And then we have to explain enough and say, hey, we're not against. Because I think it's good. It's consumer awareness. As the green Vogue edition, Elle Australia

does a whole sustainable version... from a business model perspective I still think it stinks, but at the same time they really reach out large parts and at least offer the opportunity for people to think about it more. Yeah.

Marike [00:24:28] Yeah, they have the reach at least.

Styleguide [00:24:30] Exactly. Exactly. And we have to use that reach to make sure we can sell our story as well. Yeah.

Marike [00:24:39] Yeah, I completely agree. That's always the discussion a little bit to say. Yeah, well it's not completely good or bad. It's positive in the way that you get this consciousness to people who are not yet aware of, you know, sustainability and fashion. And at the same time, of course, they are still offering their normal fashion things. And that's something which is a bit paradoxically sometimes. And it's, as you said, not really solving the problem or closing the loop at least. So that's the limit. Yeah, it's. Yeah. This ongoing purchasing behavior, purchasing, purchasing, shopping, shopping, shopping, shopping and yeah. It's about, of course, about sales. It's that's what the business model is based on. And that's exactly the paradox. All sustainable fashion labels also say that they are dependent on sales. But at the same time, of course, you know, the real sustainable solution is to buy less. And that's sometimes yeah, the switch which still have to..

Styleguide [00:25:57] Yeah, small side note on that is that I am besides being occupied with sustainable brands or outreach to consumer as an entrepreneur, I'm constantly on the look out, look out to find a business model that is sustainable in itself. Because being in business and working as an entrepreneur or as an opportunity, I could say, okay, let's make it a startup and build up fast money because we need reach and then we have to do the hockey stick model and then we have to... We need at least a million euros, otherwise we can't reach and all the bigger will go faster. And I'm saying I'm not doing that. I'm not playing that game. I'm going to do it my own way. But then it's sustainable growth. And then you're in the impact reach. But I think that's the only way. Because at a certain point, I think... so In the group of aware consumers. Let's put it for the sake of it for my brain let's keep it to consumers that are already kind of aware or at least, well know when they go to say, hey, I bought a conscious jeans at H&M instead of the normal jeans. It was more expensive. But I think it's at least good that I do something. Is that in the end, I think that will also be a generation like with food, that you expect that every ingredient is on the etiquettes or that you know that at least people are getting

fair wages or whatever. I think just like with food and with cars that there will be some regulation now, in five years that will make it easier for consumers so they have to not think less but just not ...at least they can buy it better. And from that perspective I already want to be one step ahead and not try to enter the market from a perspective that's from my perspective, a very old economy business model. There's no single maximum profit and I can't build a sustainable fashion business model if I'm focusing on maximum profits. That's impossible.

Marike [00:28:15] Yeah. We're coming down the supply chain management and these kind of things. Yeah. I mean, the big topic also in fashion and also with regards to communication than a greenwashing. Okay. Yeah, let's leave it at that I think. How would you. Next question to just get you there. How would you characterize your main customer group? Maybe because you just recently joined or I don't know if you actually already joined to [Insert Name], but maybe also from your old company perspective.

Styleguide [00:28:59] So we've said and clarified it for the merch ...we both, as she had mid segment and a bit premium and I'm actually at premium and even a bit higher and we decided if we merge and we kind of mix that and we had mid and premium together then it's still completely affordable and it's not just luxury. So that's how we wanted to scale up. And I think in general the customer is a bit higher income. They're educated. I think it's often also the career woman. So they have their own income of course. And I think it's a very important differences is that they are interested in in design or in fashion, so a certain lifestyle. But even more important I think is the quality of what they have in general. So if you talk interior or you talk what wine they would love to buy at the end of the week. Or the food they buy or the car they drive. It's not that they think everything should be very expensive, but they realize that if you want to have a bit more value what you buy and if you can afford it, I also I always think that that meat or wine or cheese is a very good example. And that's the same way how they look at their clothing. I mean, it should be a good wine. But the more they know of the story about a local producer or they know it's a bio line or it's from an organic farmer. And so, they know the story. And it's recommended. Then they are more perceptive for that. And that's the same with the fashion we have. It's about the story. It's about the value, it's about being aware that you actually are wearing something that is made by a designer and not something you picked up from the rack and you have no idea where it came from. So this awareness of cherishing a product is very important. I also really believe I mean, that's the whole other part of why I started this is this group of women who is really also looking for more value and I mean not value in money, but value in... For me, it is that all historical value of what fashion is. How it

started before the whole industrialization came up that you had something and you keep it for life. You have it and it meant that you have it remade. I mean, that's of course the most.. But I think it's about that they really want to have nice stuff they can wear and they know it has quality and looks good. Yeah. They are the connoisseurs.

Marike [00:32:00] So basically, yes. You spend your money on a very personalized thing and so distinguish yourself from maybe the masses. Also a little bit express your identity and to have the means, at least also to do that. Interesting. Yeah.

Styleguide [00:32:35] And of course that's a broader group. I mean this is the most distinct description. Yeah.

Marike [00:32:43] Yeah. OK. And how would you describe the level of awareness of your customers then towards sustainability in ...also relations to fashion.

Styleguide [00:32:57] So actually, I would actually think it's astonishing low. Yes, because the fact that... I mean, it's what I have, of course, most recognized when they come into a pop-up and I have to explain what I curate and I have hanging there. What is actually vegan leather and what does recycled actually mean? And I thought it would move quicker. That at least some terminology would immediately click like oh yeah, I read about it. I know, but it's often like I'm telling it for the first time. But at the same time, when you talk about the whole chain, it does immediately click. And not from the very complex perspective on how it's all possible and what's more, at least, it's a better alternative. That's why I have that all on my website that there are better alternatives. Yeah. What you could wear instead.

Marike [00:34:10] Yeah, I mean, that's interesting because it also matches limit what you said to what you said in the beginning, saying that fashion is more about building your identity than about the sustainability aspect of it. For now. I mean, if you're buying high quality things.... They are. I would say in most of the time or in at least more often, more sustainable than if you buy something else. So it has already the nice side effect if you buy something that lasts and you know, all these kind of things. But at the same time, it's interesting that the still, also for this really distinguished group who's already emphasizing a lot quality and all the characteristics actually of a sustainable lifestyle maybe still not yet quite there. Well, most of the times.

Styleguide [00:35:07] No but at the same time this is a group that is open for it. And they actually also quite loyal in sense of that... And again, the example of wine or cheese, when they have local small ...or small butcher or whatever they like to go and know their products and keep going there because it's a quality trust point where she goes. And if the butcher would say, hey, I recently only worked with a farmer that is just outside of town, and he does it completely organic from scratch to or it's completely circular then she is even more like cool, OK, this is actually what I already liked quality wise and now you're helping me very nicely and I also know the story is right.

Marike[00:35:59] It's adding value in the end.

Styleguide[00:36:01] It's adding value and I mean, it's any value end it that is the triggers. And I never want this to be a very let's do better and be very good and change the world and let's all call it eco. Yeah. I think you should like to style. If you don't like what you're seeing, you're not going to buy it. And if I can tell the story as well, then that's another win. Yeah. And not the other way around.

Marike [00:36:26] And when you wouldn't wear it in the end but you bought it because it was sustainable...that's also not really sustainable.

Styleguide [00:36:32] Yeah. When Tesla would have been one of the ugliest cars in the world, three quarters of the target group would not have bought it. Unless the brand is so popular...but now we are again at branding and that's why I see that branding is massively important in a good way to use it. And I think the sustainable world has been afraid of connecting it to branding or marketing for a long time because it's money and that's capitalism. And that's bad because that's not going to change the world. So I think they are also the ones to blame that it's not moving that fast.

Marike [00:37:20] Okay. Now we're coming a limit to the communication with your customers and consumers in general. So, again, a very broad question you probably don't like, but I'm trying to make it a little bit more specific. So is there a strategy or communications strategy you are applying when you are communicating this sustainable purchasing/ shopping behavior or the message of sustainability?

Styleguide [00:38:04] I always use some kind of mix in it. So, first it's always about style, so whether it's about trying to feel the mood that we are all at home and we want to wear something that's more comfortable than I mean, I'm not sure how many women are wearing high heels at

the moment sitting behind their desk. Of course, there is this funny story of just underwear and then a very nice blazer or earrings or whatever. But it's so... no matter what the story is about, sports or we just had Christmas or whatever. I always want to tell the story about, OK. You are looking for something that gives you the feeling that it would fit you and you really are in the mood for wearing it. I think that's first and then second.... the second part of this is that at the same time, I want to explain where it comes from. And that's. Always knock wood, two or three lines it's organic or it's recycled or it comes from a designer in Berlin or they just recently won a prize or whatever, just these sound bites. And if they want to know more, read about brands or dove deeper into the cage... and if not, it's not. I always try not to exhaust my customer or reader with loads of information because I honestly think they're not interested.

Marike [00:39:28] OK, so to say... well, it's not short term, the short term strategy, but more to keep it at the level of style and fashion and then adding this sustainability aspect and not trying to become an educational platform.

Styleguide [00:39:51] Yeah. Yeah. I even tried to be more trusted platform that you know, when you find it at my platform, then you know in a sense that it's good. So you don't know the details. That's what we do when I know it's a grey zone. It's not 100 percent good or not, but at least I know that it's not... People are paid well. No toxins are used. And it's not a fake company somewhere at the other end of the world I actually don't really know. So in a sense... and of course I cannot guarantee. I mean it's still of course very hard, but I think you have a question about the later on. So we'll come to that. So yes, it's in a sense even trying to gain points for being a trusted platform. And I remember from those popups and last time I was in Munich and of course, I was in the Turkenstraße, I'm not sure if you know some places, but that's one on one my target group, it's filled with small restaurants and galleries, nice bookstore. So literally during lunchtime, there are always people across the street. And then it came in and they were interested and it looked good. And just by saying, OK, I have ten new upcoming designers, but they all work in a sense sustainable and in different ways. And rarely do they want to know really about certifications. And they're not hardcore eco.

Marike [00:41:30] OK. So basically, yeah, I see that it's more about trust and trying to build a platform, that is giving a positive experience and also making it a little bit easy for them, too. Well, if they shop there, they don't have to worry about it, if it's green washing or not. So that's really.

Styleguide [00:41:57] Yeah, I think I'm basically it's... I never realized it actually in that way that I'm there for very lazy customers that still want to do good and I'll just make sure they're not behaving very badly when they buy it. And if that's how the market is going to roll and then I still think it's a better solution than buying it from other brands. And then in the end, I don't care if they are fully aware of what she did or bought and then I think all works out anyway.

Marike [00:42:28] Yeah OK. I don't know if it really applies to you, but I'm gonna pose this question anyway. Do you think that or do you feel that this strategy to focus on sustainable fashion is a burden or an opportunity for your business?

Styleguide [00:42:49] It's definitely an opportunity.

Marike [00:42:57] OK. So you don't have any any ...let's say you don't feel that it's a burden or sometimes it would be easier to not do that or something like that?

Styleguide [00:43:05] Because it would make it more harder? I think, for my designers from the brands I have in my collective. It's harder because they have to work double as hard, search longer, be persistence, pay more for the materials to sourcing to production. For them, it's really hard and I often think it's a burden to stick to that strategy. And then still they have to make money and it's simply expensive, more expensive because the sourcing and production is more expensive. But for me in the end, it's about selling what they have. And that's why, of course, I have this target group as well. So it's not, I think, the sustainability that makes it harder. If I had a non-sustainable premium curated shop, I would have the same problems because what I need is reach. And I think it doesn't matter whether it's sustainable or not. Yeah, I do think sometimes it's more easy and it's coming more easy because that's what people are looking for more and more and I'm less competitive...hopefully..than the global premium fashion industry in it's... together.

Marike [00:44:19] Yeah. Yeah, I think so too. I mean for the future it's at least also a point to say you are gaining more and more legitimacy if you are sustainable. And if you're not, then you know you can close.

Styleguide [00:44:39] I mean, this is really I could talk hours about this. That's really why I really don't understand why companies like Woford, for example, have not made the switch. They have such a massive loyal customer group or target group. And I think people could accept it from them when they say, hey, we changed our sourcing or production and we do a whole branding campaign about it and communication strategy. But they don't. And then their

target group or their consumers that are still buying now, because they're very loyal basically and in love with all the products which I understand. But at the same time, when I go in and at least...like Kühne, for example, made a series of stockings made of recycled stockings or from fishing nets. Blue. I'm not sure. Ocean blue, blue. Well, I don't know this is a specific name. I though that was clever. So I think these companies are so stuck in a very slow way due to their big company structure that it's almost impossible to do it. And there's a lot of opportunity for others to that.

Marike [00:45:59] Yeah. I think that we are also again. I mean, H&M and Zara and so on that they are at least offering this conscious collection. But of course you can question the intent behind it. But I think in the future, more and more big companies will need to - And that's a good thing- switch to a more sustainable sourcing at least...so let's see.

Styleguide [00:46:28] This makes me very interested... because it's, at the same time, I think. I don't think they can ever do that because they are so in their own business model and structure. I think it's almost impossible to really completely erase that and start with a whole new structure at the same time, I can be often scared as hell that I think OK, they just have to decide. Because they have the money, they have the reach, they the structure, the supply chains, they have everything and they can just decide to do it differently. And then they are the biggest. But apparently they don't. So there's still more money to make how they are doing it than the other way around. That's a question that really bucks my head. Yeah.

Marike [00:47:19] I think in a sense it's a bit sad because. If it's the case that it's at least right now, they can make more money with business as usual than switching in the long term strategy to what's more sustainable or sustainable processes and sourcing and selling and, you know, all these kind of things. That's why I'm actually focusing also on the consumer side, for at least a little bit. To see that if there's still the demand they are covering the demand, you know, so...from which side does it actually have to come? And I think that we as consumers have the big power to send out messages. But in the end, I think it has to be a dialog to say, you know, I really would like to have a I don't know, a good selection of more sustainable or really sustainable brands. And I would love to have no bad conscious if I go to Zara or H&M, which is right now not the case at all. And I don't do it since I don't know how many years. But I think this is still such a small critical mass that the impact is at least getting bigger. But and we're going to. Yes, it's one of the last questions. But also, I think that there need to be more regulations and more laws from the government, too.

Styleguide [00:48:54] For me it's a triangle, it's really top down. We need regulations because often and I don't like to sound shmuck, but I think a lot of people need to be educated because they simply don't know. They see a nice commercial and they need the education simply. When you said that, I totally agreed. And it's the same with energy. For example the opportunity to have now green energy for your home, more electric cars and that the cars are changing. It's not because the consumer really demanded it and they stood up and they want to change it. It was the mix of, the awareness. It's apparently also due to regulation because that really changes a lot. And at the same time, people like Greta do change the perspective on is it normal that you fly everywhere? And the Flugscham that comes up? And it's so that's from both sides.

Marike [00:50:17] Yeah. Yeah, I think so, too.

Styleguide [00:50:21] I mean, we can't wait for regulation because it takes so long. It's also very hard because you have to decide and that's not going to happen as well. Only partially, yeah.

Marike [00:50:34] Yeah, I agree. I think that the governmental side is, on the one hand crucial, but at the same time it's so low.

Styleguide [00:50:43] If you're interested. There's this movement, and they're coming originally from the US. They recently also founded a city or another movement here in Berlin. It's called Zebras Unite. And they basically are a movement and they want to grow a more sustainable, healthy growth climate for startups that are not unicorns but Zebras. So it kind of really have a look on how they do their businesses and I had to think about it because I think as a company, it really depends in the end on the guys that sitting in the boardroom. What their conscience is, what their awareness is, whether they think we actually should do this different, it will cost me money but this is how we should do it. And at the same time, companies like booking.com, not sure if you're still following a bit of Dutch news...in the Netherlands are getting money. That's just it. So from the Netherlands and there haven't been taxes for years. And then I think the system really stinks. I mean, that's something that needs to change as well.

Marike [00:52:00] Yeah.

Styleguide [00:52:17] But it happened with cars, it happened with foods...When I grew up, I don't think there was as much information on packages in supermarkets as there is now. So it's also happened. But I think it's really interesting that from fashion perspective, it's taking really long. And I learned by now that the fashion industry is a retail, I have to say, not

specifically all industry, but retail, is a massively conservative industry. Which is funny because you talk fashion and trends. But that very conservative.

Marike [00:53:01] I'm getting sick by the thought of how the prices, the percentages off the prices of you buy a shirt or whatever, and you see how much money the companies get and how much money, the one who actually, you know, doing this or suing the t shirt or whatever is getting that's also.

Styleguide [00:53:24] Yeah. I have two daughters, they're twelve and sixteen. They know my business, they know my story. They are aware they lost by second end. Thank God. Also, when they want new shoes, it's going to be Nike or Adidas and nothing else because you really honestly don't think I'm gonna walk to school in some other shoes than that, mom. That's reality. So I'm not saying no...I understand the pressure of peer groups. I also understand it's where you.. where you grow up with it. And so that's why it's about the identity. So really status. And I find it interesting to see which brands can make a status symbol when you wear it. And change it from that perspective, but it's identity, they're buying identity and I can't expect, and I won't blackmail them to say, hey, you're not getting it. You have to wear eco shoes, then I think they'll leave the house. I mean. It's reality.

Marike [00:54:39] That's true. I mean, that's it's a lot. It's a big topic. Also to say... changing of mindsets, changing of perception, changing of, I don't know, trust. To change your habits and then coming, again, to age groups and all these kind of things. But yeah, it's a big topic. Let's maybe move on a little bit to the more operational side. How do you communicate your sustainability aspects to your customers. What main messages to try to get across. And, for example, to use social media and what you know, what outlets?

Styleguide [00:55:24] Well, the website, of course. Instagram is a must have I should say. Newsletters where you have the opportunity, I mean, this is a group who loves to get a newsletter and actually read it and actually clicks because they are... they get a created, selected style. So it's like shopping in a concept store. So it's a very good opportunity to tell to sentence more about how it's made. And of course, doing offline events like small salons or Pop-Up Stores is, of course, also a very good way to communicate a bit more about the product or the brand's production or whatever.

Marike [00:56:15] Yeah. Yes. And how do your customers respond to this?

Styleguide [00:56:22] Always very positive. The question is not that I'm not afraid that I can't reach them when I reach them. The question is how I reach them. It's not the same as when you have to reach a group of a hundred thousand teenagers because you want to sell the next hip sneakers. Then you still have to convince them. And you're still, of course, this is called reality, afraid to say the next time and they will be off again to the next hype. And that's which my target group, of course, a bit different. I'm not saying they're gonna stick forever. They are not that jumpy. And moving on to the next thing.

Marike [00:57:07] Yeah. I mean, at least they do respond, right? Like if they look at me or also what I've heard before, that there are. I mean not a lot of customers actually are very responsive. Right. Like I'm also more the passive consumer. Like I'm doing my research, I'm shopping, and then I'm saying that to me. OK. Thank you. Or following or something like that. But not actively reassuring or giving feedback on I like this one. I don't like that. And, you know, all these kind of things. But I think if you reach them and they give you feedback or they respond positively, that's already a good step.

Styleguide [00:57:54] Yeah. And of course, it's not that everybody says something when they come in. Of course they are the persons who come in and they say, no, I was just looking. Yeah, well, I always try to at least say five sentences that at least should take a bit like, OK, this is not real leather, but this is vegan, and it's certified. And do you want to know something about vegan leather or whatever, and it is not actually quite interested. And then I'll push the brochure into their hand and then hopefully they will have a look at home. That's the life of retail.

Marike [00:58:32] Yes, I think so, too. So do you face any challenges when trying to bring this message of sustainable purchasing across? And what do you consider as the main barriers?

Styleguide [00:58:50] So speaking from my target group, make my answer and not that long. I think funny enough, I think that the time, so time to have the opportunity to raise more awareness and second is the status story. The moment, one or two brands are becoming more popular and they can lead the team to say so, yeah. For example, when you sell five sneaker brands and one of them is Adidas and you have them in your shopping window, then people will come in. But you get five unknown brands and say they are new and you don't recognize any name, then not as many people will come in. So I think the time is one of the challenges to make sure you can still reach people with not enough time. And because it does take time. And to build the awareness that it also can be a status symbol to have, because in the end, I think everybody kind of needs that. From that perspective, left or right, it's the identity. Yeah, well,

of course, there's another one. I mean, the whole greenwashing industry is perhaps even one of my biggest challenges. To build trust. I'm done. Yeah, to build trust. But it also not to constantly say you have those are the bad guys, they're doing it wrong because that's not helping. But at the same time to create the awareness without getting people bored with my story.

Marike [01:00:30] To kind of subtly influence them to be critical, but not on the negative side or not in a negative way.

Styleguide [01:00:38] Exactly. And I have to say, I always tried to do not tell the negative stories. And. Funnily enough, when people think about sustainable fashion, they think of Brennessel, they think of some of the boring stuff they think of handmade knitted itchy pullovers. But at the same time, there are so many stories they don't know and they actually find this very interesting. So there's the story of Martine, of course, still brilliantly. He starts the whole story with Lisa Guise which didn't work, but it really said the name on the map. I wanted to say something else about greenwashing. I'm thinking. The greenwashing sort of greenwashing is actually a very big challenge, but I'm not sure what I am. That's what I want to say. So what really works, what I've noticed is that I tell people about the ethical part. I have to say that people are less vulnerable for what it does to the environment. But when you tell that people are working in very bad working conditions, are getting very unfair fees. So it's really this is the unfair side of the world that you do. I'm not sure if you know, Brechmann, who wrote a brilliant book and he says, OK, there's only actually one really luxury status and that you can gain in life. And that's the place where you were born. Because it really defines what you are people are becoming more aware of that. So when you say, hey, you were actually wearing that, but I don't want it to be made in a factory, but people are not getting paid or working in a toxic environment. And that's kind of clicks now because then they can resonate that it's actually unfair. I'm just buying it simply more easily.

and someone else suffered.

Marike [01:02:53] Yeah, I think it's the more relatable side to see. I mean, there are great documentaries about it. And I think that's always the case. If you see something which then resonates with you and your ethical side and or mindset or brain or whatever, that you really think that. OK. That's so unfair, I can't continue like this and then give up.

Styleguide [01:03:14] People don't want to watch those documentaries because it's very hard to watch. And so they don't.

Marike [01:03:20] Yeah. You can ignore it of course. Yeah.

Styleguide [01:03:23] And that's ...ignorism is one of the biggest diseases I would say. And so my daughter tried to explain it to her classmates like what your mother does. And then she explained this. Yeah. But it's very expensive and I can't afford sustainable clothes. I mean it's this and we have to help. Otherwise people don't have a job in the other countries. So we actually also supporting an economy of a country. Yeah, that's one way how you could put it. So it's also good that we can really reframe that it's the wrong thought, circle of thoughts. But I think a lot of people think in that way.

Marike [01:04:09] Can be, yeah. I mean, it's also a little bit ignorant to say... Well, it's sort of a sugar-coated way to say, well, you know, I'm also helping, but in the end that's absolutely not true. But I mean, of course, they are not the ones who put in place these processes and hired third party agencies or factories or whatever. But I think there needs also to be more the awareness to see that with the money I'm spending, I have a big impact. Also, the money where I know which which bank I am at and how I put my or invest my finances and which industries I'm supporting and all these kind of things. But then we come again to what little bit transparency, but also, of course, education and that you are not afraid to ignore something because it can be that you have lived your, I don't know, 30 years doing so ,and now you're like, oh, my God what did I do, I didn't know. It's uncomfortable for many people, I think. I mean, I think that it's even worse if you're, you know, shutting your eyes because it's too horrible to see. But I think that it's very, very hard to. And I can understand if people do that.

Styleguide [01:05:39] But I think this is one of the solution you can offer to make it smaller. If you think about it and you make it bigger and bigger and it's the same with the whole Greta topic, it's so intense. It's because it's really massive, really, really big decisions and movements that are there for ages. And how can we change that? And people I mean, of course, I have to say, when I think long about it, I like look at what the hell are we actually doing because I don't have any idea that things will change in India or China or whatever, because we think we really change a lot. But of course, now due to Corona, some things have changed. But for a long time, even if Europe would start, stop buying fashion from India. They still have their own national fashion market where they make money. That's how big the East is. I mean, it's and when people start thinking about that, it's such a huge topic that they kind of logout. Yes. Because it's really re-emphasizing. The trick is to make it smaller with very sizable steps.

Marike [01:06:51] Yeah, I think, of course, sometimes you have the idea to have, you know, the impact to be the savior of the world, the planet. But then, yeah, I mean if you really and I feel that sometimes too, because I mean, I'm now on the border of, you know, coming out of my studies looking for a job and you try to decide what you want to do and which direction you should go. And then, of course, you are so idealistic that you're trying to make such a big impact. But sometimes you have to be also a bit realistic to a certain level. I can have an impact, but it's not going to be that huge unless I'm going to be, you know, I don't know, I am a successful politician having a really impacting on a big scale.

Styleguide [01:07:46] Yeah. By the way, do you know, tbd? I don't know where it stands for, but it's a company. So they are a company in Germany and that one of the founders. Her name is...and together with ... they wrote a book together. It's called Starting A Revolution, which is a very interesting book to read, by the way. OK, I can really recommend it. And it's packed with beautiful alternatives and good stories and success story to show how you can have a more conscious company. But tbd is also a company which really works as a job center for, well, companies who want to have people and people who want them, companies that work more consciously. And it's a different state of mind. And I think also good that they also offer that as well.

Marike [01:09:03] Yeah, that's something. Yeah. Just on their Web site right now. And it looks really, really good because that's really something a bit challenging. I'll have a look. Thank you. Maybe. I mean, you are already there. Think. I don't know if it's really. I need to pose a question, but that's a. That's up to you. Yeah, I think. I'm going to post them anyway. Maybe you can make a short. Who would you identify as a key players to drive the change towards sustainable fashion consumption in the future?

Styleguide [01:09:58] Now, realistically, it's going to be probably one of the big names is fast enough and brave enough to change and keep changing. At the same time, it's even if H&M is going to be after greenwashing, after a better way of what they were, then still my target group is not shopping at H&M, not necessarily because it's not sustainable enough, but because it's simply not their age group and not their price and not their quality. But I think for the whole young generation, these companies could be, funny enough, the key changers, the key to changing key players. But of course, I don't know if they will do it. I don't know, I'm thinking company wise now. Perhaps it should be more a person. I really think it's already happening. I think there are in a few years when you look back and think you can, people like Greta and

understanding. Well, I mentioned her name the whole time and I'm not all positive about the whole story, but at least it does change awareness and it did create a whole new movement. So she could be called a key changer from that perspective. Yeah, I'm not sure it's interesting. It's too early to say who it's definitely going to be, of course. I think there will be names to mention from the political perspective, but also from the companies, but also new designers. I think Stella McCartney... also not ideal what her business model because I still think she has to run the red race. But at least she's doing it differently than the was. She will be one of the names that's really on top of when you talk sustainable fashion. So she is a role model.

Marike [01:12:15] Yeah, I think so, too. I think that's something we covered in the whole discussion and that's again, this triangle. Also from governmental side from some big companies who have the majority and have the courage to change their businesses or their processes to really make, to, to reach the masses, I think.

Styleguide [01:12:43] Christopher Raeburn is basically, from my perspective, not any less than Stella McCartney is, but at some point she's part ...Kering, I think. And he is not. So she has the reach and the massive opportunity to set it through and he doesn't. Yeah. It's an interesting question.

Marike [01:13:10] We will see I think.

Styleguide [01:13:11] Could you say could you say the same for the food industry or the car industry? Who is that, who are the key players? Key changers?

Marike [01:13:26] I mean, if we talk about the food industry, I think I am not knowledgeable enough to make a statement but if I think about the car industry. I think there is more the disruptive technology companies that offer workable solutions that are at least as good enough as or as well working as the current options you have. Meaning that, for example, the Tesla is, for example, offering now or, over the years developing a car that is driving on renewable energies and that they more and more build their grids around I don't know, around the world basically. And that you can actually use it because there's no use in an electric car if you cannot charge it anywhere, for example. Yeah. And then again, I think that it's not only these. I mean, on the one hand, it has to be these new companies. But on the other hand, I think that also the government has a huge impact to help and to support because their subsidies they give...

Styleguide [01:14:53] Scandinavia, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, of course, they have a leading role. Funny enough for the Scandinavian countries and perhaps for perhaps Germany, perhaps

the Netherlands, because they all lost. Look at Scandinavia, but will they be the key changers globally? I don't know. And I think that the prime minister, prime minister of New Zealand is a key changer. But she's not going to change things worldwide.

Marike [01:15:24] No, of course. It's then again, you know, in the local impact area. But well, for example, I visited Change Now in Paris in January this year, which ... do you know it? Okay. So there was the minister for the environment of France, and they just introduced this zero waste law and she's more, she's the one who also kind of stands for sustainable fashion and all these kind of things. And she gave a talk about it, that was very interesting. And these people that are in such key roles and then have the right mindset can be also the key players. And that's I mean, that's really under the umbrella of the government. But that's really interesting.

Styleguide [01:16:30] Yeah. That's really important. I think she's actually a very good example. You know, at least what she can maintain in France. And at the same time, I have to say what Neonyt needs, so the sustainable fashion fair here is doing how it started when I came here in Berlin six years ago, into what they've grown now also with the Frankfurter Messe and the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week. I can mention two, perhaps three others that grew that fast and maintained into a... that really grew out of that amateurism and that really became a professional and mature fair, that really supported the sustainable fashion. I think they definitely play a key role in how they do it. And I think Paris is second with coming with specific ones as well for sustainable. Which is also good. Yeah.

Marike [01:17:41] Yeah. In the end, it's many people, many institutions that can be key players keep saying some really. Let's see how it goes. But I think it's very interesting actually that the European Commission basically said that small and medium sized enterprises in Europe who are fast enough and have their supply chains under control and, you know, all these kind of things, the labels now speaking about fashion are also the key players to see...coming up with more sustainable or sustainable circular business models to be kind of those small labs for big groups or companies to not copy paste, but apply it and. Yeah.

Styleguide [01:18:29] So it's just any time when you could really, like, reset and change some rules, it's now because literally half of what's happening is on pause. And that's why it wasn't a very interesting article in the Dutch newspapers about it, about that you can, as a government, you at least have to set these rules about where you pay your taxes, which protocols you follow, how much money will be divided, or you're not getting any bonuses if you get money from the

state. Those are pretty simple rules, which everybody understands, but it's not happening. And why not now? Do it now. I mean, I honestly don't get why huge airplane companies, you call them. You know what I mean? Yes. And get massive amount of money because everybody kind of expected things will be as it was. And then old thing is running again. Yeah. Who's going to shoot first?

Marike [01:19:33] Yeah. Yeah. I think then we come again to the problem of being reelected as a politician and not wanting to really come up with radical changes and all these kind of things because people will not vote for them then. Yeah. It's yeah it's a whole system in the end. But. Let's see.

Styleguide [01:19:56] It's an interesting time. Yes. We have to say that, right? I mean, it's not a... I think it's really a paradigm shift.

Marike [01:20:05] Yeah, I think so, too. I mean, also for me, even though I would consider myself already, you know, kind of savvy for Minimalism, for not having so much, purchasing less or, you know, all these kind of things. And then again, it brings you so back to what is really essential. Yeah. Nice. I know that, you know, it's really, really sad what's happening, but for the majority who is hopefully safe and sound at home, it's, I think, a really interesting time to reflect. Yes.

Styleguide [01:20:44] So that's the last thing I can say about it. And then knock it out of your hair because I gave you just such extensive answers. So what's what the outcome what the outcome is going to be is that I think things will change. I think that's going to be more awareness and a growing awareness. Actually, that's also why I think what I'm doing now fits, when it doesn't sit in this era, I don't know when. And I think that's very good. At the same time, the opposite will grow as fast as well. So the polarization, poor and rich, the whole having access, not having access is going to be more divided as well. ... which is the downside.

Marike [01:21:32] OK. Well, I mean, I really have to say was one of my most interesting interviews I had.

Styleguide [01:21:38] So, yes, very polite of you to say no.

Marike: I mean, it was the longest, but it was also one of the I think. Most interesting ones. Because I mean, you have a lot of experience, I think. That's really interesting to see because from the from the other interviews, they were mostly very young like me being in their 20s or early 30s or something like that. And it's mostly young start ups, really, you know, young

companies, which is nice because as we said, these people are the ones who are still very idealistic and really have the motivation to make a change, or have an impact. But I think, too. Yeah. Over the years, I mean, I think you experienced a lot the change of people's minds that I knew. I mean, you were at the forefront of defining not defining that, but, you know, looking at researching it, whatever.

Styleguide [01:22:43] You know, I'm not even sure if I'm on the forefront. I think what I see is my benefit and at the same time, it makes me in business one of the hardest ones to work with is that I really have a look from a distance. What really I find shocking is that. But I. So I started arts. I come I'm married to a philosopher. I come from a completely different perspective. So I think we should always. I always want to think about, hey, is this even? Does this even make sense what we're doing? And not simply acknowledging when we have to say at home, when you are at Germany's next top model and you win, then apparently then you're the most beautiful because you won. And people kind of accept what's then said, then the rest does as well. And I never want to do that, which makes me hard to work with. But at the same time, I think it's. Keep your mind open, what's more possible, and I'm actually kind of surprised that even from sustainable brands not to try to change the old economy system, which I completely understand because that's the system available. But that's also what kills you, because you can not keep pace in an old system with the values you have. And that's why rents don't survive, which I find terribly sad. But it's how they do business. And that's why I keep nagging [Insert Name], really. She doesn't always like me but I don't want to do the hockey stick. I don't want an interest will just be set. And then you have money. And you could do because I know the demands they have for what you get, are demands I cannot do and I don't want to do. I'm going to be miserably unhappy. And I hope I'm really sad that during education or fashion design day, a lot of young designers are not. Talk more. Just think about it. They could do it differently. Besides saying, hey, this is my design, this is my thought and it needs to be in the market. So there's a huge opportunity to do guide them better, I think, because they get stuck in an old system which isn't working.

Marika [01:24:59] So it really interesting that you're saying this because I had this moment when I wanted to choose a topic for my master's thesis because I was like, well. The most you know, everybody's telling me, and I actually agree, the most sustainable thing is to not shop at all and to use things as long as possible. If you can then go shop, you know, second hand first. And you know, the last thing, if you look from a sustainability aspect, go and look for something very special, high quality, etc. And this comes from, you know, startups, people,

designers, whatever that labels who are dependent on sales. Right. They are in such a paradox situation and that's so strange, I think. And that's why I think that, for example, I like the approach of MUD jeans who are maybe. Well, of course, they also depend on sales and all these kind of things. But at least the sustainability aspect of the singularity is already a bit, you know, thought a little bit more until the end. So basically that's it. Yep. Now what comes in is not new. So they are trying. Well, not completely new. So they are trying to not use the raw materials from scratch. But I think for everybody else, it's a beautiful thing, fashion. But at the same time it's so. Yeah, it's really paradoxical. I don't know, from the sustainability aspect.

Styleguide [01:26:57] It's the insistence that doing sustainable business, which basically means conscious growth, is what should be talked first, because then in the end it doesn't matter when you talk fashion. Also, more come to meet again. I mean, at a certain point, people are willing to pay a bit more for. So you know that you pay a bit more, but you know, the people that did it, the animals are treated better. And, you know, there's no chemical stuff in in what you eat. And that's something people had to get used to as well and of course, there are the ones who cannot afford it. And I can't afford it as well. But at least then we say, OK. But then we eat less and we eat it once in a while. And we've tried different stuff with vegetables. And I'm not saying I'm a free vegan or I'm an eco warrior, as we as you said it earlier. But at least it does change my perspective that it's not normal, that we simply always buy it for cheap money. And that should happen with fashion as well. But the companies are bringing it in the same old. I keep calling it the old economy. It's always explains it to me. And then they won't survive. But hopefully it changes. Yeah. Nice. And there are things, we still have some stuff to do. But hey, nobody said it's going to be easy.

Styleguide [01:28:38] Yeah. Well, interesting. And when? How much time do you have? Are you. Well I'm rounding up.

Marika [01:28:45] Yeah. It's it's more or less the last month. So in the end of the month I have to hand it in. So you were my last interview. So that's good for my time perspective. And then, yeah, everything is gonna be online so I don't have to. Oh, I cannot think. Go to Leeuwarden again. And. Yeah. Then I'm done basically with my my master, which is good. And then I'm just as I said, I'm still looking for a position. A career entry again.

Styleguide [01:29:21] What what are you looking for? What's what's on your wishlist? If I may ask you questions.

[...] *End of interview.*

Appendix H: Data | Self-Consumers – Priorities and Barriers

| Self-Consumers | |
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| Priorities | |
| | <i>“I think that price is a very very big factor.” – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>“I would say the majority in fashion is very price sensitive.” – Capsule</i> |
| | <i>“Style. I think style first and then price. Or a combination of the two. I think what I've learned in the last two and a half years is that there are very few people who are idealistic enough to buy something that is not in line with how they want to be seen. [...] Very few people will buy stuff that's not in their budget because they think it's sustainable. So, you have to hit to those two for people to shop.” – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>“People are still really interested in trends and deals and looking fashionable, and that's the challenge, especially because we live in a fast fashion industry.” – Jeans.</i> |
| Barriers | |
| Less Affordability | |
| | <i>“But I think the barriers that are still barriers for people who want to buy real sustainable fashion because it's still expensive, more expensive because sustainable fabrics are expensive because manufacturing sustainably is expensive and because it's still a niche.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“And to balance this, because pricing is also difficult because I don't have the normal margins you have in the fashion industry because if I would put the normal margins on my pieces, that would be so expensive that nobody can afford them.” - Capsule</i> |
| | <i>“But also the customers need to realize or need to be used to that fashion can't be cheaper than I don't know than a bread, for example, [...] So somehow they must accept that fashion must be more expensive because there's much more labor behind it. And I think they must also accept that, or they must be trained to...” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“Sometimes I get the feedback that it's too expensive. Then I must honestly say, yes, I can understand that but then there's not a match.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“And there is this price point, I think and somehow you you'll need to meet not exactly the same price point, but I think you must get quite near to that because if someone buys fashion at H&M, you can't expect her or him to buy fashion, which is, I don't know, three or four times more expensive.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“It is more expensive. I mean, there is a reason why it's more expensive. For some people, it's not so affordable. But then personally, I always think that. Well, don't buy two, buy one, but buy one that lasts.” – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“In general, I do think that people do think it's too boring and that they think that's way too expensive.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“I think, for my designers from the brands I have in my collective. It's harder because they have to work double as hard, search longer, be persistence, pay more for the materials to sourcing to production. For them, it's really hard and I often think it's a burden to stick to that strategy. And then still they have to make money and it's simply expensive, more expensive because the sourcing and production is more expensive.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“I know we're not the most expensive, but it's an expensive product.” – Jeans.</i> |
| Lacking Convenience | |
| | <i>“It's not convenient because you must do the research. You invest the time and you can't just go out the door and find a sustainable fashion shop next next to your door.” - Capsule</i> |
| | <i>“I think to reach those people, I think somehow you, it must be reachable for them. It must be very convenient for them to buy sustainable fashion.” – Capsule</i> |
| | <i>“Because they (sustainable online shops) have such a big range of products and different budgets and different styles and a lot of different terms and conditions apply.” – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>“Sustainable fashion is not as prominent as fast fashion. I mean, you don't have like them on every corner and you don't have them in big shopping malls where greenwashing and dirty buying happens.”- Workwear.</i> |

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| | <i>"It requires definitely some ... a little bit of proactiveness to find it, to search for it, even though, even if you Google sustainable fashion, you will find buying up hundreds of articles with links to different brands." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"I think it's extremely overwhelming if you are just a general consumer that wants to buy a T-Shirt." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"You know, it just becomes really, really difficult and overwhelming to the point of you just go like, well, whatever." – Jeans.</i> |
| Missing diversity of selection and styles | |
| | <i>"I think the biggest barrier for sure is that the offer is not so wide and also not so deep." – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>"And the second is, they say it's not fashionable enough. I would say it's convenience and the design." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"Well, yeah, I think the first thing is still availability. I mean, if you google sustainable fashion, you probably find Avocadostore and one or two big brands such Armedangels, maybe." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"In general, I do think that people do think it's too boring and that they think that's way too expensive." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"The price is one, for example, they can't rely on style only because until now, still a lot of frequently available sustainable fashion is not the most appealing." – Styleguide.</i> |
| Not yet most popular topic in sustainability | |
| | <i>"And fashion isn't, although they wear it on their skin, is somehow still too far away." Capsule</i> |
| | <i>"And they all say that many people don't know how to look for quality. They don't know what criteria they need to look for. And lot of people even don't know what to check in the supply chain to know if it's really sustainable or not. So, I think it's information. There's already lots of information but I think it still... doesn't reach the right people. Or it needs to be easier to get. And it's I think sustainable fashion is still a niche. It needs to be more reachable for the majority." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"And I think that's the same with fashion, but that's a very, very small group still. I think it's so young." – Styleguide.</i> |
| Competition | |
| | <i>"Or maybe all the people that are still buying PRIMARK, H&M, these kinds of things, that is just very, very destructive for the planet and also very bad for the people that are working on it. In Bangladesh, India and China, wherever. So to switch away from this, I think this for sure is a big change."- Basics.</i> |
| | <i>"And so I think it's giving them the kind of narrative to get excited about it basically. But it's not gonna be easy I think because it's so much easier to just walk in to COS and shop your favorite pieces and not think about where they're from." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"But I could imagine that we're also losing potential buyers directly to the brands or going to Zalando because some of the brands are on Zalando as well. Simply because the shopping ...Yeah, it's more convenient there or they have more trust." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"And now the question is how to get to the masses. And you only get to the masses if you present them with a product that is at least as good as what's already on the market. Unless you can produce it cheaper, then it can also be a bit worse." – Online Shop.</i> |
| Responsibility of other Stakeholders | |
| | <i>"There are also quite some cool influencers that are... I think you know DariaDaria from Austria, Greta, of course, with her normal stuff, but I think that influencers, YouTubers have also... They have lots of influence and they can also use it for good." – Basics.</i> |

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| | <i>"But to be honest, it's greenwashing. It's not a sustainable fashion. And somehow they must also raise their standards. They [fast fashion companies] must raise standards. And also the prices in order to educate the customer." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"I think somehow it's also the task of the big brands to imply sustainability. That's because the people who buy at H&M, Zara and I don't know all these big companies, they don't have the time and they don't have the mindset to make the research because they are not really interested in it and it must somehow cross their way in their everyday life." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"That influencers play an important role. the influencers I work with are sustainable influencers but they are also fashion influencers who have lots of followers. And I think more normal people, normal influencers need to promote this message to reach the majority. Because if not, sustainability will always be a niche. I think the role models off the majority or of the normal people, they must promote this message." - Capsule</i> |
| | <i>"And I don't know, maybe also the government in somehow, I think that somehow there must be a kind of pressure on the big companies or on the society to implement this." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"I think the government should implement some regulations about it." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"I think just with the government, companies and well, fashion brands and of course, fast fashion brands, but I don't think the fast fashion will really move until we push them, so." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"For me it's a triangle, it's really top down. We need regulations because often and I don't like to sound shmuck, but I think a lot of people need to be educated because they simply don't know." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"But I think for the whole young generation, these companies could be, funny enough, the key changers, the key to changing key players. But of course, I don't know if they will do it." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"And I think and I think this is important, I think as an industry, as a brand. But also the industry carries a responsibility to make sustainable fashion accessible and easy and, you know, a simple choice, not a very complicated one." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"I think it's definitely a push between industry and government policymakers. Right." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"And also governments and industry. But for example, I think the Green Act, that's going to be super interesting. So really good opportunities come from there. But I mean, that does not say that consumer don't play a role, of course, right. But for the real shift, I think it needs to come from there." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"But then simultaneously, like you said, they're still consumers don't give a crap. But that's where the government needs to regulate that and make that easily accessible in a real manner where it isn't just saying, oh, this is cotton, so it's sustainable. No, you can only say it's sustainable if: ...you know." – Jeans.</i> |

Appendix I: Data | Social-Consumers – Core Customer and Barriers

| Social-Consumers | |
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| Core Customer | |
| | <i>“So we're not so much focused on the super greens who are already convinced and who don't mind paying 40 Euros for a t shirt. But we're more focused on this kind of early majority who really have the intention of wanting to live more sustainable, but now have this, you know, experience barriers, because...whatever.” – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>“And they care for the conditions under which their clothes are made but I wouldn't say that they are hardcore sustainable customers. It's like they are implementing a sustainable way of life more and more in their lifestyle.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“And I think it's people who are ready to change their life to make it more sustainable. And because they realize that the way we are consuming until now, that this is not the right way.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“So, we are targeting currently only women, men are planned. We always say end of 20, 30 plus but I think it's more 30 plus who earn a good salary, so after this first or second raise. And that do have a certain awareness or consciousness towards the environment or sustainability issues.” – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>“I wouldn't say that ethical or sustainable the number one. Actually, we had this thing running on the website, you know, these heat maps. Yeah. And I was really curious to see how many people are checking what the composition of the fabric is. One in six. It's insane!” – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“It's all about the comfort of the dresses and the compliments they receive. Flattery, it's always about comfort and flattery, comfort and compliments, compliments, compliments. It's not that the customer is, you know, point out the ethical part or the fabric.” – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“Rarely do they want to know really about certifications. And they're not hardcore eco.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| Barriers | |
| Missing Reach | |
| | <i>“At the moment, we're not at the point where we can be so radical that we were even talking about having like a pop up saying "do you need this?" kind of.” – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>“It's those people who are ready to make this effort to buy, because I'm a small brand and they must make the effort to find me.” Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“If I had a non-sustainable premium curated shop, I would have the same problems because what I need is reach. And I think it doesn't matter whether it's sustainable or not. Yeah, I do think sometimes it's more easy and it's coming more easy because that's what people are looking for more and more and I'm less competitive...hopefully...than the global premium fashion industry in it's... together.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“And I think that's the same with fashion, but that's a very, very small group still. I think it's so young.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| Mission Conflict | |
| | <i>“And second, also, that even if you buy a sustainable fashion people really should buy much less, much, much, much less than they buy. This is, of course, tricky for me to say because we are very dependent on, you know, t-shirt sales.” – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>“If one woman comes and out of four dresses, she finds one she loves, I'm happy. I don't need you to come back and buy another one. I mean, it would be amazing if you do and you love it and you wear it.” – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“That's what I find it really hard because I am in general, not a person who says, you know, buy buy buy and I don't want to.” – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“There's no single maximum profit and I can't build a sustainable fashion business model if I'm focusing on maximum profits. That's impossible.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“But at the same time, I think it's. Keep your mind open, what's more possible, and I'm actually kind of surprised that even from sustainable brands not to try to change the old economy system, which I completely understand because that's the system available. But that's also what kills you, because you can not keep pace in an old</i> |

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| | <i>system with the values you have. And that's why rents don't survive, which I find terribly sad. But it's how they do business.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“And I think the sustainable world has been afraid of connecting it to branding or marketing for a long time because it's money and that's capitalism. And that's bad because that's not going to change the world. So I think they are also the ones to blame that it's not moving that fast.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“It's a balance because you do want to encourage them to fix the jeans and keep on wearing them. And these type of things.” – Jeans.</i> |

Appendix J: Data | Sacrifice-Consumers – Characteristics and Barriers

| Sacrifice-Consumers | |
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| Characteristics | |
| | <i>“So, it's it's extremely different. Some people really just want to trust us that we ask the standard that we are doing our homework and for them fashion is first. And then others really want the story around it and want to learn and want to indulge themselves in the topic and start from there.” – Online Shop</i> |
| | <i>“So I think there's like the type of consumer that will go in and ask a million questions and try to really dig into it. But not everyone is like that.” – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>“You realize that the conscious consumer, again, it's out of range.” – Jeans.</i> |
| Barriers | |
| Missing Standards | |
| | <i>“But we were smaller, we received a lot of questions, if it's sustainable etc., does it work etc. because it's in Bangladesh and all these kind of things. And this really changed. And I think people are now really believing it so to say. So this either means that the information on the website is better done or I think just we have reached some kind of awareness with the people, that they are convinced.” – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>“And the second one is kind of trust because there's no strict definition about what's ethical, what's sustainable, what's fair, what's vegan. It's all within ... every brand can just say the vegan or they're friendly for the environment.” – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>“There is so much happening, even though that's actually sustainability, that's a really good overall example of how overburdened like everything is. Things are getting so complicated. Sustainability has so many aspects that you as a brand, you cannot fulfil every one of them, you have to start somewhere and then maybe start like adding more and more pillars to your framework.” - Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>“And I think that is the biggest obstacle for consumers nowadays. If the go like OK, I want to be sustainable. But what does that mean?” – Jeans.</i> |
| Greenwashing | |
| | <i>“I mean, the whole greenwashing industry is perhaps even one of my biggest challenges. To build trust.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“You know, it's a trick...but I think more and more brands are going to try to somehow use this and this is actually not a good development.” – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>“Like you really learn an eye for how companies are communicating it, and you realize very quickly how little they actually know by the way they are communicating. And what I mean by little, they know how little they're actually doing to understand their impact.” - Circular.</i> |
| | <i>“Like you really learn an eye for how companies are communicating it, and you realize very quickly how little they actually know by the way they are communicating. And what I mean by little, they know how little they're actually doing to understand their impact.” – Jeans.</i> |

Appendix K: Data | Surface-Level Strategies

| Surface-Level Strategies | |
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| Modern Styles | |
| | <i>"I think what lots of women tell me is that they like the design because it doesn't look ... in German, you would say "Öko" because sustainable fashion sometimes, or for some people it still has this image that it's how do you say English? Yeah. Not fashionable, hippie." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"So, you know, both offline shops and online shops that existed where either super "Öko" or they look like from the 90s basically and since I started a lot changed in the scene but at the time I thought OK, I can't be the only one who wants to shop fashion more sustainably and it has to be curated and presented in a much more modern and convenient way." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"So, we don't look super ethical. And we tried to have this conscious ... I always like to say this organic coffee vibe. So, you can kind of have this feeling to feel good about yourself." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"I really want to offer as many women as possible I very fine selection of beautiful stuff. And in the end, still. No. OK. I mean at least it's better, made. It's not harmful and it is treating people and the planet better." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"And I never want this to be a very let's do better and be very good and change the world and let's all call it eco. Yeah. I think you should like to style. If you don't like what you're seeing, you're not going to buy it. And if I can tell the story as well, then that's another win." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"I always want to tell the story about, OK. You are looking for something that gives you the feeling that it would fit you and you really are in the mood for wearing it." – Styleguide.</i> |
| Certifications | |
| | <i>"What helped is also really, really the certification because a certification is so strong, it really answers most questions for people." – Basics.</i> |
| | <i>"Then I started to a bit of my supply chain, fully sustainable supply chain with certified sustainable fabric." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"But at the same time, I can now finally purchase the fabrics with the certifications, etc." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"So we are really much like these are the people we work with. This is, these are the certificates we have and people have been very responsive to that." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"Yeah, well, I always try to at least say five sentences that at least should take a bit like, OK, this is not real leather, but this is vegan, and it's certified." – Styleguide.</i> |
| Convenience | |
| | <i>"So, it's me who must make the research and not them. [...] . And to make it easy for them to implement holistic, sustainable lifestyle." - Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"It's pieces like a capsule collection for women, which consists of pieces of which I think every woman needs in the wardrobe and they are timeless. They are easy to combine." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"So, we're trying to make the platform as convenient as possible." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"I think it's more like, you know, making it comfortable for them to shop with us, even though they don't want to live a conscious lifestyle or they're not ready for it yet." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"I even tried to be more trusted platform that you know, when you find it at my platform, then you know in a sense that it's good. So you don't know the details." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"And I think it's a great model because it takes responsibility away from the consumer, you know." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"And I think it also helps that we focus on one product, jeans, right. And are nothing more, again, it's a concept of simplicity and not too overwhelming." – Jeans.</i> |

Appendix L: Data | Deep-Level Strategies

| Deep-Level Strategies | |
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| Education | |
| | <i>"It's the mixture of education and meeting their needs." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"In my Instagram post, Newsletter and Facebook posts, my social media marketing; So it's a mix of ... I tell them why I use organic cotton or why I use those sustainable materials. Why they are good for the nature, for human and for them, for their skin. And I also imply things like stylings or like fashion topics that may interest them. So it's a mixture because if it would be just education, it would be boring. And I try to meet them at topics which are interesting, which may be interesting for them." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"And so I also wanted to have those blog posts because when I started on the topic, I had no idea where to start and everybody just told me what not to do." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"So with the community for new people on the website and trying to educate them again through my big, long emails, sometimes I am like, are they really reading it? But then they click on the bottom, so they click right, to sign the petition." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"I use my email marketing to communicate to them about this topic . That's actually my...I'm using my marketing not as a,well, I don't have sales really, but I don't use it as a buy, buy, buy, but rather okay, this is my way to talk to them and that's where I raise all the topics I share with them information." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"[...] just trying to provide overall as much information as possible about the conditions in which ...how we make dresses." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"When I ship the dresses I always include a little card with the information about how ...the best practices for washing something that will minimize the impact on the clothes quality and also on the fabric and also will save money on water and energy and things like that." – Workwear.</i> |
| | <i>"I think we're still in the phase that it's about education." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"What is actually vegan leather and what does recycled actually mean? And I thought it would move quicker. That at least some terminology would immediately click like oh yeah, I read about it. I know, but it's often like I'm telling it for the first time. But at the same time, when you talk about the whole chain, it does immediately click. And not from the very complex perspective on how it's all possible and what's more, at least, it's a better alternative. That's why I have that all on my website that there are better alternatives. Yeah. What you could wear instead." - Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"So we have a blog also and also in our social media, we really try to share information that empowers our consumers to make better decisions about their wardrobes, but also really just in general aspects of how to lead a sustainable life." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"I think that's also to do a lot with creating trust. You want your customer to trust you. But then simultaneously you build that trust also, by educating your consumer on the sense that they can trust what you're saying and then they can apply that to other ways of living, other things that they're doing." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"We also have our sustainability Website, right. They can go in there and really dig in and see our production techniques. And then we have our sustainability report where you can really, where we explain everything. And then we're about to release our lifecycle analysis report where we really talk about our entire supply chain and what with measure." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"We do host webinars where we talk about our sustainability report and people are very interactive with that." – Jeans.</i> |
| Positive Activism | |
| | <i>"It's a bit of a fine line. We don't want to be like itchy. So it's very easy to go too technical and aboard. It's also very easy to go too negative, I think. Which many brands are doing you know. So our general approach is to keep it light and positive and present it as a solution, our solution." – Basics.</i> |

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| | <i>"So, it's...extremely, it's a fine line to not kind of lose the people who only want to buy fashion, because I think that's the majority. While at the same time entertaining the more idealistic people that are already invested in the topic." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"So we're trying to be very positive about everything and not preach it so that people feel more empowered about shopping sustainable fashion rather than you have to do it." Online Shop</i> |
| | <i>"I mean, we want it to do it a bit more subtle so we're an online shop, we're not an education platform." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"And I think walking this thin line of, like still making the people that are interested in it know that we're doing our job and really curating the brands by a sustainable standard, but on the other hand also making sure that if my friends, I don't know, Caro, wants to shop a nice t-shirt, she doesn't feel pressured to change her entire lifestyle because she's not ready for it. Again, this subtlety comes in that after a while, she'll probably get to it herself." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"The second part of this is that at the same time, I want to explain where it comes from. And that's. Always knock wood, two or three lines it's organic or it's recycled or it comes from a designer in Berlin or they just recently won a prize or whatever, just these sound bites. And if they want to know more, read about brands or dove deeper into the cage... and if not, it's not." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"I always tried to do not tell the negative stories." – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"There's something called "positive activism " and it's really aimed to raise awareness and educate people about sustainable...sustainability in general, actually." - Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"Because going back to my original statement, I think it's so overwhelming the information that's out there to be a sustainable consumer, so what we try to do is, yes, empower them, share information, but do so in a simplistic manner . And then we also have underlayers for people that are really like nerdy about sustainability." – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>"So we will communicate all of those things at different levels and by different levels, I mean, you know, in a very simplistic manner. But at the same time, if you want more complicated stuff like it's there, you know. So, yeah, I was just trying to make it simple so people don't feel so overwhelmed." – Jeans.</i> |
| Storytelling | |
| | <i>"In my Instagram post, Newsletter and Facebook posts, my social media marketing; So it's a mix of ... I tell them why I use organic cotton or why I use those sustainable materials. Why they are good for the nature, for human and for them, for their skin. And I also imply things like stylings or like fashion topics that may interest them. So it's a mixture because if it would be just education, it would be boring. And I try to meet them at topics which are interesting, which may be interesting for them." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"And somehow I try to be like a role model. I often tell them my story, how I was a fashion victim and how I started to implement a sustainable lifestyle, what difficulties I have and how I'm doing it and I'm not perfect at all, I'm not vegan, and I'm not zero waste, but I try to implement that more and more in my life and I tell them what are the positive facts and how I do it." – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>"For the other ones, I think it would be a bit more difficult. I think we have to get them through nice storytelling. And thankfully, a lot of the brands are really making beautiful fashion. So I think it's just a way of getting in front of them and then having a nice story to tell around it." – Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"And so I think it's giving them the kind of narrative to get excited about it basically. But it's not gonna be easy I think because it's so much easier to just walk in to COS and shop your favorite pieces and not think about where they're from." Online Shop.</i> |
| | <i>"And the communication is massively important because if it's too boring or it's too extensive information, people tend to just walk by because then they have to do an effort and not a lot of people... So in general, people don't want to do that. Neither do I." Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>"Funnily enough, when people think about sustainable fashion, they think of Brennessel, they think of some of the boring stuff they think of handmade knitted itchy</i> |

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| | <i>pullovers. But at the same time, there are so many stories they don't know and they actually find this very interesting.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“Really think about how you can get them in as easy as possible and still provide a story because it's not the certificate or the label only, that it's... helps people. They need to have the story. So I think the story behind this is massively important and leading.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| | <i>“Well, the website, of course. Instagram is a must have I should say. Newsletters where you have the opportunity, I mean, this is a group who loves to get a newsletter and actually read it and actually clicks because they are... they get a created, selected style. So it's like shopping in a concept store. So it's a very good opportunity to tell to sentence more about how it's made.” – Styleguide.</i> |
| Collaboration | |
| | <i>“I started to collaborate with other with other brands from different areas and also lots of fashion, of course, accessories, shoes and so on. – Capsule.”</i> |
| | <i>“And I work a lot with influencers and bloggers. I just promote modern brands, I don't know if modern is the right word but I think you know what I mean. It's to get away from this from this hippie image. And I work together with modern influencers and bloggers to show them that living a sustainable lifestyle can be modern, can be cool. And to them, it doesn't have to be something about ... You don't have to miss anything.” – Capsule.</i> |
| | <i>“More have like a genuine interaction with them, which I think it's very much this generation of people don't just want an ad, they want to have some kind of connection to the company. And then that also helps build trust and things like that, right?” – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>“Oh, we also have the ambassador program. That's another way that we interact with. I mean, these are sometimes influencers but just people in general. Anyone can sort of sign up to it. There's different things that you can do. I think you need to take pictures and stuff like that but there we also interact with people that are genuinely interested to buy the product, understand it and understand what we're doing and things like that and support us, you know.” – Jeans.</i> |
| | <i>“Well, I do think influencers, especially if they do it in a positive way, [...] if people live kind of a desirable lifestyle, I think more people and, you know, are inspired by that. And that's also something I see with friends. But they follow somebody who's, I don't know, super sustainable and lives a very healthy lifestyle, they often want that, too. And I think it's nice.” – Online Shop.</i> |

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