Mentality of a Throw-Away Society

A study on sustainable consumption and the millennial perception of post-retail initiatives.

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Abstract

The implication and rise of the fashion industry is not only affecting its consumers, but the whole world. As the fashion industry is proclaimed to be one of the largest contributors to climate change, and makes up for 4.8% of Swedish consumption (Centrum för konsumptionsvetenskap, 2016, p. 12), it is timely that more sustainable approaches must be taken. Disposing of one’s textiles is a vital part to reaching a more sustainable consumption, since many textiles can be recycled for redesign or to extract fibres. Post-retail initiatives are set out by many fashion firms, where they extend services to their customers in order to aid in sustainable clothing care or helping them dispose of their textiles in a more sustainable manner. The purpose of this study is to understand the perception of male consumers, a demographic that is often overlooked in fashion studies, and how they perceive post-retail initiatives, as well as looking into how male consumers take responsibility for their clothes after use. The following research questions: How are post-retail initiatives perceived by millennial men? How are sustainable clothing collections from a fast fashion company perceived by men? How do men take responsibility for their clothing when they are finished using them? Where does the responsibility lie of recycling clothes?

By using a qualitative method, in terms of semi-structured interviews, 8 participants were interviewed and questions with different themes such as: CSR, post-retail initiatives, sustainable consumption, behaviour and attitude towards sustainable consumption, fast fashion, and hedonism vs utilitarianism were used to code the data for analysis. The inductive nature of the study allowed for a model to be derived after data collection. By adapting a technological acceptance model (TAM) and a model for decision making of sustainable consumption the sustainable acceptance model (SAM) was made to interpret how external variables contribute to perceptions of sustainability and post-retail initiatives and how that can instigate a changed attitude or behaviour.

The SAM model helped to answer the research questions and showed that for perceptions to be formed, social and individual factors played a large role. One’s social context as well as situational and individual factors play a role in the perception of post-retail initiatives. The bearers of responsibility for textile recycling was believe to be in the hands of the municipalities, not the fashion industry, as they have a bigger influence of creating situational opportunities to instigate awareness for recycling textiles.

The findings show that perceptions of post-retail initiatives are derived from influences from external variables. Convenience plays a large role in perception as something that is perceived well must also be easily accessible. Clothing collections are not perceived well as availability over other convenient choices are not present. Responsibility for clothing varies from sale to donation, but an understanding was made that the lack of knowledge on where to dispose sustainably was limited. Responsibility for recycling clothing was said to be from a municipal level not the [clothing] industry level.

Keywords: Sustainable consumption, post-retail initiatives, millennials, fast fashion.
Abbreviations

As the overall purpose of this study was to understand perceptions of post-retail initiatives and how sustainable consumption was perceived and to some extent adapted by millennial consumers, the conceptual model was drawn in the fourth chapter. The model analyses three branches of consumer perspectives. With the aid of theories, such as technological acceptance model, and decision making of sustainable consumption, an analysis of the data is presented. The theories will further aid to analyse and answer the research questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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<td>DMSC</td>
<td>Decision-making model of Sustainable Consumption</td>
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<td>EPR</td>
<td>Extended Producer Responsibility</td>
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<td>PRI</td>
<td>Post-Retail Initiative</td>
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<td>PSS</td>
<td>Product-service system</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>Sustainable Acceptance Model</td>
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<td>SCP</td>
<td>Sustainable Consumer Perception</td>
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<td>TAM</td>
<td>Technological Acceptance Model</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Consumption, with a big C, is one of the most substantial variables in economics to finding equilibrium. Consumption is part of daily routines, and has neoclassic economic principles imprinted in us such as; economic growth is what makes the world go around (Mont & Power, 2010, p. 2245). Those principles also assume that people’s behaviour in relation to consumption is based on rational decision making (Lehner, et al. 2015, p. 167.) Critics to the term consumption (Gordon, et al. 2011; Peattie & Collins, 2009) draw parallels to the word consume with destruction; consuming has evolved from purchasing a product to understanding the economic, social and environmental implications of such a product (Lim, 2017, p.69). But what happens when the consumption that we are conditioned to partake in becomes unsustainable and the effects on the future become irreversible. Who will react and who should take responsibility?

The human population is growing at a rapid pace. In 1920’s there were an estimate of 2 billion people. Currently, year 2017, we are at 7.3 billion and projections state that in 2030 there will be 8.5 inhabitants on the planet (United Nations, 2015). Carbon footprint, as described by Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017) is “the amount of carbon dioxide that is emitted from an individual”. Humans are a big factor to the changing environment, and since predictions state that we are a growing population, our consumption habits cannot be sustained to what the earth can provide for us. In 2016, human consumption exceeded the capacity that the earth could regenerate on August 8th, 8 months into the year (Overshoot Day, 2017) Means of consumption such as food, transportation, housing, are often studied and scrutinized as dangerous emitters of carbon dioxide and often promote sustainable alternatives to become eco-friendlier. However, there are industries which may be overlooked and in the eyes of the consumers, are not a harm to the environment and planet. One of these, being the retail industry, is said to be the second biggest polluting industries on the planet (Gunther, 2016), however these claims cannot be taken with full accountability due to limited data within the industry. It might seem a bit outrageous at first, but taking into account cotton production, along with other fibres, factories, transportation, etc. shows that many factors are involved. An expansive industry, in terms of outsourcing and optimizing the supply chain, to online markets, the retail industry is part of a globalized market that reaches people from all around the world.

With the growth of the retail industry, global clothing production has doubled between 2000 to 2014 (The Economist, 2017). Fast fashion companies, such as H&M and Zara are notorious for producing up to 20 different collections annually (The Economist, 2017). A white cotton t-shirt is estimate to emit 8.7 kilograms of carbon emissions during its lifespan from, production to consumer (Wang, et al, 2015, p.472), which is relatable to driving a gas fuelled car for 52 kilometres\(^1\). Though there is not a statistic on how many t-shirts are sold annually, just by using one’s imagination, there must be thousands produced each year.

\(^1\) Assuming 7.3 L petrol per 100 km [http://timeforchange.org/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-definition](http://timeforchange.org/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-definition)
Being able to buy clothing for little money is instigating a throw-away attitude for clothes, where some research has found that some items are used ten times or less before disposed in the garbage (McAfee, et al. 2004: Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009, p.191). Some fashion companies are being accused of unsustainable business models, and some notice the need to create more sustainable clothes (Han, et al, 2016, p. 162). As a result, there are various initiatives from charity shops, big retailers such as H&M, to more exclusive stores like Filippa K which are currently operating with different schemes in order to elongate the life span of the clothes (Pal, 2016a). This allows for a more environmentally friendly approach to fashion, and companies taking responsibility for products sold. One such example of this is textile recycling.

1.2 Textile Recycling

Various studies have been made which conceptualize the idea of recycling textiles and prolonging the lifespan of clothing. Morgan & Birtwistle (2009) studied disposal habits of young consumers in the United Kingdom. What they found was that there was a lack of understanding of the need to recycling clothing, and presumed that a big issue is that there is limited media coverage of the environmental harm that is related to the production of textiles (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009, p. 196). Recently, studies have been conducted where they investigate how companies provide different services for after care of products (Pal, 2016b), as well as understanding what drives consumers to choose more sustainable options when it comes to clothing (Han, et al, 2016). Results from studying textile disposal show that there is correlation between the inconvenience of discarding clothes in a sustainable manner and textile recycling (Hvass, 2014, p. 415).

Sweden is currently ranked as the second most sustainable country in the world, measuring with 17 indicators of governance, social and environmental (Robecosam, 2017). The country is renowned for its effective recycling and waste management, and in 2016 reports showed that only 0.8% of household waste went to landfills, compared to an average of 28% within the EU (Avfall Sverige, 2016).

However the countries great results in minimal landfill disposal, recent reports from Dagens Nyheter show than on average Swedes purchase 13.1 kg textiles annually and 7.6 kg get thrown away and burned, instead of being recycled (Khilberg, 2017). 2-3% of Swedish emissions of greenhouse gases are correlated to the consumption of textiles, from production to end-of-life for the textile when they are discarded (Naturvårdsverket, 2016). Recent forecasts on consumption are showing that Swedes are consuming more textiles but making their lifespan shorter (Centrum för konsumtionsvetenskap, 2016). Fast fashions market share has increased and in Sweden, consumption of clothing increased with 53% in ten years, from 1999-2009 (Roos, 2010: Gustafsson & Ekström, 2012, p. 285)

There are different set-ups which allow for a more sustainable disposal of textiles than what is currently reflecting the Swedish households. Companies such as H&M and Hemtex offer in-store textile drop offs (H&M, 2017). Myrorna, has over 1200 disposal bins in Sweden (Myrorna, 2017), and stores such as Stadsmmissionen promotes donation of clothes in their stores to be sold for goodwill. Extended producer responsibility, which was first introduced by Thomas Lindhqvist (1992) for companies to take responsibility for their products sold, after the consumers have finished using them, is used in some
forms within the retail industry in Sweden. Though EPR systems has mainly focused on more rigorous materials, defined as WEEE – waste electrical and electronic equipment (Lindhqvist, 2000), it has been extended to encompass other materials which are not being responsibly collected, such as textiles (Watson, et al, 2015).

1.3 Problem Identification
This section will explore three driving concepts, namely: fast fashion – the issue, millennials – a consumer identification group, as well as sustainable consumption – the alternative.

1.3.1 Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is the phenomenon where the retail industry has optimized production, costs, collections and the supply chain in order to offer trendy items in large quantities for a low price (Investopedia, 2017). Trendy items can be defined as creative inputs from fashion forecasters and designers, making their conceptual designs an input to the social context of the world (Guercini, & Ranfangi, 2012, p. 18). The stigma of fast fashion has been to produce new clothes and collection which instigates impulse behaviour from its consumers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2009). The companies put pressure on consumers with continuously swapping collections. This creates an attitude of “buy now, it won’t be here tomorrow” because if the customer does not purchase it upon availability, they might be missing out (Sasikarn, 2012, p.35). Fast fashion aims to continuously mass produce garments and has generated was can be called a “throw-away society” (Pal, 2016a, p. 128).

Fast fashion can be defined as right in time, following the latest runway trends (Gocklen, 2014, p. 5), counterfeiting high street expensive labels (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004, p.486), and uses a spread out supply chain in order to produce large quantities of clothing for cheap prices (Joy, et al, 2012, p.276). Ultimately it allows for people to partake in, what was before a more secluded and luxurious industry, and express their personal style without having to spend copious amount of money for premium brands (McNeil & Moore, 2015). Young consumers are prominent in the fast fashion scene, as Morgan & Birtwistle (2009, p.190) state: they are concerned with trends, and therefore an influential target market for the fast fashion industry. Competitiveness in the industry relied on being able to get new products in store with a minimum number of days (Bruce & Daly, 2005, p.330). However, recently ethical considerations have become of greater importance for fashion corporations as awareness for environmental and social impacts is increasing (Shaw, et al, 2006, p. 428). More companies are showing legitimacy to ensure customers that they are acting sustainably and responsibly (Porter & Kramer, 2006, p.81). With increasing commitment towards the environment, social responsibility and sustainability can be seen as a prominent innovation tool for companies (De Angelis, et al, 2017, p.1515).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been taken upon the fashion industry for quite some time, after leaks of sweat shop labour from Nike (Nisen, 2013), as well as the Rana Plaza textile factory collapse that H&M contracted (Westervelt, 2015). They have been forced to showcase the responsibilities that their big brands should have embraced, through CSR (Bartley, T. 2003, p. 434). The need to showcase accountability and transparency has led to an increase of CSR within this industry, and not only for fast fashion, but luxury fashion and slow fashion (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013, p. 203).
CSR within fashion can be showcased in many ways, some being releasing sustainability rapports, and donating charity in countries where product production takes place (Niinimäki, 2015, p. 5). Gap was successful with turning negative consumer perception and association through a long-term CSR strategy. The company tackled environmental and social issues, and it gave them a competitive edge (Arrigo, 2013, p. 185). By implementing a CSR strategy, both a stronger partnership with various stakeholders (especially customers) was achieved (Arrigo, 2013, p. 185).

1.3.2 Millennials

Millennials, which mentioned, is a large consumers group within fast fashion, is a generation where the age specification varies. Most studies agree on the starting age being 1980, but the generation ranges from 1995 to 2000’s (PWC, 2014; Goldman Sachs, 2016). For the purpose of this research, the millennials will be defined with an age range of 1980 to 1999. This allows for the youngest to be turning 18 years’ old, the year the research is being conducted (2017) and the eldest in the generation will be turning 37 years.

Millennials can be described as the most diverse generation in terms of ethnicity and cultural background. With interracial marriages becoming more common after WWII (Lowes, 2015, p. 5), a new level of diversity can be seen amongst this generation. Their values and characteristics defer from the norm when measuring time of marriage to their technological adaptiveness and consumer power (Wooldridge, 2015, p. 29). An early introduction and advancement with technology, (Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 600) millennials have a tendency to be sceptical to information received, as they recognize the ability technology has to manipulate things to looking real (Hill, 2011, p. 25). Recognizing authenticity can turn in brand loyalty and gratitude within millennials towards companies (Hill, 2011, p. 25). Some of the defining moments for the generation have included; the 9/11 attack, introduction to the internet, technology such as; laptops, cell phones, climate related natural disasters, and are imperative and influential to the shaping of millennials (Lowes, 2015, p. 43).

Millennials, also known as Generation Y or Internet Generation, often review and share product opinions with other consumers online (Smith, 2012, p. 88) and they make consumer choices on the level of environmental friendliness (Gunelius, 2008: Smith 2015). They have a tendency to support companies that are socially responsible and therefore reciprocate loyalty towards the company, deemed that it is holding to its causes (Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 600). Hill (2011 p. 25), explained millennials concern for environmental and social injustices is due to the availability of the internet, allowing millennials “to be aware of wide variety of natural and human initiated disasters”. Growing up with media and internet has also allowed for instantaneous communication on a global scale (Valentine & Power, 2013, p. 600), it has led to an informal yet effective spread of word of mouth which affects a company positively ¾ of the time (Smith, 2012, p. 88).

Generation studies have shown that macro-environment changes have been subject to shaping different generations (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003, p. 95). Millennials, not only being born into an age of technology, they are born in the era of globalization and open markets (Goldman Sachs, 2016). They have been subject to studies on consumer purchase
behaviour because of their diverse shopping approach compared to other generations, such as the baby boomers (Casidy, 2012, p. 242).

Millennials, especially in western cultures, have been born into a society where shopping is seen as a recreational activity (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003, p. 96). The rise of materialism, retail availability, influences from TV, prolonged opening hours of stores, online shopping etc. are reasons as to why the millennial generation consume more (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003).

Millennials is of interest to study for many reasons, one being the large population within the demographic. The US has mapped out millennials, and according to Goldman Sachs (2016), born between 1980-2000, there are 92 millennials in the US, compared to 77 million baby boomers (1944-1964) making them the largest generation in American history. Baby boomers, which were previously the largest generation, increased the world population after the World War II and The Great Depression (History.com Staff, 2010). In 2016, there were reportedly more than 1.2 million millennials in Sweden (Dagens Industri, 2016), and the large quantity of individuals therefore make up for a large proportion of the countries consumption. With the generations large spending power along concern for social issues, these concerns usually do not translate to action (Kagawa, 2007; Hill & Lee, 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2015). Hill & Lee (2012) found that sustainable consumption patterns must be instigated both from the consumers as well as from the companies in order to see and more prominent change in demand for sustainable clothing.

1.3.3 Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Fashion is used as a form self-expression and can be used by individuals to associate their identity (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p. 212). The knowledge of the negative impact the fashion industry has on the environment is lacking from the consumers (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; McNeil & Moore, 2015, p. 212), or consumers’ sustainability approaches are not reflected with the choices they make (Chan & Wong, 2012; Joy, et al. 2012; McNeil & Moore, 2015; Han, et al. 2016, p. 162).

Sustainable fashion is perceived differently for different consumers (Bly, et. al, 2015, p. 126). As explained by Connell (2011) and Fletcher (2008) (Bly, et al. 2015 p. 126), evaluating perceptions of sustainable fashion can be done by choosing:
- Products that will last a long time
- Content fibre; with natural or recycled fibres rather than synthetic fibres
- Extend durability through repairing
- Limit washing & drying

The spectrum of being a sustainable fashion consumer vs. devouring into fast fashion is very wide, and many categorized consumers fit along that spectrum. Research conducted by McNeil and Moore (2015) concluded that behaviour of sustainable fashion consumption relates to three archetypes of consumers. The ‘self’ consumer: who have no concerns for sustainable fashion or changing their attitude towards fast fashion, the ‘social’ consumer: shows concern for the environmental issues related to fashion but the purchasing behaviour may not correlate to the mind-set. Lastly, the ‘sacrifice’ consumer will abandon any unsustainable fashion corporation. These consumers become a big
threat to corporations or any fashion supplier as their main concern lies with reducing consumption.

However, many fashion corporations are using different take-back schemes to promote a more sustainable fashion consumption. Within the Nordic brands, there are various schemes to promote sustainable consumption. This study will focus on Nordic brands because of its progressive approach on textile impact (on an environmental level), where many companies try to create more sustainable practices (Corvellec & Stål, 2017, p. 17; Elander & Palm, 2015; Watson, et al, 2015). Brands like H&M, Filippa K, Boomerang and more have put their personal niches to reuse, reduce or recycle clothing.

H&M, one of the largest companies within the fast fashion industry, has also been renowned for its sustainable practices. 2016 they made the short list for the top 20 most sustainable companies in the world, within all different sectors (H&M, 2016c). Practices of sustainability permeate all different levels and branches of the company, from production to transportation through to the stores and its customers. 2011, the launch of their conscious collection, which offers clothing of more sustainable raw materials and is in general eco-friendlier (H&M, n.d.). The company aims to incorporate more sustainable and recycled materials in their clothing so that by 2030 they will have a closed material loop where no new production of fibres is necessary (H&M, 2016a).

**Summarized**

To summarize, millennials are supposedly the generation that “care”, where they value companies promoting social responsibility. A main goal is to be sustainable and conscious. However, many of the eco-principles do not match the consumer choices, and even if consumers are aware of unsustainable productions within fashion and intentionally speak about sustainability, actions do not reciprocate their thoughts (Shaw, et al, 2007; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009; McNeil & Moore, 2015; Woodridge, 2015).

As a response to environmental concerns within the retail industry (Armstrong, et al, 2015, p. 30), different fashion companies are implementing different post-retail initiatives (Pal, 2016a). These initiatives include; collaboration with charity, collecting old garments, redesigning / repairing clothes, selling in second-hand shops (Stål & Jansson, 2016), Studies on value-propositions (Stål & Jansson, 2016), service innovation within post-retail initiatives (Fell & Montes, 2015), exploring perceptions of millennials in relation to different products (Wooldridge, 2015).

This research aims to get insights to sustainable consumption and retail disposal which is insightful from a managerial perspective for fast fashion companies, as well as stakeholders working within sustainable fashion and/or consumption. From a theoretical standpoint, it aims to understand perceptions which is relayed to consumer behaviour.

**1.4 Research Gap**

There is a demographic gap within the research of fashion, as well as within sustainability and clothing disposal. Fashion studies have mainly been aimed towards understanding young women in regards to their perceptions on ethics within the industry (McNeil & Moore, 2015), post-retail methods (Armstrong, et al, 2015) or consumer perceptions of sustainable fashion (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Furthermore, a study was
conducted studying the attitude of female consumers’ in regard to sustainable fashion. They expressed the need for future research to be conducted on men’s attitudes towards sustainable fashion (Axelsson & Larsson, 2012).

Statistical inference shows that menswear in Sweden is gaining momentum, as reports show that men are becoming more conscious about appearances (Euromonitor International, 2017). On a global scale menswear accounts for 402 billion dollars, compared to womenswear which is at 621 billion dollars (Fashion United, 2017). Menswear is increasing in spending power, and therefore this study will focus on men’s perceptions of the retail industry and how different post-retail schemes conducted by different Swedish brands are perceived by this group of people.

A stated gap from a student thesis on attitudes of millennial women in regards to sustainable fashion consumption (Larsson & Axelson, 2012), where they thought that further research should investigate other focus groups, namely the male gender. This study aims to understand the perception and in turn the attitude of millennial men in regards to sustainable fashion companies and further initiatives such as post-retail initiatives from fast fashion companies.

1.5 Research Question and Purpose

This study aims to understand how post-retail initiatives are perceived by millennial men and if if different sustainable schemes make the consumers engage in the post-retail initiatives. Furthermore, studies on post-retail initiatives show that it is primarily the consumer who is initially responsible to manage the disposal of clothing, therefore this study aims to understand how the participants take responsibility for their clothes when they are no longer used. By understanding the implications of consumers in regard to textile recycling, it can be insightful for fashion companies to understand how they reach out to their customers and understanding how consumers perceive post-retail initiatives.

Research question
How are post-retail initiatives perceived by millennial men?

Sub Questions
How are sustainable clothing collections from a fast fashion company perceived by men? How do men take responsibility for their clothing when they are finished using them? Where does the responsibility lie of recycling clothes?

1.6 Delimitations

This research paper is limited to its demographic, which means that the point of views is limited of Swedish millennial men. Furthermore, it is limited to men who study at university in Sweden, due to limited time as well as the convenience of mainly having friends who are enrolled at university. This caused a limit in the age span. As millennials are of a span from 18-37 years old, this study has a 19-26 age span which doesn’t justify answers for the whole generation.
1.7 Disposition

Introduction
- Presentation of background and problem identification
- Introducing research gap
- Purpose of research and research questions

Theoretical Methodology
- Introducing the chosen research paradigm, approach, philosophies, strategy and comparing to make an optimal choice for the research

Literature Review
- Discusses selection of topic
- Presenting method selection and crisisim
- Reviews relevant literature

Theoretical Reference
- Introduces relevant theories from past research
- Develops conceptual framework and themes to cover

Practical Methodology
- Describes and evaluates methods used to collect empirical data
- Presents interview participants
- Discusses ethical standpoints and aspects

Empirical Results
- A presentation of the results from the conducted interviews
- Connection to different themes

Analysis
- An analysis of the results in relation to the theories and grouped as per the conceptual model
- Research questions are answered in accordance to the theoretical model

Conclusion
- Conclusion for the research paper is presented
- Implications for valuable further research
- Limitations to the study is discussed
This section will explain the methodological approaches made to aid the research and data collection methods. It will support the research question by assessing different research philosophies and act as a reference to strategically collect and analyse data.

2.1 Pre-Understandings

The reason for choosing this topic of study was due to a growing understanding about the environmental impact that the fashion industry has. About a year ago, after studying Micro- and Macroeconomics at Umeå School of Business and Economics, I felt that the underlying reasoning of the concepts is that in order for a country to thrive, we must continue to consume. There were no external implications that were involved such as the implications of consuming in regards to natural resources or the environment. I started to look into my own consumption and see where I could actively make changes to be more mindful of the environment. What I noticed was that there is not that many external pushes helping people to be more sustainable in regards to their consumption. I became determined to change my impact on the environment and change my consumption habits. By looking at friends and family in regards to their consumption I became interested in wondering what externalities could help them be more sustainable without “sacrificing” normal day things like shopping. The topic developed from there.

I am aware that I may have a strong opinion in regards to my preconceptions regarding sustainability consumption within fashion, and this might follow with some bias towards the research in regards to how the participants are approached, which will be discussed further down in this chapter regarding axiology. I think that my pre-understandings turn into a springboard into finding relevant literature that encompasses this study and can therefore be used as an aid to investigate the research questions and the general purpose of the study, as well as finding relevant literature and theories to aid my analysis of the results.

2.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm encompasses the philosophical approach as to how scientific research should be done (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.43). When using the term philosophy, it includes areas of knowledge, reality and existence which are ever evolving and not a fixed reality as they are open for progression as more research is made (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.43). A research paradigm becomes individual to the researchers approach on knowledge and depends if the researcher looks at knowledge as objective or subjective. By stating what research paradigm will be used, it will set the intention of the research and allow for information to be collected and presented in a way that is aligned to the philosophical approach of information Saunders, et al (2009) reason the importance of explaining the research paradigm stating “the research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way you view the world” p. 108.

Past research has been based on a paradigm that has been supported by Kuhn (1962) which only gives an explanation to natural science phenomena of scientific achievement.
It systematically observed matter to make objective reasoning within the physical world (Smith, 1983; Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.43) In more modern days there have emerged more research paradigms which can explain objective and subjective matters. The two main research paradigms which are have emerged and are explained by Collis & Hussey 2014 are: interpretivism and positivism – and are on opposite ends of the research paradigm spectrum.

The aim of this research is to understand the perception of humans of sustainable consumption of clothes and PRIs. Therefore, an interpretivist paradigm is the most suitable for this study. Interpretivism allows for researching the personal perception of human beings, by measuring a phenomenon and getting insight to human perception (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.45). By being empathic to the participants and their understanding of sustainable consumption, useful information can be obtained as to how certain factors, such as media browsing, internet use, peer-pressure, has led to formation of thoughts and action within the retailing industry (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 116). The main objective when using an interpretivist paradigm is, as stated by Saunders et al (2009, p. 116): “to enter the social world of our research subjects and understand their world from their point of view”.

The positivist paradigm, which is at the opposite end of the spectrum to interpretivism, aims to understand the world from an objective point of view, and explain information in a scientific manner (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.43). This approach, which has been supported by Kuhn (1962), has systematically observed matter to make objective reasoning within the physical world (Smith, 1983; Collis & Hussey, 2014, p43). This paradigm would not suffice for the research being made in this thesis, as it does not support individual understandings to describe different problems, and is not subjective to individual considerations.

In between the spectrum of positivism and interpretivism, there have emerged more paradigms to approach scientific research. Realism states that there is a fixed reality which is not dependent on the perception of human individuals (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 114). It aims to provide answers to what is happening around us. Realism is prodded with some bias, as it does not believe that it is possible to create distance between the researcher and the data that must be collected (Saunders, et al, 2009, p.119). This paradigm was considered for this research, but being able to study a single phenomenon and putting myself outside of the context is necessary with this study, when collecting and interpreting the data.

By choosing the interpretivist paradigm, this research will be able to understand and analyse the individual perceptions of millennials in different concepts which were introduced in the first chapter such as: post recycling initiatives, sustainable fashion consumption, textile recycling, and more.

2.3 Research Philosophies

After delving into the research paradigms of how information and data can be collected, and how the different philosophies explain how research can be interpreted, research philosophies are used to explain how the researcher process knowledge and interpret reality is an important aspect in relation to the analysis of results (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 23). Bellow the research philosophies are presented.
2.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is as stated by Collis & Hussey (2014, p.47) “the nature of reality”. The paradigm has a relation as to which approaches to research philosophies are chosen. There are a few different ontological views, and two will be explained, namely objective and subjective ontology.

Subjectivism is in line with the interpretivist paradigm, since it states that subjective nature of reality is constructed through social realities. Therefore, all personal events within an individual’s life is what shapes their realities (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 47). Being influenced by parents, education, access to information from TV, news, etc. will leave individuals with different understandings of the world. Actions taken by individuals can come to change depending on the context of a situation (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 111).

Objectivism is more appropriate with a positivist paradigm. There is only one reality and it is external to the researcher (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 47). Any data collected and analysed will be true to the entire population, as empirically proven data explains the phenomenon. This philosophy might be suitable if a market research was to be conducted, in order to get a general understanding of how to target millennials into engaging in PRI’s, since the information obtained would become highly useful for a large amount of the population.

A subjective ontological philosophy will be used for this study. The research subjects will be studied in a way to understand and analyse their answers in context to their individual reality. Knowledge and preunderstanding of sustainability within the retail industry is individual to them, and therefore it makes sense to understand that personal understandings in their lives will influence all questions.

2.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology covers the area of business research concerned with what can be accepted as knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.47). Within the epistemological philosophy the approaches to valid knowledge differs depending on the chosen paradigm.

From an interpretivist approach, which this study is using, knowledge is closely correlated to what data the subject has provided (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 47). Though it might not be able to make a generalization of the whole population, the facts obtained from an interpretivist stance become valid to the group that has been study to collect the data. By collecting useful information that can be transferred to gained knowledge within retail perceptions from millennials, it is impossible to make a generalization for the whole population. However, by contributing with an analysis of different answers, the research will be able to make contributions which are aimed and different demographics or people with specific interests, such as environmental harm or sustainable practices.

Realism looks at knowledge as being proved with facts and data and when there is insufficient evidence, there lacks validity to the knowledge (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 119). It assumes a scientific approach and can therefore quantify data to generate knowledge.
within an area (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 114). The aim, however, is not to make quantifiable data that provide general yet realistic answers to the research questions.

An interpretivist approach will be used in this research to validate and interpret knowledge within the research scope. By interpreting results from resources with individual perceptions, constructed by their reality, it will allow for new understandings within the area of \textit{textile recycling}, \textit{sustainable perception}, \textit{measures taken to be a sustainable consumer} and more.

2.3.3 Axiology

This philosophy reflects on the values and ethics of individuals (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 116). It argues that since we are humans we cannot be freed from our own personal values and perceptions of judgment when studying a phenomenon, and therefore, it should be taken into account when researching, as it becomes a vital part of the study (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 116).

From a positivistic approach, axiology means that there is no value of the researcher that gets involved with the research, the research is merely independent of any values (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 119). This I believe is hard to obtain in any research, as a driving interest of a statement or an issue prevails why the chosen area is being researched. Whereas, with an interpretivist philosophy the value of the researcher is linked to the research question at hand and the mannerism of conducting the research will be influenced by the researcher’s values (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 119). By using this approach, there may too much influences from an emotional or prerequisite of information on the subject and can become too biased from the researchers point of view.

Pragmatic axiology relays that values may be subjective or objective to the research, though whichever the choice, it will play a large role with the research (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 119). Realism within axiology states that there will be bias from the research as all people are individuals and are shaped by individual upbringing, culture, experience, etc. that cannot be disconnected from the research (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 119).

This study will be conforming to the realistic philosophy of the axiological paradigm as value is something that is inevitable and is a reason to why the research question has been made from the beginning. When studying sustainability and perceptions, it is based personal views and is inherently impossible to free the research of values. Without values to influence thoughts and guide decisions, it would be hard to find any intrinsic academic research with different views without realism views.

2.4 Research Approach

Two main approaches to battle a research and incorporate a theory, through an; inductive or deductive approach. These approaches are made to state if the research will be going from the general to the specific, i.e. \textit{deductive}, or from the specific to make a generalized theory from the findings i.e. \textit{inductive} (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 7). It is said that deductive strategies take on a positivist paradigm, and an inductive strategy would be used with an interpretivist study. However, Saunders, et al, (2009, p. 124) states that “labelling is potentially misleading and of no real practical value”. With that in mind, for
the purpose of having a clearer guide to instigate an appropriate theoretical departure, this thesis will choose an approach which will become an aid for the theoretical departure.

There are three main points as to why it is important to make a research approach which are suggested by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126). It aids the design of the research, from developing or choosing theories, to forming questions for data collection. When choosing what the research will be studying, knowing what the research is trying to answer will be helpful to know which approach is best suited. Some forms of research may be practically difficult due to lack of knowledge, and therefore the right approach is more suitable to cater to the researcher’s prerequisite knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126)

A deductive research approach is aligned with a positivistic research paradigm. Its aim is to prove or disprove a scientific approach to a problem by testing hypothesis to further develop an understanding of an already conducted theory (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 124.). A deductive approach is important to findings as it explains variable patterns, missing patterns as well as quantifying the data to be generalized for a larger population (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 125). Through hypothesis testing and empirical findings, at the end of the research the theory can be revised and conclusions can be drawn by giving answers to the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 12). A deductive strategy can be seen as moving from the big to the small, where a part of a theory gets tested and proved with empirical support (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 7). Criticism to deduction is that the research method is very linear and that it does not take into account the reasons variable patterns, it just is (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 126). This approach is not suitable to understand perceptions, as it is everything but linear. To answer the research question, all given variables must be explored in able to get a reliable understanding of the phenomenon.

An inductive research, which is the approach that will be taken for this research, has a different approach to theory proving, as it goes from a specific problem to a general explanation of the population (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 7). The specific empirically collected data is used to create an understanding of the phenomena that is observed during the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). An inductive approach aims to create answers from a social science view, and there is an aim to understand the nature of the problem (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 126). By collecting qualitative data, which is most common in inductive research, the researcher can understand distinct views, group answers under different themes and understand insightful information within a specific context (Saunders, et al., p.127).

2.5 Research Strategy

Choosing a research strategy is important as it becomes the ground for how data is going to be collected. A qualitative or quantitative approach can be taken (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 6). Though quantifying data seems to be the biggest factor in choosing a research strategy, influences depending on epistemological and ontological approaches of how knowledge is obtained and reality is viewed, will naturally influence how data is collected and measured (Bryman & Bell, 2014, p. 26).

As following the interpretivist paradigm with an inductive approach, and understanding the individual perception of PRI and sustainability, it is most logical to do a qualitative
By conducting a qualitative research, the phenomenon can be studied in-depth with fewer participants but at a more detailed and descriptive level. The opposite would be to do a quantitative research and explaining different variables by proving or disproving hypotheses based on previous theories.

As the results of the participants will be analysed and described, they will be presented from the view of the researcher. Instead of using predetermined theories to explain the data, as a qualitative research would entail, this research will through collected data allow theories to emerge (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 420).

Qualitative data has a shorter set of samples but studies them in-depth. There is some critique as to how valid qualitative data is, as there is not statistical evidence to justify how true statements are (Tracy, 2010, p 838). In chapter 5 qualities to fulfil relevant criteria for a qualitative data will be introduced and explained how this research is valid, even with a small sample.
This chapter will go through how literature has been obtained critically reviewed for the thesis. Furthermore, previous research which has made contributions to sustainable insight within fashion is presented. First, some general background on theoretical concepts will be explained. Then the chapter is going to introduces detailed theories used to more specifically analyse the results.

3.1 Selection of method and criticism

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<th>Keywords</th>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Carroll, A.; Dahlsrud, A.; Porter &amp; Kramer</td>
<td>Scholarly Article</td>
<td>Perception, greenwashing, CSR-washing, sustainable</td>
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Finding valuable literature within the research area does not only imply summarizing or describing previous literature, it is a critical review of past research within the field and additional material that can be of aid within the research area (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 91). By searching and reviewing the literature, past methodology or results can be incorporated into the new study. By searching for relevant literature, it can be a guide to research gaps which has not been looked at before, or lead to similar research within the field, as well as an identification of what is available within the research field. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 92).

By using different databases provided by Umeå University Library, different premium source forums are available and provide research of mainly peer-reviewed scientific articles which are used to conduct this research. Taking validity to account is done by examining the date of publication and scrutinizing if the research is modern enough or if the approaches are relatable to modern day realities. Another way to ensure validity is entering the title to Google Scholar which provides information of how many times the specific research has been cited. The aim is to use articles which have been cited many times, as this shows that independent studies has relied on the same information for research. However, some articles have very little citations and these will be used as well, but critically assessed before relying on them. Taking into account the publication year gives indication if an article with few citations is relevant or not. The most common databases for finding scientific articles were made available through: Business Source Premier, Emerald, Wiley, DiVA, Springer, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis and EBSCOhost.

A way to decide if the literature is relevant, even with little citing in further research, is looking at the author. If the author of an article has written previous work which is referenced in other text, then the viability of the literature has been assumed to be trustworthy. Furthermore, a process of finding viable work has been through using different keywords. Thereafter, if the criteria for viability has been reached, that article has been a springboard to interesting and relevant information within the topic through looking at the reference list.

Another validation for literature has been when reoccurrence of certain authors have been identified in similar areas of research. For example, when searching literature within CSR and fashion, Carroll (1999), who introduced CSR is mention within all further literature with CSR. Even cross references of more recent authors are mentioned in similar research.

3.2 Selection of defined literature

*Literature within relevant fields of fast fashion and post-retail initiatives were searched to get an understanding of important topics that the industry has to cover, or get prompted to partake in.*

3.2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

As explained in the introductory chapter, consumers and namely, millennials value companies that take responsibility within their business. To understand how CSR has
been identified and is used from a theoretical perspective for businesses, an overview of the concept. The initial term used to define CSR, or social responsibility as it was called in the past, was coined by Howard R. Bowen and it was described as: “the obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objects and values of our society” (Bowen, 1953: Carroll, 1999, p. 270). Since then there are various studies and terms as to what CSR is and the purpose it serves. Though there has been extensive research within the area, CSR, there are many different aspects which allows an abstract meaning to the term (Garriga & Melé, 2004, p. 52). In 2006 an in-depth study was made by Alexander Dahlsrud in order to create a deeper understanding of CSR. Since there is no concrete definition to the term, it can be perceived differently. This can lead to bias, depending on how CSR is defined by a specific individual and further create confusion of how integrate the term in business (Dahlsrud, 2006, p. 1).

CSR has been emergent for quite some time. Pressure from activist groups, governments and media has led to corporations taking on responsibility in order to maintain a good reputation not only with their shareholders, but as well as their stakeholders (Kramer & Porter, 2006, p. 80). According to Freidman (1970), when companies dealt with social responsibility the investments should only increase shareholder value, and if costs outreached the gains, the investment should not be made (Garriga & Melé, 2004, p. 53). This CSR theory can be put under the categorization of instrumental theories as the objective of this CSR approach is to create wealth (Garriga & Melé, 2004, p. 53). However, the different theories explained by Garriga & Melé (2004) include; political theories – the power of a business within society, integrative theories – integrating social demands as business cannot be conducted without the power of the people, ethical theories – understanding what is ethically correct to do for society. These theories become a springboard for an even deeper understanding of different strategic approaches to CSR.

CSR can not only be put into different theories, but placed into different dimensions and focus from a business perspective. The dimensions which are developed through analysing the existing definitions by Alexander Dahlsrud (2006) give indication of how CSR can be applied instead of only defined. There is some correlation between the theories stated above (by Garriga & Melé) and the dimensions which were studied by Dahlsrud (2006) when trying to map out a more definite definition of the term. These dimensions are; stakeholder, social, economic, voluntariness and environmental dimensions (Dahlsrud, 2006, p. 5). The lack of a definite definition of CSR is justified with the dimensions as the with them CSR can be referred to a phenomenon and business strategies should be built around a specific phenomenon rather than trying to define the phrase (Dahlsrud, 2006, p. 6). The European Commission is constantly updating the approaches to CSR and how it should be better incorporated to encompass the above mentioned definitions. A recent definition which is described as “a modern understanding of CSR” (European Commission, 2011) states that CSR is “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”. This definition allows for the complexity of responsibility to be independent to the business conducted as well as dependent on making responsible decisions within that scope and area of business.
3.2.2 Greenwashing

Greenwashing: “an advertisement technique that misleads consumers into thinking that their products or services are better for the environment that they actually are” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011: Wood, 2015, p. 9)

CSR can be seen as a strategy to influence customers into believing that the company taking responsible actions, and the intent can sometimes rebound if customers perceive it as a marketing scheme, namely greenwashing (Niinimäki, 2015, p. 7). There has been a rise academic literature done on the perception of greenwashing which also is referred to as CSR-washing, and is spoken about from activists who are pushing further than being “O.K” with the CSR initiatives made from firms. Some even say that CSR is superficial marketing (Pope & Wæraas, 2015, p173). Some research has even showed that the consumers believe that CSR is fake (Alves, 2009: Pope & Wæraas, 2015, p.173), and some studies are pushing that CSR should be abandoned completely for its counterproductive impact (Maysier and Zick 1993; Parguel et al. 2011; Wagner et al. 2009, Pope & Wæraas, 2015, p. 174).

Greenwashing is a bit similar to conscious consumers still choosing to purchase clothes from fast fashion brands. Since 2011, over 250 of the largest companies in the world make annual CSR reports (Chapple and Moon 2005; Lakatos et al. 2011; Penn et al. 2010; Rolland and Bazzoni 2009, Pope & Wæraas, 2015, p. 184.) however, consumers rarely seek out the information. Consumers lack trust and confidence that CSR is of good intent, and therefore, some claim that the rise of CSR-washing is harming even those that are trying to do good (Parguel, et al, 2011: Wood, 2015, p. 5). The academic research made on this subject shows that there is little understanding of how the unmasking of greenwashing could cause consumers to distance themselves from a company or a brand (Wood, 2015, p. 27).

According to Wood (2015), the emergence of greenwashing has been due to the rise of markers understanding the need to appeal to the rising concern consumers have about the environment. By labelling products with words such as organic, sustainable, fair, gentle (Bodger & Monks 2010; Ekstrand & Nilsson, 2011, Woods, 2015), firms manipulate consumers into believing these ethos’s that are being presented, and can result into a purchase.

3.2.3 Sustainable Consumption

Consumerism, as explained by British economist, Paul Ekins (1991) is “the possession and use of an increasing number and variety of goods and services is the principle cultural aspiration and the surest perceived route to personal happiness, social status, and national success” (Assadourian, 2010, p. 187). Taking that into consideration, sustainable consumption is then explained by the OCSC (2000) as “consumption that supports the ability of current and future generations to meet their material and other needs, without causing irreversible damage to the environment or loss of function in natural systems” (Jackson, 2003, p. 14: Birtwistle & Moore, 2007, p. 211). Furthermore, sustainability has been described by Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Kramer & Porter, 2006, p.81).
The term sustainable consumption lacks a concrete definition, as it has a different meaning or reasoning to different people. The emergence of sustainable consumption was made at an international summit in Rio 1992, where policy and decision makers around the globe attended. The Earth Summit was the first on an international policy level to highlight the adverse effects that consumerism could have on the environment and how governments could intervene the phenomenon (Bly, et al, 2015, p. 125). Because of the abstract definition of ‘future generations’ and ‘future environment’ the term lacks objectivity when being put into action, as there is no exact detailing of what the future holds (Schaefer & Crane, 2005, p. 77).

The studies and practices of sustainable consumption are mainly reviewed from a consumer behaviour and marketing perspective. What causes people to become sustainable consumers, what are the reasons behind it, is the supply matching the demand (Young, et al, 2010, McNeil & Moore, 2015) are some popular research topics. Some studies have showed that though people may have a more sustainable mind-set, it will not be translated to their decision making when purchasing products (Defra 2006: Young, et al, 2010, p. 22). The research stretches to further understand why actions do not speak louder than words, and according to Biel & Dahlstrand (2005), Sener & Hazer (2008) and Wheal & Hinton (2007) these are some of the reasons (Young, et al, p. 22)

- Brand Strength
- Culture
- Demographic characteristics
- Finance
- Habit
- Lack of information
- Lifestyles
- Personalities
- Trading off between different ethical factors

Trying to enhance a society to become more sustainable has been tested through different campaigns and policy implementations for some 40 years. Governmental policies and activist groups, among few, have repeatedly introduced initiatives to sustainably consume (Holt, 2012, p. 237). However, these initiatives are drawn up from an empirically disproven, outdated ‘ethical value paradigm’ which has resulted in no change in consumption patterns, even by so-called “environmental allegiance” consumers (Holt, 2012, p. 237). *The ethical values paradigm*, described by Holt (2012) implies that: some scholars view consumerism as the cultural consequence of industrial capitalism (Holt, 2012, p. 238). Since we are living in a capitalistic society, how are we to rid ourselves from unsustainable consumeristic behaviours.

### 3.2.4 Extended Producer Responsibility

Extended Producer Responsibility, from now on referred to as *EPR*, is a concept that was introduced some thirty years ago and is still under development. One of the main researchers in the field whose research has supported policies made by OECD countries is Thomas Lindqvist. EPR is defined by Lindhqvist (2000) as “a policy principle to promote total life cycle environmental improvement of product systems by extending the responsibilities of the manufacturer of the product to various parts of the entire life cycle of the product, and especially to the take-back, recycling and final disposal of the
product”. The OECD (2001) go further and claim that “the responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a products life.” An EPR model has been drawn out, which explains the interrelations between bearing responsibility for: the physical product, the expenses, environmental damages linked to the product, etc. (Lindhqvist 1992; Lindqvist 2000, p. iii). The studies of EPR is generally of WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) complex electrical products, such as cars, washing machines. However, it can be extended to the recycling incentive of the PET plastic bottles in Sweden (Lindhqvist 2000, p. 58).

By assuming EPR, a company is complying to taking responsibility for the waste their products produce. The issues surrounding this practice is that it might not be economically viable, for either stores, or the producers to take responsibility for their waste once it has reached its end-of-life phase (Spicer & Johnson, 2002, p. 38). However, the research of EPR only goes back three decades and therefore some might say the method is still in its starting phase and therefore the profitable side might not have arisen yet (Lifset, et al, 2013, p. 163). Most EPR is looked through the scope of industrial ecology, trying to manage waste, using little new resources, and “closing the loop” to using resources in a circular manner (Lifset, et al, 2013, p. 162). The incentive is to create products that are easily recycled when their life span is up, and easy to deal with until then (Mayers & Butler, 2013, p. 277). However, research is limited in the field with answering the question if EPR mainly enhances recycling, but does not promote the reusing of materials (Lifset, et al, 2013, p. 165).

EPR systems can be categorized into four different areas – mandatory, voluntary, individual or collective schemes. All different schemes try and find incentives between consumer and producer to work together. Within retail and textile EPR, there is only one country within the EU which has mandatory EPR schemes – France (Watson, et al, 2015, p. 23). Canada is set up to begin in 2017 (Watson, et al, 2014; Fell & Montes, 2015, p. 18). By having these mandatory schemes, a producer responsibility organization (PRO) can be contracted and have responsibility for facilitating collection of certain waste (Watson, et al, 2015, p. 24). An example of a mandatory EPR under the sight of a PRO is collection of batteries within 12 EU countries (Mayers & Butler, 2013, p. 165). By contracting a PRO, that company will then be responsible for the collection and management of waste (Mayers & Butler, 2013, p. 278).

Furthermore, EPR systems can be categorized into upstream or downstream where upstreaming is adding value to the product after it has been collected or handed in i.e. increasing the lifecycle, and to downstream a product is to decrease the value of a product i.e. a t-shirt become a window cleaning rag (Lifset, 1993, p. 164). The optimal would be for every recycled product to be upcycled as it would be generating increased value, however, this is usually hard to do (Gupt & Sahay, 2015, p. 596). By upstreaming rigorous innovation of the recycled material must be made in order for the product to gain a greater intrinsic value (Fell & Montes, p. 17). The image below shows the classification in a life-cycle assessment of up- or downstreamed collectables.
Using EPR in a retail context can be difficult, as it is hard to control the habits of consumers to actually partake in recycling clothes, and it is only the consumers that have the mandate to choose what to do when they discard their clothes (Fell & Montes, 2015, p. 16).

By looking at previous research studies, theories of perception of different phenomenon’s will be presented. A model of sustainable action, and more modified theories will be presented. These reference points will become an aid to analysing the results.

3.3 Post-Retail Initiatives

Post-retail initiatives, hereby referred to as PRI are growing within the fashion industry (Pal, 2016a; Armstrong, 2015; Stål & Jansson, 2017). As consumer become more aware of their personal waste, the demands to dispose of their waste in a sustainable manner grows. In the waste cycle collection, reproduction, reusing, recycling has the ability to flourish.
3.3.1 Product Service System Model

Product Service System hereby referred to as PSS is an incentive for corporations to continue to give a service to their customers, even after they have sold a product, as it achieves a competitive edge as well contributing to more sustainable practices (Van Halen, et. al. 2005, p. 10). It is defined by Goedkoop, et al, (1999) as “a marketable set of products and services capable of jointly fulfilling a user’s need. The product/service ratio in this set can vary, either in terms of function fulfilment or economic value” (Mont, 2002, p. 238). Besides giving extended value to the customer, a PSS can be incorporated for many different reasons, one incorporating repairs, instead of throwing away things before the life span has been reached (Blau et.al. 1997; Mont, 2002, p. 239).

With PSS’s there are many different definitions and description from previous studies. Tukker (2004) discusses eight different models which are placed in three different categories. They contain product-oriented services, use-oriented services, and result oriented services (Tukker, 2004, p. 248). The categories are on a spectrum of how tangible or intangible the product or service is and the different economic or environmental that entails the models (Tukker, 2004, p. 248). The spectrum can in turn be used to measure ownership of the product/service at hand (Mont, 2002; Stål & Jansson 2017, p. 2). The less a PSS becomes dependent on the actual product, it will begin to value and take into account the need of the client and what service to provide (Tukker, 2004, p. 248). One aim that PSS has, according to innovators and sustainability researchers, is for its incorporation with business models to promote sustainable consumption and more environmentally friendly manufacturing (Armstrong, et al, 2015, p. 31).

With business models evolving and the market power shifting, companies look to create valuable services in order to retain loyal customers (Tukker, 2005). PSS can be used as an incentive to elongate the lifespan of a product and contribute to a more sustainable business approach (Stål & Jansson, 2017, p. 4). Stål & Jansson (2017) collected a subsequent amount of research where they summarized that PSS might not be as effective as one might wish because consumers do not appreciate: the value’s PSS’s might bring, nor do they wish to reduce the ownership of material possessions. It may be unclear as to what PSS can achieve, from an economic and environmental standpoint, however, if more corporations are looking towards creating a more circular economy, rather than linear, then this is an approach for them to uptake (Linder & Williander, 2015: Stål & Jonsson, 2017, p. 3)

There are different options and orientations to make use of a product-service system, and the grades of implementation and use of these differ. Product oriented (PO) tackles the physical product and provides a service for through initiatives such as repair or take-back services, among few. Use oriented (UO) aims at increasing the use of one product, such as renting or leasing clothes, creating a shared community and minimizing personal consumerism. Result oriented (RU) completely removes the product and replaces it with a service, such as personal styling in collaboration with a personal collection. (Tukker, 2004; Armstrong, et al, 2015). This research will focus on product oriented (PO) product service systems, as this is the main focus within the fashion industry (Armstrong, et al, 2015, p. 31).
Some PSS include:
- Repair services
- Renting clothes
- Take-back schemes
- Collaboration with charity

A PSS has the intention to close the loop meaning that the economy around it should become circular (Stål & Jansson, 2016; Fell & Montes 2015) meaning that the aim is to decrease consumption of new products, to in the end recreate products from recycled materials. However, there is some criticism and confusion towards take-back systems, as many [fashion] companies incentivize this kind of behaviour with rebate checks for the next purchase. This then informally promotes further consumption (Armstrong, et al, 2015, p. 32; Pal, 2016b, p. 459) and does not enable a circular economy, yet. The thought and intention behind the theory is that it provides a more sustainable and circular business model (Fell & Montes, 2015).

3.4 Sustainable Action Attitudes

McNeil & More (2015) made great progress in mapping out attitudes towards sustainable fashion consumption. The concept which is aimed towards understand consumer choices within sustainable fashion is a concept that there is little empirical research in (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p. 214). Below are three attitudes towards sustainable fashion consumption derived from a qualitative study on men and women in Australia. Han, et al (2016) describe as many other researches have shown that sustainability is of high importance to young consumers, i.e. millennials (p. 165)

**Self**
This is the consumer attitude does not seek out sustainable fashion garments and have little concern that their avid consumption is harmful to the environment (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p 220). A study on sustainable consumption in general by Marchand, et al (2010) a similar annotation to the self-group. Price is of importance to the self-group and therefore they have tendencies towards fast-fashion companies as this allows for cheap and easy access (McNeil & Moore, 2015). The self-interest consumers got their classification for having no environmental concern to their perceived consumption (Marchand, et al, 2010, p. 1441). These consumer attitudes can be crossed with a study of the perception of recycling e-waste by Wooldridge (2015). The term throwaways, was coined and though not similar to the self-consumers, they did not overconsume, however, they did not dispose of their products after use in a sustainable manner (Wooldridge, 2015, p. 84).

**Social**
This attitude is for the consumers who have a genuine interest for the environment and taking more sustainable responsibility, but it does not always portray their actions or purchases (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p. 221). These consumers are widely influenced by social norms as well as social media, therefore the influx of sustainable product marketing affects this group greatly as they represent a large group of the population and their change in purchase behaviour could lead to a big change in demand for sustainable clothing (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p. 221). Price is not of the same importance, and this group would be OK with paying more money for “ethical products” (McNeil & Moore,
Marchand, et al. (2010) found that people from affluent countries had a hard time understanding sustainable consumption, as society was pushing for materialistic validation, and turning to be more sustainable could mean a change in social standard. A participant argued that the paradigm for success should be reconstructed to eliminate excess and take on a more “civic” role of being cautious of the implications individual choices can have on the environment (Marchand, et al, 2010, p. 1442). Convenient environmentalist is the classification that Woodridge (2015) allocated to the social sustainable consumers. They rely heavily on authority incentives to provide means to be sustainable i.e. recycle waste. They do not go out of their way, but if the option is available and easily accessible, then they act sustainably (Woodridge, 2015, p. 82.)

Sacrifice
These consumers only partake in sustainable and ethical clothing, though they have greater intentions, which is to reduce consumption overall. They have desires to partake in fashion but understand the environmental and social effects it can have. They actively seek information and share it with other consumers, hoping they will adapt their sustainable behaviour (McNeil & Moore, 2015, p.211). Marchand, et al. (2015) identified altruistic consumers, as acting unselfishly. However, this was not a favourable to be identified with in being sustainable, as the selflessness prevailed an unappealing lifestyle of complete material sacrifice (Marchand, et al, 2015, p. 1441). Woodridge (2015) found however, that at the forefront of technology, and displayed some leadership within sustainability. However, this group cannot be compared to the altruistic / sacrifice consumers, as the gadget gurus were not compelled to reduce consumption, they were condoning the opposite, as well as only recycling when it was convenient (Woodridge, 2015, p. 83).

3.5 Hedonism vs. Utilitarianism

Consumer behaviour is used by largely in business to understand the psychological perception of what consumers need and value when purchasing products (Kumar, 2006, p.2). As Kumar (2006, p.2) states, “consumer behaviour involves the use and disposal of products.” By understanding consumers, their needs can be met, and moreover, companies can influence and attract customers by targeting these prerequisites. Kumar (2006) further investigated post-purchase decisions of consumers, where they 4 stages of the purchase is evaluated. This helps to understand reactions of a product but is also used to influence and instigate sustainable disposal (Kumar, 2006, p.2 & p. 291). Two approaches to understanding the value of a product, which in turn relates to consumer behaviour, as it depicts the intent behind a purchase will be described below.

Hedonism and utilitarianism can be seen as a continuum paradigm of necessity and pleasure, however, they are two separate dimensions of consumer behaviour (Richard & Habibi, 2015, p. 1105). Hedonistic behaviour in relation to fashion can be described as the ultra-consumer (Blythe, 2008) where clothes are not a necessity to stay warm, but an extension of the self-identity (Blythe, 2008, p.43; McNeil & Moore, 2014, p.212). Hedonistic fashion can often be justified with utilitarian attributes as there might be feelings of guilt to buying clothes that may be perceived as unnecessary (Okada, 2005; Richard & Habibi, 2015, p. 1106).

Utilitarianism is the practical consumer, who eats not for great tastes and pleasures, but for nutrition and survival (Blythe, 2008, p. 43). Utilitarian values can be fact specific, and
purchases are usually business-to-business or cleaning utilities for the home (Blythe, 2008, p.43). A study on online shopping showed that high hedonic websites often had excessive informative information. This further strengthens the argument for justification of hedonistic values, intentions and purchase behaviour.

Figure 2. Hedonism vs. Utilitarianism

3.6 Technological Acceptance Model

Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) is theory developed by Davis (1989), derived to generally understand how people accept technological advancements and changes as well understanding the general acceptance behaviour towards IT and computers (Tzou & Lu, 2009, p. 312). However, this model has been used to understand acceptance of fashion technology and how it affects consumers (Tzou & Lu, 2009), as well as the perception of changing attitude of recycling garment cut-offs within a textile factory (Tomovska, et al, 2017). Its aim is to identify and explore perceived usefulness “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her performance” as well as, perceived ease of use “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989, p. 320). Perceived usefulness will be modified to understand to which extent a person believes a PRI will change their perception towards a company, in regards to sustainability. Perceived ease of use will be modified to understand to which extent a person believes they will engage in PRI’s, textile recycling, and sustainable consumption.
When a positive perception is obtained, attitudes and intentions to perform positive behaviour can be formed. Enhanced performance can have a direct relation to extrinsic needs as well as external rewards (Davis, et al, 1989, p. 869).

3.7 Decision-making model of sustainable consumption

Where there has been a shift traditional consumption, as well as economic, which has prompted people to consume as they please, to better understand behavioural economics where researchers have defined key attributes which lead to attitude, intention and behaviour (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015, p. 160). The decision making model, which was formed through many previous researchers (Balderjahn, 2013; Carrington, et al, 2010), a behavioural understanding of what decisions and influences lead to a consumer making sustainable choices. Factors such as individual, social and situational all play a role behind decision making. This model will be referred to as the DMSC from now on.

By looking at these factors [individual, social & situational] and placing them into the TAM model, the two can be incorporated to better understand individual perception and decision of PRI’s. The factors from

*Figure 3. Technological Acceptance Model*

*Figure 4. Decision-making model of sustainable consumption.*
3.8 Conceptual framework

Through extensive literature search and reviewing previous research studies on EPR systems, PSS, PRI, millennials, millennials in relation to fashion and consumption, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility a defined model for this research has emerged. The complexity of these different theories become of importance to the understanding of perception with the case of sustainability and PRI’s and the context of the participants understanding of H&M, the company’s sustainability actions, as well as their dedicated collection that offers sustainable options.

Using consumer perception as the focus point, a conceptual framework model has been derived from past literature and theories to make the sustainable consumption perception (SCP) framework to collect qualitative data and interpret the results. Using consumer perception as the focus point, becomes vital in understanding different segments of the fashion industry in relation to the participants of the study.

Figure 5. Sustainable Consumption Perception – A conceptual framework

Source: (Author, 2017)
Integrated TAM and DMSC model (Davis, et al, 1889; Terlau & Hirsch, 2015)
Named: Sustainable Consumption Acceptance Model (Author, 2017). Presented as the Sustainable Action Model (SAM)

The integrated SAM model consists of the DMSC model which therefore portrays the external variables that influence consumers to make choices. They are also used to understand how externalities lead to a certain perception. Thereafter, as the DCSM model is incorporated to the TAM model and they become one, where the attitude, intentions as well as perceived actual use can be related to PRI’s as well as sustainable action. This model will be used as an aid to analyse the data.

The theoretical model that has been designed for this thesis uses different literature, theories and empirical support from previous research to understanding of consumer perspectives of sustainable consumption, post-retail initiatives, how to stay informed and how they act in regards to sustainable consumption. Below is a grid of themes that will be used for the interviews to collect data. As explained in the upcoming chapters, the questions per theme were obtained during a pilot interview. The realization emerged from utilizing the literature and asking questions specific to a theme, as it would help to get useful information as well as categorizing answers in specific sequences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Taking environmental, social &amp; ethical responsibility through actions. Marketed and reassured through reports</td>
<td>Is there a relationship between CSR &amp; Fashion? How would you describe it? Are you aware of different measures taken by H&amp;M and if so where do you find them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism vs Utilitarianism</td>
<td>The continuum of necessity and pleasure. Understanding</td>
<td>How often do you buy clothes? With what intent do you buy new clothes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the connection people have to clothing</td>
<td>What is important to you when buying clothes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Collections, maintenance, repair services, charity collaboration</td>
<td>How do you perceive the different initiatives available to manage your clothing? How are you informed of how to manage textile waste, and where do you receive this information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Consumption</td>
<td>Strategically consuming and purchasing products that leaves as little impact on the environment as possible</td>
<td>How does sustainable consumption mean to you? And in regards to fashion? What is your opinion of the <em>H&amp;M Conscious Collection</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Fashion</td>
<td>Cheap and mass produces clothing, constantly updating and offering new collections. Poor quality and usually not used over 10 times</td>
<td>How would you describe fast fashion? Your opinion of fashion industry in regards to the environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and attitude towards sustainable consumption</td>
<td>Actions is usually not reciprocated with intent to be sustainable. How do peoples’ perception of sustainability match how their behaviour</td>
<td>How do you manage textile waste? What would be an optimal way to discard clothes? What incentives do you need to recycle clothes? How does your perception of H&amp;M change with knowledge of their PRI’s? What do you believe is the main thing stopping people from recycling their clothes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>To get a general understanding of the participants who are interviewed.</td>
<td>Age? Current program enrolment? Where do you live? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below shows three of H&M’s most prominent PRI. With different causes, they aim to elongate their services as a company selling clothing to offering in-store clothes recycling, aid in how to care for clothing when in the possession of the customer, as well as collaborating with local charities. They incentivize instore garment disposal by promoting customers to dispose of clothes and in return get a discount. To better understand the theories and be able to answer the questions emerged in the theme grid, secondary data will be collected from H&M from their extensive sustainability reports. This is done as an aid to the research to put a context to the presented theories in relation to a large company, Swedish, and supposedly one of the most sustainable companies of the retail industry (H&M, 2016c). The PRI’s below is a summarized presentation of what will be used for the data, and the rest will be presented in *Chapter 5 – Empirical Findings*.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:CO – PRO to collect &amp; sort materials</td>
<td>In store</td>
<td>Collects any garments that wish to be discarded. Incentivized by giving discount coupons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clevercare</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Gives advise on how to wash and care for clothing when in the customer’s care. Advises on tips to save energy when washing clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity Star</td>
<td>In store / follow up online</td>
<td>H&amp;M donates 0,02 € for every KG collected in store</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Information gathered from H&M (2016a & b), H&M (2017), & Clevercare (2017)*)
4 Practical Methodology

Introducing methods of designing the research, and strategies of how to collect and present the data is reviewed. Furthermore, an introduction of the participants of the research is giving. A discussion on ethics and a motivation as to how qualitative data can be ensured to hold of relevance without quantifying empirical data.

4.1 Research Design

The research philosophy for this thesis follows that of an interpretivist paradigm and therefore, certain contexts have been suitable for designing the research. The aim is to understand the perception of post-retail initiatives of millennial men and how they see themselves in accordance to being sustainable consumers. This research will use exploratory case studies as the research method.

A case study’s aim is to explore a single phenomenon (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 68), and therefore it could be suitable for this research, as it is aiming to explore the phenomenon post-retail initiatives. The research’s exploratory nature fosters the idea that casual variables or relationships between variables can be studied and further understood (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 172). However, a case study is the analysis of a single event, person, location or an analysis of a specific organization (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 58) and upon consideration, it would be more suitable to have a cross-sectional study.

A cross-sectional study is more commonly associated with quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.54), however, a research on the usage of cross-sectional design showed that the use of the design was found almost equally within qualitative or quantitative research, from studying many past scientific papers (Bryman, 2006 p. 104).

Contemplations of the design of the research were made whether to conduct a case study, cross-sectional study or grounded theory research. Grounded theory can be referred to as a total interpretivist research design, as it uses no previous theories of theoretical references to conduct its research (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 70). By not being guided by previous data or research, the design does not disregard any useful data, since everything has the same degree of usefulness (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 70).

Due to lack of time and skills, the grounded theory was disregarded, as it seemed like too difficult of a task to compare and test new theories and make complete new categorizations and theories within post-retail perceptions. Therefore, with the help of some theoretical framework and backgrounds, a cross sectional study, using a case, namely H&M to depict real life PRI’s and how they are perceived, felt like the most suitable approach for this research.

4.2 Data Collection

For this thesis, I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews as my method to collect data due to the studies interpretivist approach. By using open ended questions, it will allow for a natural unfolding of sub questions or other data relevant to the phenomenon.
(Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 133). Qualitative interviews will be done on 8 male students, enrolled at university.

Secondary data will be collected from H&M’s website to provide some insight on the company as a case. Since there is extensive information through sustainability reports, annual reports and general information on the company’s web page, this data will suffice as it is only used to describe the case of sustainability and PRI.

To get a sample of participants I used convenience sampling. A convenience sample uses participants to study which are easily accessible to the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 190). Upon designing the data collection process, I figured snowball sample, where participants get selected through reference and are may be more distanced to the researcher (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 132), would be beneficial. However, the lack of time made it more convenient to use the first mentioned method. I asked male friends who I know have an interest in fashion, to partake in the study. To ensure that the people were not too generic I asked both people in Stockholm and Umeå who study different programs at university to conduct interviews on. By diversifying the participants, it allows for a more cross-sectional study. As the premises of the participant’s place of living means that they are subject to different norms, as well as different influences in terms of external variables. With the nature of the subjective ontology of the thesis, the nature of reality varies from participants, and through having participants living in different cities, their perception will be influenced from the context of their reality. Furthermore, by having participants living in different cities and studying different programs, yet within the field of social science, this might contribute to a more spread understanding of perception.

All interviews were audio recorded, with the permission of the subjects, and later transcribed. This allows for a more fluent interview with no hesitation to answers questions and no relevant data or opinions are lost. 6 out of the 8 interviews were held in Swedish, and the remaining two were in English. The Swedish interviews were transcribed in Swedish and then translated. Though this might constitute for some lost data, I decided it was better to keep the interviews in the most natural and comfortable setting as possible to not lose any viable information due to language barriers. Being fluent in both languages, any loss of data is not likely.

Since some of the interviewees were not in my geographic location, some interviews were done over the phone, while the rest were conducted face-to-face, and typically took between 20-30 minutes (see Table 4. Participants). The face-to-face interviews were either held at a local coffee shop or open meeting environment such as a library in Stockholm with a calm setting, to prevent disturbance of setting. It depended on the preference of the participant in order for them to be as comfortable as possible. Three of the interviews were made over the phone and the remaining five were done in Stockholm.

This is a qualitative data and exploring a phenomenon of understanding the perceptions of people, namely how they perceive post-retail initiatives, and it is most suitable to collect data in this way. Having semi-structured interviews allows every subject to answer and interpret different concepts in their own way, but it also allows for any other relevant information to be brought forward and flexibility in questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467).
Pseudonyms are given to the participants, so that their identity is confidential. By allocating pseudonyms, it is easier to refer to the answers and analyse the data without using numbers. With assured confidentiality it allowed the participants to answer truthfully without having answers related back to an individual, and any the need to satisfy the research answers is minimized. Below is a table of the participants, date and place of interview, the duration of the interviews, and what university they are enrolled at, what they study and which year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2017-05-02</td>
<td>Coffice Södermalm</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>1st year Law, Stockholm University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2017-05-03</td>
<td>Coffice Södermalm</td>
<td>22.52</td>
<td>3rd year Business, Umeå University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2017-05-04</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>23.12</td>
<td>3rd year Business, Umeå University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017-05-04</td>
<td>Coffice Södermalm</td>
<td>27.53</td>
<td>1st year Media &amp; Communications, Örebro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2017-05-05</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>21.03</td>
<td>3rd year Business, Umeå University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2017-05-09</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>3rd year business, Umeå University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2017-05-10</td>
<td>Royal Library Stockholm</td>
<td>25.29</td>
<td>5th year Law, Stockholm university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2017-05-10</td>
<td>Royal Library Stockholm</td>
<td>28.05</td>
<td>1st year graphic design, Beckman’s Design School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonym for integrity and confidentiality purposes*

4.3 Interview Process

The interview process went as such that I contacted friends of mine at different universities, asking to be part of the study. Initially I had 10 participants who had agreed to partake in the interviews, but 2 eventually dropped out due to lack of finding a time to meet and do the interview which was unfortunate. The interviews that were done face-to-face were conducted in Stockholm, and the rest over the telephone, which is quite common in business research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 448), as it may be practically impossible to meet, or with limited funding, impractical and expensive. To my benefit, many people were down in Stockholm in the beginning of May, from Umeå and therefore we could meet in person.

Initially a pilot interview was done with a participant who wasn’t part of this study to get an understanding of what questions to use, what time-frame I could expect to get the questions answered, and how any misunderstandings could be interpreted from my side, as well as if any of the questions would lead to a total misuse of information. The pilot interview helped me to construct the theme grid (seen in chapter 3) where I could then
link questions to specific theories that had emerged from the literature review. Furthermore, I got an understanding of introducing certain questions or themes in specific orders for the interviewee to understand the funnel of the interviews, and therefore answer the questions in a more flowing interview.

The timeframe for the questions varied mainly between 23-28 minutes, with one being significantly shorter and one longer. The shortest interview [Anton] was the first real interview conducted. Though it was a bit shorter that the rest it was that some questions didn’t lead to further discussions, such as CSR. Upon interviewing, this might be due to him being in his first year at Law, and compared to my personal knowledge from studying business in Umeå is that CSR is one of the primary focuses from the start of the studies. All communication was swift, and even if looking afterwards at time differences of the interviews, they all gave insightful information of their personal views, which has been a great aid in analysing their results to answer the research questions.

4.4 Data Analysis Strategy

Analysing qualitative data can be quite difficult, especially for new researchers, as there are no clear guidelines, or “universally accepted conventions” as Robson (2011) says (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 154). In order to move forward with this process, different steps have been used as an aid.

The audio recordings were transcribed and translated to English when applicable. As explained in the section above, 6 of the interviews were held in Swedish. However, since I, the researcher, speaks both English and Swedish as mother tongue, there was little possibility as to whether data could have been lost due to wrong translations. As described by Saunders, et al (2009), the tone questions have been answered, play an equally important role as the words that are used (p. 486). Therefore, certain remarks that have been annotated in the transcribed interviews. By carefully analysing the way questions were answered or concepts explains, it set a tone on the social reality, and constitutes the interpretivist paradigm that describes the perception (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 45).

In order to translate the information consisting of 8 interviews and almost 200 minutes into worthy empirical data, different steps have been taken. The data was reduced in accordance to the theme grid, on page x. This gave head topics for 6 categories of the data. By deducting every interview and allocating codes, themes and relationships to the interviews, generalizations can be made of the data (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 162). These themes were introduced in relevance to the research questions and the purpose as a whole. The themes aided in the data reduction as they were kept as a reminder of what information was important to extract from the interviews. By using direct quotes, and describing or deconstructing and investigating the intent behind certain paraphrases of the respondents, the data is presented. It reflects the importance of the themes in accordance to the participants, links specific perceptions, as well as instigated behaviour in relation to specific happenings. Furthermore, it allows for important concepts that were brought up by the participants to be developed under the right categorization.

The data that is grouped within the coded concepts will then be analysed with the aid of theories presented in chapter 4. The sustainable action model is a derived theory from previous models used to describe perceptions and external variables in regards to
sustainable consumption. This will be used to answer the research question and enable the purpose of the research to be fulfilled. By analysing the results, it allows for interpretations of the collected data to better understand how millennials perceive PRI and sustainable consumption.

Figure 7. Overview of handling the data for analysis

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics plays an important role in any research, as there is human involvement and it is important to be respectful and conduct work ethically, responsibly and morally (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 183). A general code of ethics has been conducted by Bryman & Bell (2007) and is used as a guideline for many research aids (Saunders, et al, 2009; Collis & Hussey, 2014). This code of ethics has four major guidelines:

- No harm to participants
- Lack of informed consent
- No invasion of privacy
- No deception

(Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 128-136)

Harm to participants’ states that no harm should be done to those involved in the research namely; the participants, researchers, and others and encompasses physical and psychological harm (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.31). The exploratory nature which involves interviews involves meeting, which can be avoided if conducting a questionnaire, creates some opportunity for harm. By meeting in a public place, any physical harm is being avoided to the best of the potential by having the comfort of other people in near surrounding. By offering the participants a full disclosure of the intention behind the interview, as well as being respectful of sensitive questions, psychological harm is avoided.

Consent is respected by, as above stated, giving full disclosure to the means of involvement in the study. By having an anonymous research, consent is partially respected (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 190), as any information obtained by a participant will not be linked to that person. Questions of using the data in a way that the participant did not intend can become an issue, especially in an exploratory research where ideas and theories are generated. Sometimes a perceived misuse of information given can cause trouble, or at least embarrassment for the participant or the researcher (Saunders, et al, 2009, p. 190). However, since this research is not linked to a specific organization, there is a low risk of anyone saying something that might be perceived as embarrassing or wrong in the eyes of one’s employees.

The possibility of deception is eliminated when being truthful about the intention of the study and what it encompasses. However, miscommunication can prevail and perceived
behaviour can cause for deception even if it was not intended (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 32). By being truthful and informative throughout the process to the participants this will hopefully be avoided. By explaining that all data will be handled with respect, confidentiality and anonymity, along with other measures, the author argues that measures within the best of abilities has been taken to conduct an ethical study.

4.6 Truth Criteria in a Qualitative Study

By doing a qualitative research, some critics have made statements the reliability, validity and generalizability is not able to be obtained in a qualitative research (Cheek, 2007; Tracy, 2010, p.838). A paper, written by Tracy (2010), introduced 8 criteria for qualitative research to ensure that the research holds sufficient quality. The 8 branches include: worth topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010, p.8.40).

The table below is a modified explanation of the criteria which Tracy (2010) has deemed of how to validate qualitative research. There is a personal explanation/reflection as to how these criteria were met.

Table 5. “The Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research” and personal reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for quality</th>
<th>Means, practices and methods to achieve</th>
<th>Reflection on achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worth Topic</td>
<td>Relevant, timely, significant, interesting</td>
<td>This topic is of relevance since the increased coverage of sustainable clothing and disposal of textile waste is being studied in Sweden. Furthermore, the studies on sustainability is a focal point within education and business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Rigor</td>
<td>Theoretical constructs, sample, contexts, data collection and analysis processes</td>
<td>This thesis uses 2 different constructs of theories to describe the collected data. With 8 interviews and an extensive secondary data collection from reports, this provides an insight to a further researchable area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>Transparency about methods and challenges, self-reflexivity about subject values &amp; biases</td>
<td>From the 2nd chapter, an evaluation about which methods to conduct the research was given. Personal perspectives are presented as well as limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Thick description, concrete detail, multi-vocality, member reflection</td>
<td>Primary and secondary data is presented. Many quotes which state perspectives of participants which relay to themes, as well as help understand the implied theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection of certain questions and how it provided relevance to the study is reflected further on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resonance</th>
<th>Transferable findings, naturalistic generalizations</th>
<th>By researching a topic that is relevant and understandable by the larger population, the generalizations made will be resonant to many, and though the size of the study might limit transferability, they can be used as a spring board to do future research.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant Contribution</td>
<td>Conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically</td>
<td>This contributes to some extent a theoretical basis to further understand perception and can be extended to how it influences behaviour. Practically, it can contribute to understand how to target people to recycle textiles, and how companies can promote it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Procedural ethics, situational ethics, relational ethics, exiting ethics (sharing the research)</td>
<td>Ethical considerations have been discussed above. However, utmost respect has been given to participants to portray their views and how it has implicated and instigated results for this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Coherence</td>
<td>Achieves what is purports to be about, uses methods to fit stated goals, meaningfully interconnects; literature, focus, findings, interpretations</td>
<td>Writing this research, an aim has been to create an understandable essay that depicts an investigates how the purpose is followed through and having a red thread throughout the paper.</td>
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5 Empirical Findings

This section will introduce secondary data about the discourse of H&M sustainability actions within the company, followed by primary data collected from 8 participants through semi-structured interviews. The primary data will be introduced under the categorizations that were presented in the theoretical chapter, Table 2. Theme Grid. The theme grid is used as an aid to reduce and present data under specific codes. The codes provide data of perception is the areas: Sustainable Consumption, CSR, PRI, Fast Fashion, Behaviour and Attitude towards recycling clothing as well as Hedonism vs. Utilitarianism. They can be distinguished as codes from the interviews and provide insight of how different concepts and actions are perceived by the participants.

5.1 The Case – H&M

H&M is one of the leading fast fashion companies, owning six different brands with revenues reaching 222,856 million Swedish Kronor (m SEK) in 2016, and over 3900 stores worldwide, (H&M, 2017). The company is renowned for their sustainability approach, though there are some sceptics towards their actions. H&M curated a conscious collection where they produce clothes out of recycled plastic, organic cotton, recycled polyester and more. 2017 was the first year that the company made a conscious exclusive collection for men which had previously only been available for women. Currently 26% of the clothes offered at H&M are made of sustainable materials (H&M, 2016a)

H&M launched instore recycling in 2013, where they collect any textiles in exchange for a discount voucher. Since 2013 they have collected over 39,000 tonnes of textiles, which can be recycled into 190 million t-shirts (H&M 2016b). However, their collection methods may be effective, but their output of collections may be misleading to customers. According to Greenpeace project leader, Kathy Brodde (2016), though H&M sold 1.3 million items with recycled materials, they only amounted to 130 tonnes of recycle garments collected in stores (Textile Excellence, 2016). However, H&M also send clothes to second hand stores, burns for energy, etc. (H&M 2017). There are suspicious speculations are made that these are smart marketing schemes so that consumers believe sustainable action is begin taken (Marati, 2012).

The company started with CSR reports in 2002 due to a growing consumer demand for it. In 2010 they started with an annual Sustainability Report to present the current actions that have been taken within the year and what goals are set out for future sustainability and how this is going to be conducted. To be a leader within sustainability, visible changes are promoted and marketed (Li, et al, 2014, p. 831) from H&M to show an ever increasing sustainable actions. Actions such as Better Cotton Initiatives (BCI) (H&M, 2016a).

As stated by Karl-Johan Persson, the CEO of H&M the company has three main aims when working with sustainability. Firstly, they see it as a business opportunity and integrate sustainable business models to enhance all aspect of the company. Secondly, working with long term perspectives is not only necessary for the company but also the resources that the company is in need of using. Lastly, the company highly values collaborative work, from environmental foundations, to scientists working with ground
breaking innovation as well as the civil society. This is to create a collective mentality of creating awareness and shift in sustainable clothing (H&M, 2016a).

*The primary data results is presented in themes which were introduced in Table 2. Theme Grid to correlate answers to different questions. The results are a collection of the answers from the semi-structured interviews of the eight participants.*

### 5.2 Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption becomes a vital point in PRI’s as its aim is to reduce the amount of materials made in the process as well as reusing materials that have been collected (Lehner, et al, 2015). To uncover the participant’s perceptions of PRI, their overall understanding of sustainable consumption is an important aspect.

When asked to describe and discuss sustainable consumption, most of the participants were very aware of the concept and could recite the textbook definition which has been defined by Jackson (2003).

“...the ability of current and future generations to meet their material and other needs, without causing irreversible damage to the environment or loss of function in natural systems”

*(Birtwistle & Moore, 2007, p. 211)*.

There were great discussions in regards to the importance of the trend that has derived to be more environmentally friendly and to care more for the earth. “Media is to thank for the gained knowledge and insight of environmental harm” David stated. Anton and George stated that it is important that us living in the western world set standards as we are the most developed and it our responsibility to make conscious choices with everything we consume and how we live our lives. As communication within social media has emerged this century, from the participants’ points of views, it is hard to be unaware of environmental changes happening, and how humans have a direct affect. David stated that *loads of videos come up on my [Facebook] news feed about plastic in the ocean, ending up in our food, energy saving tips, etc.*

Fred said that the most important part of understanding what sustainable consumption really means is when you recognize what unsustainability and unsustainable consumption is. It turns into a matter of “do I really need this” or trying to look deeper into production phases “how and by whom was this made”

For some participants, sustainable consumption was linked with terms like *fair trade, ecological products* and *organic*. Reducing a person’s carbon footprint was also associated with sustainable consumption, as stated by *Ben*.

Two important themes were brought up when discussing sustainable consumption – producer responsibility; by sustainably supplying clothes, and consumer responsibility; by choosing sustainably clothes and being mindful when using them.

Henry discussed the sustainable supply chain within fashion, and how the different methods to create more clothes were detrimental to health of the workers, who produce the clothes as well as the environment. By partaking in sustainable consumption, the
production line must become sustainable in minimizing waste, reducing chemicals and water usage.

The fact that clothes can be reused and repaired makes it a very thankful commodity. It isn’t like fresh produce with a best before date, clothes and textiles can usually have a long life.” – Carl

5 of the 8 participants brought up food choices, such as the rise of veganism and vegetarians as an indicator of sustainable consumption. Even tough food choices were not part of the interview guide, the fact that the majority of the respondents mentioned it, I felt that this information should be presented as many of the respondents drew parallels to fashion consumption and food. The general perspective was that many people are changing their eating habits as a response to the trends and the uprising information of the animal industry in relation to the environment. It was stated that it has become a trendy issue and that more and more of their friends are changing their eating habits. 1 person out of the 5 that brought up food choices, (specifically vegetarianism and veganism) was a vegetarian and became influence to make dietary changes after watching a documentary called Cowspiracy. 3 of the participants said that they had made some changes with their eating habits, such as incorporating meat-free Monday. The last participant who mentioned vegetarianism / veganism had not made any dietary changes in regards to food sustainability, or environmental correlation with food choices.

Carl discussed how a club that he works at has recently launched a vegetarian menu, and the boss reasoned with this decision because it is both trendy and a demand for it, stating “it’s a good demand, there are very few people who can protest towards a more sustainable menu, and the same with clothing. Few people can stand against the positivity towards having environmentally friendly clothes.”

Food choices was not something that was previously interpreted as something that would have an influence on this study. However, looking at the results, the perception of food seemed to have an effect of retained or sought out information of other sustainable measures.

The H&M Conscious Collection was something that was welcomed by most of the participants. For Ben, it was not associated with any form of CSR, but a general “step towards the right direction to becoming more sustainable”. 3 of the participants thought that this was one of their biggest contributions to environmental CSR, taking corporate responsibility is taking responsibility in all aspects of your business, which was stated during an interview. This was perceived as a long and ongoing initiative from the company, but that did not mean that purchases from the Conscious Collection was favourable to any other part of the store.

Ben stated that he would “get feeling and buy something sustainable, H&M isn’t the place that I would turn to”, further stating that “if I happen to buy something with that earthy label on, I then give myself a pat on the back”. This shows that instore offerings from a fast fashion label did not presume more sustainable choices, and that there are more

2 Cowspiracy: a documentary released in 2014 exploring the effect the agricultural industry has on the environment. (http://www.cowspiracy.com/about/) It should be mentioned that this movie is a one sided view of the meat industry with a clear message to influence consumers make different lifestyle choices inregards to the food they eat.
favourable places to purchase sustainable clothes. 3 more of the participants had similar regards to perceiving a sustainable collection from fast fashion as unsustainable.

5.3 CSR

This theme emerged from the different interviews when discussions about intention behind different strategies to market sustainability and how fashion industries are associated with CSR and how they promote different care causes. Henry stated that “whenever I see campaigns about issues like gender issues or environmental issues, it feels very fake. Doesn’t really matter where you stand with those viewpoints, but it seems very forced from the company’s side.”

What was understood from all participants when discussing both CSR initiatives of fashion companies as well as information of causes the fashion companies support, a lot is done through media and trying to influence them as consumers to understand how companies are working with different causes. There was a connection to the participants believing that the millennial generation is a clear target market for the fast fashion companies.

When transcribing and coding the data the term younger people, our generation, millennials, were brought up 49 times with the eight different participants. As per the interview guide, there is a question stating Do you believe that this mentality is raising within the young adulthood generation? Before this question was brought up, the millennial coding was mentioned 27 times. The code millennial was in correlation to being target market for many industries such as technology, clothing, food, lifestyle choices. Furthermore, a participant stated that they millennials were probably more aware of different issues in regards to the environment as they will live here for a longer time and need to create awareness for living 50 years and more.

The general presumption, though obvious, from the millennial participants was that they indicate that they are a generation that have been exposed to luxuries of education, traveling, and awareness. This is limited to the participants all living in Sweden. 3 of the participants addressed that in the long-term perspective everyone cannot live the standard that there is in Sweden and therefore changes are going to have to be faced, and presumably under this [millennial generation] lifetime.

When discussing specific targeted marketing of CSR from fashion industries, 3 of the interviewees stated that they felt that even though there is a lot of fashion aimed towards the male segment it feels like its main target is towards young woman. Usually looking at ads, the woman is in focus, either from marketing, to trying to create body acceptance awareness. The male is excluded from a lot of marketing in their perspective. Especially larger companies like Zara, H&M.

David said that the emergence of CSR is huge within marketing and companies “choosing allegiance with certain causes”. He discusses how it has transformed from a few years back to making efforts within childcare or education in disadvantaged countries or cities, to now trying to address more substantial issues which are recognized around the whole world. He brought up Adidas new campaign to “close the material loop and make shoes out of recycled plastic” and debated the incentive behind it. A general welcoming the idea, but he also discussed how it may be perceived by many people thinking that the
company may be glorified for a small effort, when they [Adidas] are a cause to the problem.

Isaac has a different approach to CSR and thought that it was a trend that has emerged claiming “there is a demand for it, so companies will put just as much focus that they have to, to prove that they are working responsibly”. There was a general mistrust to the term CSR, and even if there are some benefits that emerge from it, it was view upon as a way to create brand loyalty and that it is a simple way to communicate and ensure young consumers that the company is “working with causes that matters”.

5.4 PRI

There was a lack of knowledge of the term post-retail initiative, as well as product-service system. When explaining PRI, Henry said that they had gotten their jeans repaired at Nudie Jeans and wondered if that was a PRI / PSS. An explanation of what a PRI was and how H&M incorporated product-service was given to all individual participants.

PRI were generally welcomed by all the participants and they understood the logic behind it. 5 out of the 8 participants were aware of PRI’s, but they had never heard the term being used, and were specifically aware of at least one of H&M’s PRI’s. The remaining 3 were not aware of any PRI of H&M or any other fashion company.

In-store collection

With H&M’s clothes collection, only Henry and Fred had done it. The others said that they knew about it, but did not know where to do it. On H&M (2017) webpage, it says that clothes can be handed in at any store. A discount coupon is given, to be used within 30 days\(^3\). Upon investigation of the company’s sustainability reports and information on recycling, there is no clear information about the discount, but by asking in stores they validate that this is still happening, as well as a confirmation e-mail from their customer service.

They do not market the fact that they give discounts coupons which George and David found discouraging. They thought that if they made this more visible, that more people would engage in the service, as there is an economic gain or incentive for the consumers. Anton thought that it sent out a mixed message to encourage customers to be mindful of their waste and promote sustainable clothing, and at the same time encouraging customers to consume more. Carl had a similar reasoning and wondered about how sustainable the process even was of taking in clothes, having them reassessed and reproduced, if that might not be quite unsustainable. The rest thought that it was brilliant to be rewarded, and easily finding an outlet to bring old clothes, as H&M was present where they all lived.

Charity Star

3 of the participants anticipated some kind of charity connection for a big corporation. “It’s kind of expected for a company to be involved in charity, especially a big one as H&M”

\(^3\) 50 SEK discount for a purchase above 300 SEK (http://www.chic.se/olagligt-kladkedjor-hm-kappahl-kladinsamling/)
The general perception of this engagement was positive. It did not exactly affect them as consumers, as only one had previously handed in clothes to H&M and therefore been the only participant who contributed to the charity. Discussions arose with some of the participants whether this was a strategic move from the company to gain credibility, or to “show off” that they helped causes. However, with H&M taking several ethical and social standpoints, this was seen as an innocent and effective way to put some of the company’s large resources into the hands of others.

Holding H&M accountable to their word that they have collected 39,000 tonnes through I:CO (H&M, 2017) and donating the set amount of money (€0.02) per kg, they have then donated €780,000 to different charities around the world through their clothing collection.

**Clevercare**

This PRI was unknown to every participant. Clevercare aims to reduce energy consumption involved with washing clothes. The perception of this initiative was not really positive, as they did not find any importance of looking up sustainable washing instructions. Anton mentioned that there seems to be more important ways of “being green” and clothes washing is not really something that he would bother with or feel guilty about [not] doing. This was confused by Henry, thinking it was the washing label on the garment, wondering if 1: is not that a legal requirement, and 2: shouldn’t they put it on the label then?

As per H&M’s sustainability information, they inform consumers that “26% of the carbon emissions in garment’s lifetime occur after it has left the store” (H&M, 2016b) encouraging consumers to be aware that changing washing can help reduce carbon emissions.

**5.5 Fast Fashion**

A general understanding of fast fashion was seen throughout all the participants. Some knew exactly what the term entailed, whereas two of the participants guessed what it was through listening to the words. They gave a vague guess of “mass produced, low production cost, and entering the retail market quickly”.

As explained in Chapter 1, fast fashion is the phenomenon where the retail industry has optimized production, costs, collections and the supply chain in order to offer trendy items in large quantities for a low price (Investopedia, 2017). During the interviews, reactions to the term where uncovered. Henry explained his reasons for distancing himself from such companies with the intent of fast fashion “low labour costs, exploiting people, cheap materials and destroying the planet”. He then went to explain how there is a paradox of needs and demands from consumers that are being met by fast fashion companies, stating that “fast fashion has been created in parallel to consumer needs, buying a t-shirt for 50 SEK is great for some and therefore they expect this instant gratification of buying cheap clothes whenever they want.”

George, who when asked how often he bought clothes said once or twice a month. He said to be aware that the fashion industry might not be as justifiable as people might think, mainly pushing on the social welfare of production workers, such as those sewing the garments. With this prerequisite knowledge, it does not change his intent when buying clothes, usually buying clothes from Weekday, Carlings, H&M and occasionally online from Asos or NlyMan.
In regards to fast fashion and the environment, 5 out of the 8 participants recognized the effect the retail industry has on the environment. Fred said that it was a steady stream of information that friends shared on Facebook, as well as a clothing swap event that took place in Umeå, where there was a lot of information on alternatives to fast fashion.

A discussion arose from Anton when he was pondering the meaning of financial success within top fast fashion industries. He went through the entire supply chain from cotton production to end customers and found it insane that something with as little value as a t-shirt, is valued at so little but goes through a rigorous production phase to get to a shop [Zara] for him to purchase, for not that much money.

Ben said that the most important factor when buying clothes was the price, the rest was unimportant. Living in Umeå, there were not many other options that the shops in the malls, and the driving force was price. Though he constituted to actually have the money to buy fair trade or ecological I just don’t.

5.6 Behaviour and Attitude towards recycling clothes

All of the participants who studied at Umeå University (5 people) were aware of the recycling bins that Myrorna⁴ has put up to collect old clothes, shoes, etc. Two locations were brought up, one situated close to school (Berghem) as well as one in a highly populated student area (Ålidhem).

“Even if it quite accessible, if I am just getting rid of one shirt, I don’t bother to bring it to any recycling bin, and it ends up in the trash” – Fred,

Interviewee 2, 3, 6 & 8 stated that they usually let clothes pile up in their closet for a really long time. Incentives from friends or family made them engage in a wardrobe clean out, in forms of yard sales (George & Isaac), selling the clothes on an online auction such as Tradera⁵ (Ben), or donating to charity such as the Red Cross or Stadsmissionen (Isaac).

Isaac, who claims to be well informed on environmental issues, and namely the fast fashion industry does not seek out information of disposal/recycling points for his clothes. His main ambition is to donate any clothes to charity. “I donate to charities which then sells my clothes as second hand, I think there are people who appreciate it and they can be sold which then supports a good cause”.

Very interesting points where made as to how it is possible to influence people to make better choices when disposing of clothes. Many of the participants felt that when there are issues that do not have a direct impact on their lives, it is hard to make changes. As mentioned above, from David, he felt that littering plastic had a direct effect on his health and therefore he has become an adamant informer amongst his peers to inform how plastic waste ending up in the ocean affects their food. He, however, does not extend that to other

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⁴ Myrorna, a second-hand shop, has over 1200 collection containers, where textiles, shoes and accessories can be disposed. Collected items get sold in their stores. Items that cannot be sold are thrown with waste and burnt. (http://myrorna.se/om-myrorna/vad-hander-med-gavorna/)

⁵ Tradera, an online commerce site, with private and commercial sellers, listing clothes, collectables, electronics and more. (http://info.tradera.com/om-tradera/)
issues that do not affect him, and did not think that he would necessarily change his behaviour when it came to disposal of clothing. Stating that if all resources were gone to make new clothes I think everyone would be making sure that they were recycled.

Many of the informants had similar views of how George summed up the issue: “people are lazy, and in order to see a collective change it has to be easily accessible, otherwise it’s too avoidable”.

5.7 Hedonism vs Utilitarianism

All of the participants, to an extent, justified clothes consumption as an extension to one’s identity and inspiration from new trends to buy new clothes.

“Fashion is a luxury good, it’s made to be quite decanted. Nice clothes aren’t something you need, it’s something you want” – Carl

Generally concluding from the question related to hedonism and utilitarianism, all of the participants bought clothes and had a general interest with their personal relation to fashion. Though they all had individual preferences to style, as well as shopping behaviour, the sample of became quite homogenous in relation to this question as they are currently in the same life situations, as well as similar in ages.
6 Analysis and Discussion

This section will give a thorough analysis of the results and use beneficial theories to draw conclusions as to how the results can be interpreted, as well as discussing the results. In the theoretical framework chapter, a conceptual framework was introduced which highlighted three directions of which consumer perspective was headed. This being the external intentions which is aimed to analyse the intent of which clothes are bought, as well as looking at how externalities has an effect on the perceptions of the participants. PRI analyses the perception of different PRI’s available at H&M and how they can be used to promote more sustainable behaviour. Sustainable action analyses the influences of personal sustainable behaviour in regards to buying and disposing clothes. It also investigates on where responsibility lies and how responsibility is perceived in the eyes of consumers. By using the sustainable action model (SAM) which goes through a process from external variables, to perceptions and how it can lead to changes attitudes, actions and behaviours.

As the overall purpose of this study was to understand perceptions of post-retail initiatives and how sustainable consumption was perceived and to some extent adapted by millennial consumers, the conceptual model was drawn in the fourth chapter. The model analyses three branches of consumer perspectives. With the aid of theories, such as technological acceptance model, and decision making of sustainable consumption, an analysis of the data is presented. The theories will further aid to analyse and answer the research questions:

How are post-retail initiatives perceived by millennial men?

Sub questions
How are sustainable clothing collections from a fast fashion company perceived by men?
How do men take responsibility for their clothing when they are finished using them?
Where does the responsibility lie of recycling clothes?

6.1 External Intentions

Through the collection of data, the emergence of food choice became present in 5 of the 8 interviews, where people used sustainable clothing identification and compared it to sustainable food choices. By incorporating the external variables from the sustainable action model (SAM) it can explain, to some extent, that influences from one’s social surroundings can have a great effect on consumer choices. The need to identify one’s self within a social norm or group became apparent with the interviews. “The major trend within the youth is to be conscious of the environment and politically correct at the moment”. Influences from social media, which has become an outlet for influencing friends as well as peers, seems to be an effective way to highlight issues as well as influencing attitude and perception changes.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, prominent events have defined the millennial generation. Them being perceived as “the generation that cares” might be translated into the conscious or political correctness that portrays the generation. But might this not be
a generational statement, but a trend. If looking into the philosophical values of the research, and more specifically the interpretivist epistemological approach taken, the perceptions constructed by their realities, which may have links to the social science studies that the participants are enrolled in, may be a driver in what is currently focused on at university. These assumptions of the constructed reality of the millennials can be of the growing quality criteria within western higher education which promote sustainability throughout their curriculum (Ismail, et al, 2013, p. 321).

Nudging, a concept that through, visible prompting promotes sustainable behaviour. The concept identifies that social norms stand in the centre of creating changed behaviour (Lehner, et al, 2015, p. 168). The mentioning of food choices, which becomes a visible nudge to one’s visibility, if someone in your surrounding has made an active choice to change their food consumption, for reasons such as environmental improvement, that could be regarded as a nudge. The 5 participants that mentioned vegetarianism / veganism in their interviews, either had family members or friends whom have chosen this diet.

The intrinsic value of clothing was perceived to be higher to 5 of the participants explained their purchase intentions with a form of identity extension. There was a connection to buying clothes (from any company i.e. fast fashion or second hand) and using it as an expression of their interest to style and fashion. Though all of the participants’ responses could be identified with hedonistic intentions to buying clothes. The fashion interest within the interviewees varied, but nobody ultimately bought clothes for the sake of practicality, and everyone to some extent expressed clothing with terms such as: identity, fashionable, or personal style.

Relaying back to the food choice concept, and putting it in context with the hedonistic nature of buying clothes, the two can be compared disposal goods [clothes] and consumable goods [food]. Actions taken to change behaviour with consumable goods seemed to be larger within the participants and their social context, in comparison to behaviour when buying or disposing of clothes. The external variables that have a ripple effect on perception leading to attitude and behavioural changes can be seen as more visible in regards to food in comparison to clothes. The pressure from the external intentions to change one’s behaviour in buying clothes did not seem to extend very far. Participants mentioned the growth of changing food habits among their generation highlighted, where one had made a conscious choice to change that. If regarding food as a consumable good, and clothes a disposable one, one might presume that preferences over food i.e. eating meat might be highly regarded as a hedonistic trait and people wish to continue to pursue it.

Anton, who only bought second-hand clothing and could be seen as an anti-consumerist which explained by Sandikci & Ekici (2009) as people that “avoid and not consume products that are incompatible with their conservation ideology” (Lim, 2017, p. 72). By choosing vintage clothing and minimizing his consumption in clothing, he felt that he made a statement to the world that fashion does not need to be new, but that there are options to be “stylish and original”.

Anti-consumerism was only present with Anton. The effects and trails which can lead to the positive or negative perceptions of external pressures has not only been portrayed in a changed consumption style, as maybe a fashion company offering sustainable clothing might wish. He has completely eradicated and moved beyond changed behaviour in one
segment and changed his values to create a different meaning to the fashion company’s definition of sustainable clothing. Where big retailers such as H&M promote their sustainable clothing line and aims to close the material loop in only using recycled materials, the anti-consumerist that Anton can be identified as does not even perceive closed loop as sufficient enough.

6.2 Perceptions of PRI

The interviews gave insight on a perceived distance that is placed between the consumers and a [fashion] company. A store is seen as a place to buy clothing, and can be an enjoyable experience, either doing it online or in a physical store. The perceptions of the introduced PRI’s that are conducted by H&M were to some extent accepted by the participants. There was some resistance towards PRI’s in general, as some perceived a hidden agenda behind it [David], and questions such as: how much are they actually doing arose.

Clevercare was not generally seen as either positive or negative. This was a predominant perception of 2 participants who since a long time were mindful when they washed clothing, and this attribute was extended to many other habits that the participants had evolved as a conscious choice to be environmentally friendly as a whole.

“Having to change the way I wash my clothes, along with all other things that I’m not doing sustainably, this just seems like too far of a step”. – Henry

There was a stigma of sustainable importance when this PRI was discussed. Even though changing washing habits requires little knowledge and attention, a measurement of effect that washing has in comparison to other changes that can be made, this seemed insignificant in the bigger picture.

Charity Star was generally welcomed by all participants. As one of the participants stated “when does charity ever seem like a bad idea” – Carl. The fact that there is not excessive marketing about their collaboration with textile returns and charity was also perceived as positive. Though as one said “it might be a further incentive, along with getting a discount for returning clothes, to let people know that they involve in this, it makes the whole donation seem more credible - Isaac”.

As greenwashing was introduced in Chapter 4, there were many annotations from the data that this is the case when companies engage in CSR. There was a definite perception of an agenda behind CSR initiatives. Though for 5 of the participants, greenwashing was not associated with something negative, as one might presume from previous literature (Wood, 2015). They recognized that the implementation of green marketing or green branding raised awareness of issues that they were not previously aware of. Ben stated that Nike’s Reuse a Shoe6 campaign from 2012 was a catalyst for him, realising that there is a risk to overconsuming products. A situational factor which lead to a better understanding and perception of how the retail industry has an effect on the environmental factors.

Charity Star was widely accepted, more so than the H&M Conscious Collection or other sustainable attributes. This did not fall under a branch anywhere within the supply chain.

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6 A campaign which was introduced in 1990, which collected used shoes to be recycled to new Nike products and sports fields. (https://recyclenation.com/2012/08/nike-reuse-shoe-program/)
such as production, consumption, or entail any responsibility for consumers. Therefore, the intent seemed authentic compared to other initiatives.

One of the participants had very harsh feelings towards Charity Star. He questioned that they only donated €0.02 per kg of clothing, and thought that since they were not marketing it well, he did not feel that the company was committed to the charity projects they engaged in. Even putting the amount (€780,000) into perspective was not changing the perception, and he put the donated amount into perspective how much the CEO allegedly earns annually.

I:CO was generally accepted by the consumers. As displayed in the empirical results, there was some confusion as to why it was not marketed. A participant mentioned that many other stores collaborated with I:CO and some mentioned that a discount was marketed there. I:CO was generally perceived well, as it allowed for odd garments, or torn out clothes, that cannot be sold, and does not suffice as hand-me-downs to dispose with I:CO. Even Myrorna do not urge people to dispose of old socks in their collection bins.

“Would be interesting to see a report on how they managed all the waste that is collected, like seeing how much is actually being put back to making new things” – Fred. Some scepticism was raised, wondering how the whole thing is managed, since H&M outsources this initiative. Their webpage states that a t-shirt can currently include 20% recycled fibres (H&M, 2017), though it was unclear if this was the Conscious Collection or if it was unannounced and part of a regular t-shirt.

As the SAM model is used to analyse these perceptions, it becomes a defying moment in answering the research question for this study. Looking at the perceptions of the three PRI’s offered by H&M, where charity star become a direct effect in partaking with I:CO, disposing of unwanted textiles, some key points can be taken from the data provided for these incentives. Looking at clever care, this was not perceived well. There is a lack of external variables which altogether makes it hard to create a change in perception for this offering. This made it clear that the SAM model relies on external variables to highlight awareness. Usefulness was low, as well as modification of one’s behaviour was not generally accepted.

I:CO had more external variables such as social as well as individual factors which could then relay to the next step of accepting the perception of the initiative. Perceived usefulness as well as ease of use, was identified, as many of the participants recognized the need for clothes to be recycled. The discount involved was for some a positively perceived for most instigating positive attitudes to this PRI.

6.3 Sustainable Action

When looking at the results from the interviews, it became clear that the mannerism of looking at clothing and in the context of sustainability and environmental affect became a crucial part of their actions in how they perceived fast fashion and sustainable consumption. The empirical data displayed similarities with the identifications that were introduced by McNeil & Moore (2015) and Woodridge (2015). By gaining insight on perceived care for sustainability within fashion the biggest limitation to the participants
was the *self*. By this I mean that for 5 of the 8 participants who stated that they cared about environmental issues, clothing became a detachment to their thoughts.

Sustainable action was put into two segments, trying to understand actions and perceptions when *purchasing* clothes as well as *disposing* of them. The *decision-making model for sustainable consumption* (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015) can be used to describe sustainable action within this study.

“*Consumer behaviour is the most unstable and unpredictable part of the entire supply chain*” – Terlau & Hirsch, (2015, p. 168)

The comprises of *individual, social and situational* factors all lead up to decisions that are made in life. As all of the participants are university students with similar economic standpoints, there priorities when purchasing clothes are different. As *individual factors* were relatively similar, with discrepancies of personal values, more focus was put on understanding *social factors*.

There was an obvious difference in social factors which created a mixture of perceptions during the interviews. When collecting the data, those who were influenced to consume sustainably had people in their near surroundings that often spoke of these traits and lifestyle choices. The effects of media had brought attention to the matters of sustainable consumption. With the SAM model, intention did not suffice to a changed behaviour. Majority of the participants did not have the ambition to sacrifice cheaper clothes to buy of better quality. Even swapping fast fashion to similar prices of second-hand clothing was not regarded highly. “*Second-hand is just such a mission to look through and I don’t really like the smell of old clothes*” – Isaac

The participants living in Umeå found that there are not many options to buying sustainable clothes. In fast fashion companies, as Ben stated, the conscious collections [at H&M] are not too elaborative or have enough, compared to the rest of the [unsustainable] options available in the stores. 3 of the participants live in Stockholm, and they claimed that there are many second-hand shops have become more popular recently. From what before was just a store with old cheap clothes, there are shops with carefully selected, trendy items, with great variety, even for men. Though something trendy is subjective to each participant, the cross-sectional diversification of the males in terms of place of living and study choice, gives hints as to how these trends can be relayed into perception and attitude towards sustainable clothes. Situational factors, and specifically *availability* is one of the factor of understanding perception. As seen from the data, the availability of second-hand allowed for the positive perception to be enhanced. If there in fact is not sustainable clothing options available, or if they do not meet the [hedonistic] value of clothes that would have to be replaced to make a more sustainable choice, it ultimately becomes hard to have a change in attitude of positive perception.

The disposal of clothing was easier to see how intent differed from behaviour. Changing one’s consumer purchase behaviour, to limited selection, higher prices, and/or difficult accessibility, requires more effort from the consumer. Disposal of clothes requires less decisions, or namely one, if they are to be recycled. Lack of knowledge was a big indicator as to why some of the participants did not engage in sustainable clothes disposal. When selling one’s clothes, it was not perceived by the majority of the participants to be environmentally friendly. Carl was the only one who methodically went through an order of sell, donate, recycle. The rest (4) participants did it with an economic incentive, or they
could be categorized as the *social consumer*. Their efforts portrayed that of the social context. Upon discussing how it could gain a greater momentum to closing the gap from attitude to throwing away clothes to a changed behaviour, it turned into a convenience issue. If garment disposal was as easily accessible as recycling plastic, cardboard, etc. as all of the participants had available near their living complexes, then they thought it would help.

*Perceived usefulness* was understood during the interviews, but there is a general lack of knowledge of the effects of fashion to the environment. The participants were more aware of food choices compared to fashion choices having an effect on the environment. Because of this attitude, the annotation of making dramatic changes to one’s relations were not really perceived as necessary. This also led to a lack in acceptance towards engaging in PRI that H&M offered.

When analysing *perceived ease of use* of recycling clothes, or making use of the PRI’s offered by H&M, there was not much that showed that the participants would engage in the PRI. I:CO was the most accepted PRI out of the bunch, as there was an economic incentive behind the initiative. When it came to only recycling clothes without an incentive, the response from the participants was that it needed to be more easily attainable. 2 of the participants thought that responsibility should however be moved from the company [H&M] to the municipality. As stated in the results, many of the participants identified themselves, along with their peers, as lazy and even if an opportunity to get a discount for an upcoming purchase was lucrative, when the time came, 3 of them did not think that they would actually do it.

By identifying H&M’s collaboration with I:CO, this is a classic EPR relation that has been obtained. Outsourcing of the collection, and either up- or down-streaming their products to “closet the loop” as the system is meant to do and as they claim to do on their webpage (H&M, 2017). Looking at the data, more awareness to this EPR and how it effects consumers both economically as well as consciously.
7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion that have been drawn from the data will be presented by answering the research questions and purpose of the research. Further on, recommendations for further research and implications will be presented.

7.1 Conclusion

This study aims to understand how post-retail initiatives are perceived by millennial men and if it if different sustainable schemes make the consumers engage in the post-retail initiatives. Furthermore, studies on post-retail initiatives show that it is primarily the consumer who is initially responsible to manage the disposal of clothing, therefore this study aims to understand how the participants take responsibility for their clothes when they are no longer used. As fast fashion is becoming an industry associated with large carbon emissions and having a great effect on the environment, research and practicality is emerging on how to conduct more sustainable practices.

Through extensive literature searches, reading articles, relevant theories, as well as previous thesis’s and dissertations, an understanding of how to target the research questions was developed. Choosing methodological principles to support the research purpose and how to interpret the data was also a vital part in moving the research forward. An understanding that certain external factors have an implication of behaviour, such as social, individual as well as situational factors. Through reviewing theories on consumer behaviour and past implications of consumers in relation to recycling and fashion disposal an adapted theory was derived to be used to understand the participants of this research. The SAM model which is an adaption of the TAM and DMSC was used to understand drivers of perception and how those perceptions might instigate changed or unchanged attitudes and behaviour. A conceptual model to categorize perceptions was also made in order for the data to be analysed in a more coherent manner.

When looking at the research questions, the SAM model

Figure 6. Sustainable Action Model (SAM) was an aid to understand the perceptions of millennials in different aspects. PRI’s are perceived as a positive input. However, there were few external factors influencing them to partake in sustainable clothing from a fast fashion company. The overlying factor that they felt that they were not a main target for these companies and that fast fashion companies promoting sustainable consumption was not perceived as useful for them as consumers. However, sustainable clothing in general in perceived as necessary and some have changed their choices when it comes to choosing fashion.

Post-retail initiatives are perceived well, and for the participants the attitudes towards these initiatives were positive. There was resistance towards changed behaviour. The intention of the PRI’s in general were accepted, however, to get the participants to engage in them convenience was a factor that held people back.
The perception of the participants of where the responsibility lies was to some extent the companies producing the clothing. In order to see a positive change of textile disposal and recycling, the municipalities have to get involved. As convenience plays a big role in changing behaviour, the municipality should make textile recycling as available as other disposal ways such as disposing of glass, cardboard, etc.

With that in mind, and in regards to the analysis, here are summarized answers to the research questions.

**How are post-retail initiatives perceived by millennial men?**
They are generally well perceived, however, there is a lack information which can be a cause of lack pursuit in the PRI’s before. Since the PRI’s does not have an intent of changing the behaviour of how people consume fashion, it is easy to engage in this initiative. Ease of use can be relayed as a positive perception from the participants.

**How are sustainable clothing collections from a fast fashion company perceived by men?**
Due to limited availability, from what was understood from the data, this was not perceived very well. Here similarities to the self-consumer could be seen, as many of the participants realized the need for sustainable clothing, however, it was not extended to their personal consumption for the majority. Factors such as price and availability pertain a big factor in choosing sustainable clothes vs. “unsustainable” clothes, and in most cases, the participants didn’t go out of their ways to find more sustainable clothes.

**How do men take responsibility for their clothing when they are finished using them?**
The social factors, such as availability, and knowledge and in-schooled knowledge or behaviour from home (routines of parents in garage sale, donating to charity, etc.) gave insights as to the attitude around disposing of clothing. What could be learnt was that the general lack of knowledge of how it should be done showed that they were not too responsible with their actions in recycling. That meaning that if the opportunity arose for them to dispose of their textiles in a sustainable manner, such as having a garage sale, or going by a Myrorna disposal bin, they were positive to it, but if it were a large inconvenience, the clothes would either pile up in the closet, or be disposed in the normal waste bin.

**Where does the responsibility lie of recycling clothes?**
The majority of the participants felt that the responsibility lied within the municipalities to provide for better facilities to recycle clothes. Convenience was a large factor into what they perceived could change mentality about disposing of textiles responsibly. A similar finding from Hvass’s (2014) study on the recycling responsibility however, from the fashion industries perspective. Convenience is a big factor. As an external variable, situational enhancements can lead to a perceptual positive annotation. By creating the situational instigation close to the participants, the participants thought this could increase recycling clothes. This even more than handing in clothes and receiving a discount.

**7.2 Future Research & Limitations**
This study has provided an interesting insight into how male consumers perceive and behave when it comes to sustainable availability within clothing, as well as how they perceive post-retail initiatives. More than just understanding the perception, the interviews gave insight to what drives and influences them to recycle textiles, as well as what external influences can instigate a positive behavioural change. Further research is always available and necessary in any research. Firstly, the Sustainable Acceptance Model can be used for a different demographic, as well as a different generation. A research between millennials and an older generation would be insightful to understand if there is a global shift in sustainability, or if as this study argues, is more linked to millennials. It would be interesting to do a longitudinal study where different external variables can be presented in a normal context and see, in a natural setting, how perceived usefulness vs perceived ease of use is relayed into consumer behaviour and if changes have an effect. From the analysis, it shows that social media is a big influencer on sustainability, as it has the power to reach a wide variety of people, this could be interesting for future, as well as comparing different consumption patterns in regards to sustainability, such as clothes, food, etc. Many interesting topics emerged from the analysis and it definitely pertains for insightful future research.

This study is subject to limitations, one main driver being that the millennial participants have a relatively narrow age gap ranging from 19 to 26. Since the generation has an age span of 18 to 37, therefore the participants can only perceptions of people with different social economic differences limits the research. Furthermore, all of the participants were enrolled at university which limited the study to a fraction of the generation, and results must be treated with this in mind.

7.3 Managerial Implications & Theoretical Contributions

From the research that has been conducted, this information can be of value both from a managerial perspective, as well as from the academia. I would like to stress that the stakeholders that can make use of this information is any fashion company wanting to instigate a changed positive behaviour among their customers. This study reaches out to any company involved with fashion, or consumption in some regards, and want to understand the mind-set of sustainable consumption, as well as perceptions of waste responsibility. This research gives an insight to consumer behaviour in regards to sustainable consumption, and should be treated and highlighted from this stance.

From an academic perspective, as mentioned above, it aims to explain consumer behaviour and perceptions with novel insights. The introduced models, namely Technological Acceptance Model, as well as the Decision-making model of sustainable consumption, have been used in a way that borrows models for different approaches in understanding perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, to suit the perception of post-retail initiatives.


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Appendix

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

With these interviews we are going to be covering your perception of sustainable consumption, fast fashion, and post-retail initiatives. I am then going to present you with four unknown brands and their different post-retail schemes, which can be classified as product-service systems.

➢ Age / Lives / Studies / Place of Studies
➢ How often do you buy clothes? With what intent do you buy clothes?
➢ What is important to you when buying clothes?
➢ What is your opinion of the H&M Conscious Collection?
➢ Is there a relationship between CSR & Fashion? How would you describe it?
➢ What is your thoughts of the fashion industry in regards to the environment?
➢ How would you describe fast fashion?
➢ What does sustainable consumption mean to you? And In regards to fashion / buying clothes?
➢ How do you manage your textile waste? i.e. where do you throw away a t-shirt that you don’t use.
➢ What would be an optimal way to discard clothes in your opinion?
➢ Are you informed of how to dispose of textile waste?
➢ What do you think hinders people from recycling clothes?
➢ What influences you to be environmentally friendly / doesn’t influence you? Do you believe that this mentality is increasing within the young adulthood generation?
➢ Does your perception of a fast fashion corporation change if this PRI is involved?