Green is the new black

How Swedish luxury fashion brands use sustainability as an advantage in international markets.

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Subject: International Business
Level: Degree of Bachelor
Abstract
The thesis purpose is to analyze sustainability from a Swedish luxury fashion brands perspective. By investigate their product development and green communication it will provide a valuable understanding in how to be internationally competitive. It is a discussed subject within the fashion industry. Therefore, relevant aspects have been taken under consideration regarding luxury fashion brands sustainable thinking to be able to conduct the research. The thesis have been used the qualitative research method to get a deeper understanding from the respondents perspective in their process to become more sustainable. The subject of the thesis is relatively unexplored, which required a good pre understanding. Therefore, the deductive approach has been used, since the findings are based upon the theoretical framework.

The thesis has been based upon different relevant theories which are related to the subject. Sustainability, CSR, luxury branding and international competition are the four main theories which have resulted in a conceptual framework to demonstrate the relation between them. Furthermore, the conceptual framework has been used to analyze the empirical findings which have been founded from the cases. In the analysis chapter, a comparison between the theories and empirics is presented in accordance with the conceptual framework. In the final chapter, a conclusion has been conducted based on the analysis. Further on, it contains answers of the research questions, implications, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for research in the future. The result of the main theoretical implication was to fill the research gap together with a higher understanding in sustainability within Swedish luxury fashion brands.

The result of the study is that Swedish luxury fashion brands have implemented sustainability into their business strategies, but on different levels. It is agreed that sustainable fashion is important internationally to decrease the negative effects on the environment.

Keywords
Sustainability; corporate social responsibility; environment; Swedish luxury fashion brands; international competitive; product development; recycling; green communication
Acknowledgements

We would like to take the opportunity to show our gratefulness and appreciation to everyone who has been involved in this process and helped us to complete the thesis. First of all, thank you Sofia Sandell and Dennis Majer at Boomerang, Malin Kiriazidou at Elvine and Ann-Marie Kryger at SixtyDays. We are grateful for your response and the contributing of your valuable information. Without this, the thesis would not have been able to accomplish.

We would also like to show our thankfulness to our supervisor Clarinda Rodrigues, who has provided us with useful feedback and guidance through the thesis process. Furthermore, we want to thank our examiner Soniya Billore and also our opponents, who have supported us with constructive criticism during the thesis.

Kalmar, 25 May 2016

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# Table of content

1. **INTRODUCTION** ......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 **BACKGROUND** ..................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1.1 What is fashion? .................................................................................................................... 3
   1.2 **PROBLEM DISCUSSION** ........................................................................................................ 5
   1.2.1 Practical problem .................................................................................................................. 6
   1.2.2 Scientific research gap ......................................................................................................... 6
   1.4 **PURPOSE** .............................................................................................................................. 8
   1.5 **DELIIMITATIONS** .................................................................................................................. 8
   1.6 **OUTLINE** .............................................................................................................................. 10

2. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** .................................................................................................. 11
   2.1 **SUSTAINABILITY** .................................................................................................................. 11
   2.1.1 Triple bottom line .................................................................................................................. 13
   2.2 **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** .............................................................................. 15
   2.3 **LUXURY BRANDING** ........................................................................................................... 16
   2.3.2 Product development ............................................................................................................ 19
   2.3.1 Green market communication ............................................................................................... 21
   2.4 **INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION WITHIN THE FASHION INDUSTRY** ......................... 23
   2.5 **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK** ............................................................................................. 24

3. **METHOD** ..................................................................................................................................... 26
   3.1 **DEDUCTIVE APPROACH** ....................................................................................................... 26
   3.2 **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD** .................................................................................... 27
   3.3 **RESEARCH DESIGN** .............................................................................................................. 28
   3.3.1 Case study design .................................................................................................................. 29
   3.3.2 Purposive sampling ............................................................................................................... 29
   3.3.3. Companies chosen for the case ........................................................................................... 30
   3.4 **DATA COLLECTION** .............................................................................................................. 31
   3.4.1 Structure of interviews ......................................................................................................... 32
   3.5 **OPERATIONALIZATION** ...................................................................................................... 32
   3.6 **QUALITY OF RESEARCH** ..................................................................................................... 33
   3.8 **METHOD CRITICISM** ......................................................................................................... 35
   3.8.1 Ethical considerations .......................................................................................................... 35

4. **EMPIRICAL DATA** ...................................................................................................................... 36
   4.1 **BOOMERANG** ....................................................................................................................... 36
   4.1.1 Company profile .................................................................................................................... 36
   4.1.2 Sustainability .......................................................................................................................... 37
   4.1.3 Corporate social responsibility ............................................................................................ 39
   4.1.4 Luxury branding .................................................................................................................... 39
   4.1.5 International competition ..................................................................................................... 40
   4.2 **ELVINE** ................................................................................................................................ 41
   4.2.1 Company profile .................................................................................................................... 41
   4.2.2 Sustainability .......................................................................................................................... 43
   4.2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility ............................................................................................ 44
   4.2.4 Luxury branding ..................................................................................................................... 44
   4.2.5 International competition ..................................................................................................... 45
   4.3 **SIXTYDAYS** .......................................................................................................................... 46
   4.3.1 Company profile .................................................................................................................... 46
   4.3.2 Sustainability .......................................................................................................................... 46
   4.3.3 Corporate social responsibility ............................................................................................ 47
   4.3.4 Luxury brand .......................................................................................................................... 47
   4.3.5 International competition ..................................................................................................... 48

5. **ANALYSIS** .................................................................................................................................. 49
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 SUSTAINABILITY</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Triple bottom line</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 LUXURY BRANDING</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 Product development</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2 Green communication</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 FUTURE RESEARCH</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOKS, ARTICLES &amp; ONLINE SOURCES</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B TABLES AND FIGURES</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, a description of the area that has been studied during this thesis will be presented. A background will be provided followed by the problem discussion where the topics relevance and problem will be discussed. Throughout the problem discussion, relevant research questions will be formulated followed by the purpose of the thesis. The chapter will be concluded by delimitations and an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background
Sustainability is a concept that, according to its founder Lester Brown, can be described as "meeting today's needs without jeopardizing the well-being of future generations" (Weisser, 2002, p.321). In recent years, this concept has got an increased importance and dissemination. The result of this is that sustainability is now seen as something normative that companies have to introduce in their business in order to succeed. Thereof, sustainability issues have got more attention and importance within today’s business world (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003).

Several fashion companies are developing their work with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) to reach a sustainable environment. The meaning of this term is that companies are supposed to take responsibility for the society and the environment, which includes factors as economic, ecological and social work (Risberg, 2013). The fashion industry was early to implement CSR into their business. They realized the importance of this concept after increased transparency of the working conditions in the factories, which were atrocious (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). Fashion is the world’s most polluting industry, right after oil. In a garment’s production, every step affects our planet and its resources in a negative way. To give an example, just one kilo cotton, which is equal to one t-shirt and one pair of jeans, requires more than 20.000 liters water to produce (The business of fashion, 2016). According to Handelsrådet (2015), each person in Sweden tends to buy 15 kilogram textile yearly and the number is still growing. The scientist claims that the effect of today's society consumption can lead to a natural disaster if this continues. Fashion companies become more and more aware of this problem and the improvements of sustainability
has the recent years increased rapidly, but there is still a long way to go (JB, YM, LS & EJ, 2015).

Unfair working conditions where big fashion companies keep their manufacturing, such as China and Bangladesh, have been a hot and debated topic. Media have been focusing a lot on this subject and big fashion companies have been questioned about their supplier’s way to treat workers. This also lead to employees became more aware of their human rights. Because of all the attention media did put into this area, it resulted in that consumers became more aware of where and how the products they purchase have been produced (JB et al., 2015).

Swedish companies in the fashion industry have been growing during the last years (Sternö & Nielsén, 2015). One reason is because companies have moved their production and expanded their sales to cross-borders countries. Emerging countries have opened up their markets for international trade and to the world economy by integrate with foreign countries (Sandberg, 2012). Local companies have started to grow because of internationalization processes in their business strategy (Svenskt näringsliv, 2006). The fashion industry is Sweden’s biggest creative industry, with a turnover of 264 billion SEK in year 2014 (Stockholm fashion district, 2015). As Sternö and Nielsén (2015) illustrate, the Swedish fashion industry have increased their export. In 2015, 62 % of the total sales were exported to foreign countries. The authors state that one reason is because of new knowledge in the globalization process. It has provided the companies with opportunities and possibilities to continue the growth but also how to handle hinders and take it under consideration (Sternö & Nielsén).

Due to the fast growth and the huge size of the industry, the sustainable work becomes more important. Sweden is such a big part of the global fashion industry and is thereby carrying a responsibility to make sure that the fashion industry is not affecting our planet in a negative way (Dagens industri, 2015). According to Stiglitz (2007) the globalization is the development of international ideas. Cultural differences are also an aspect that had a significant impact on the movement in the society. The result of this is that Swedish fashion companies are now cooperating on the international market by transferring information, production and education.
However, the competition has become harder, which put more pressure on the management to be observant and innovative to new trends (Sandberg, 2012).

To be green thinking within the fashion industry has today become a trend. Consumers are more aware of sustainability and to wear clothes that are friendly-produced is today connected with status (European Year for development, 2015). Companies are investing in more sustainable alternative to be competitive and to attract more customers. Due to the huge growth of sustainability work, it is no longer an option to not be green thinking as a fashion company, no matter which type of company it is (Dagens Nyheter, 2014). Regarding this statement, is it now possible to assume that green has become the new black?

1.1.1 What is fashion?

“Luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends” - Coco Chanel

(Okonkwo, 2007, p. 7)

Fashion is a phenomenon of human needs of emotional feelings in the society as well as individuals. Fashion gives people the possibility to express themselves and their personality through their way of getting dressed. Compared to fashion, clothes are a complement in a material perspective, such as functionality and quality. By purchasing clothes, consumers can feel satisfied and can create their own identity (Fletcher, 2008). Furthermore, consumers get the impression that it gives them the opportunity to reach a new experience. There are two main categories in the price level aspect, either budget brands or luxury brands. Companies need to decide either if they want to offer their consumers a more cost efficient price with lower quality or a more luxurious choice, which is more expensive but with better quality (Fletcher, 2008).

During the years, the definition of luxury has clearly changed. As Cooper (2015) describes, the definition of luxury is a condition of abundance, something that adds comfort but is not necessary, provides satisfaction and pleasure. When Henry Ford popularized in the 20th century, mass production of luxury goods came into existence. Before this time, luxury was only limited to the aristocratic customer group. The reason for this was because of the rareness and the difficulties to obtain
luxury goods, since it was produced in limited quantities (Cooper, 2015). By
referring luxury with expensive products only, Sozzani (2011) states that it is an old
way to look at it, since luxury is more than just the price. Luxury today includes
factors as richness, purity, uniqueness, innovations and exclusiveness. Luxury is also
connected with experimentations. To find new solutions that are not already
predictable or seen is also one kind of luxury. Sozzani (2011) continues and mean
that luxury clothes has to be sophisticated, not vulgar, because then it is just richness.

Luxury fashion is considered as the concept of slow fashion, which was first coined
by Fletcher (2008) and it is describe as the slow movement of apparel production.
Eco, ethical and green are all three factors which are represent in slow fashion. Clark
(2008) explains that fast fashion is dominating the fashion industry but many slow
solutions have emerged. Further on, slow fashion is the best option to create a social
and environmental friendly production in the fashion industry. It also contributes
with better quality and environment sustainability to the apparel industry (Jung &
Jin, 2014).

The Swedish designer Lars Wallin explains that there is a clear difference when
talking about luxury (Aktiespararna, 2007). In Sweden, luxury brands are not the
same kind of brands as for example luxury brands in France, such as Chanel and
Louis Vuitton. The Swedish inhabitants that are rich do not dare to show it by
purchasing, for example expensive bags or clothes. Sweden does not have a luxury
culture in the same way as other countries, but it is about to increase. Swedes tend to
indulge in expensive product abroad, but not in Sweden. However, Lars Wallin
believes that luxury will be more acceptable in the future and that more foreign
luxury brands will start up in Sweden. Furthermore, the Swedes perception of luxury
has changed because of higher requirements. The ones, who cannot afford luxury,
make it possible to purchase anyway which lead to a distorted view of luxury
(Aktiespararna, 2007).

Fast fashion is another phenomena which means that it occurs a constantly change
in the environment. Consumers are constantly requiring innovative and upgraded
products to be available on the market on a frequent basis (Bruce & Daly, 2006).
New trends give consumers the opportunity to take part of them and to consume
more. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) also explain that today's consumers are more updated and aware of fashion news and tend to be more fashion-conscious. For companies, this means that they have to offer the right products at the right time, which is the concept of fast fashion. A problem for companies is that if they do not keep up with this high speed, they will eventually lose profit. This is a problem which has been identified by Strömquist (2008). The author describes that this issue have a more negative impact on fashion designers compared to great clothes companies such as H&M and Zara. These companies are popular by the younger generation who tend to consume more clothes and want to have the latest trends. It means that they put more focus on priceworthy and vogue clothes instead of high quality that usually have a higher price (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

Consumers are today more aware of the environment and the social responsibility issues in the fashion industry. However, there is a gap between the consumers acting and awareness of the sustainability. The approach against a more sustainable environment has to be considered both from the consumers, designers and manufactures point of view. Impacts from the fast fashion industry affect the working condition and the environment in a negative approach (Black, 2008). Slow fashion is, according to Clark (2008) a more long-lasting strategy, both in a sustainable and cultural aspect and the different views on slow and fast fashion have increased the gap between them.

1.2 Problem discussion
According to Fletcher (2015), fashion and sustainability can be seen as a paradox since they are contrarious against each other. The aspect of increasing production in the fashion industry leads to less focus on the sustainability. Fletcher (2015) also claims that the fashion industry, with its mass production and over consumption, is far from a sustainable environment. However, the trend of developing a sustainable environment is increasing and it is a current topic in the fashion industry. More companies are interested and engaged in creating more solid solutions to make the environment better in a long-lasting perspective (Caniato, Caridi, Crippa & Moretto, 2012).
1.2.1 Practical problem
According to O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2002), the consumption society has a clear connection to hedonism and marketing. Because of the modern marketing, today’s consumption society is characterized by desire. This is because companies are trying to increase the desire and request of material goods, which later on leads to that the consumers will purchase. The culture of consumption shows that consumers today spend less time with family and friends to instead buy happiness (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2002). However, the purpose with the consumption is to have belongings that will attract attention and shows signals about the owners values and self-image. In order to succeed to catch the customer's interests in sustainable products, these products have to fulfill the attributes that the non-green products hold. The question is how Swedish luxury brands that are working with sustainability, are supposed to handle the dilemma with this kind of strategy when competing international (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004).

Companies in the fast fashion industry want to have an over consumption and a lower production cost, which makes factors like the environment and unethical working conditions a growing problem (Fletcher, 2015). According to Handelsrådet (2015) the challenge for Swedish luxury fashion companies is to achieve equilibration between the business needs and the sustainable aspects. Their responsibility has a significant impact on the competitiveness on international markets, since it is visibly and people can see and read about the company's positioning (Caniato et al., 2012).

In the developed world, consumers are more aware of environmental questions when it comes to the impact of the apparel production. The importance of environmental aspects in consumers purchasing decisions, sustainable development and consumer choices is something that should be in the center of attention. However, even though the values are high when it comes to these kinds of questions, consumer’s choices are still irrational. This is why the gap between consumer’s awareness and their actions is a problem in the fashion consumption (Niinimäki, 2010).

1.2.2 Scientific research gap
The fashion industry, both global and the Swedish one, is growing rapidly together with the consumption need (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). The consequence of this is
that the world is now facing intractable problems. The fashion industry has a huge impact on large amount consumers all over the world and thereby, companies have to take more responsibility regarding CSR (Praguel, Benoit-Moreau & Larceneux, 2011). As mentioned earlier, it is a concept that more companies have embraced, but there is still a long way to go to reach the goals. Therefore, an investigation in this topical issue is relevant, to get a better understanding and knowledge in companies participating to make the world a better place.

As mentioned previously, consumers have become more aware of the problem and are more engaged in questions on how to reach a greener future (JB et al., 2015). However, as Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates (2010) argues, there is a gap between the consumers approach and their values against the environment compared to the way of acting to the question. The decision-making process is more responded to factors such as price, place and the availability of information. Cost efficient price make consumers purchase more, which put pressure on companies to make the production chain shorter. This proves that cheaper fashion has led to a vicious cycle since less focus is put on the sustainability (Black, 2008). To survive the global fashion competition, companies need to constantly produce new collections to attract the consumers. They have created a shorter life-cycle to be able to accomplish the consumer’s needs. As Strömquist (2008) mention, today the fashion industry have to constant deliver new trends, compared to 1900 century when the fashion designers only had to create new collections for every season (Strömqvist, 2008).

When analyzing sustainability in the fashion industry, it is possible to find significantly more research within the fast fashion industry than the slow fashion and luxury brands. Companies as H&M, Zara and Forever21 are in most cases companies that are being analyzed and criticized in their way of acting green. Due to the great amount of research cases in fast fashion companies, we agreed that the same kind of research has to be made within luxury brands. To examine the company's product development and green communication in a sustainable direction, will further on provide the thesis with a deeper understanding in the problem. People may take luxury brands for granted when it comes to quality and sustainability, because of the higher prices. Therefore, an investigation regarding this topic from a luxury brand perspective seems relevant.
1.3 Problem definition
The conclusion of the problem discussion is that a better understanding is needed to be able to consider how Swedish luxury fashion companies are working with sustainability in order to be competitive on international markets. By making a research within product development and green communication, the reader will get a clear understanding in the company's sustainable strategies. Two main research questions have been conducted in order to get a valuable result of the thesis.

- How do Swedish luxury fashion brands work with sustainability in product development to be competitive on international markets?

- How do Swedish luxury fashion brands use green communication to be competitive on international markets?

1.4 Purpose
The thesis purpose is to achieve a clearer understanding of Swedish luxury fashion brands, which are acting sustainable within green communication and product development, in order to be competitive on international markets. A research about sustainable strategies will be conducted to identify similarities and differences. By using the research questions combined with a relevant theoretical framework, a higher level of understanding within the subject will be provided. Furthermore, the thesis aims to provide recommendations for the fashion companies in order to contribute to a greener fashion industry in the future.

1.5 Delimitations
Through this thesis, limits have been taken to be able to identify the subject on a deeper level. A study will be investigated in Swedish luxury fashion companies and their process of developing sustainable products. The empirical data will be collected from interviews with Swedish luxury fashion companies that are all established on
international markets. To get as valuable information as possible, an interview with a suitable employee of the chosen companies will be conducted. Brands that will participate in this investigation are Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays and their head office are all located in different Swedish cities. The main focus of the interview will be if they have started to be greener thinking today and what kind of changes they have made in order to produce more sustainable products. International companies from foreign countries will not be examined since the thesis only will derive information from a Swedish perspective.
1.6 Outline

Chapter 1
• Introduction - The first chapter consists of a background of the topic that is chosen to be studied. It will be followed up by a problem discussion where the findings will result in research questions and purpose of the thesis. Delimitations and the outline for the study will conclude this chapter.

Chapter 2
• Literature review - This chapter will introduce relevant literature that is related to the subject. The theoretical framework will be connected with the empirical data in order to create a good analysis of the topic.

Chapter 3
• Methodology - During this chapter, motives and choice of methodology will be presented that was found to be applicable to be able to conduct the research.

Chapter 4
• Empirical findings - The empirical findings for the thesis will be presented to create a more clear understanding for the reader of what is of value and importance about the subject.

Chapter 5
• Analysis - This chapter will connect the theoretical framework with the empirical findings and similarities and differences will be compared and discussed. In the end, our own voice regarding the analysis of the topic will be provided.

Chapter 6
• Conclusion - The final chapter will summarize the findings of implications and arguments of the whole thesis. Answers of the research questions and evaluations of the analysis will be clarified and give an increased understanding of the subject. Recommendations and suggestions for further studies in the future will conclude the chapter.
2. Theoretical framework

_In the following chapter, the theoretical framework will be presented. The focus will be on four main theories which are relevant for the thesis. To summarize the chapter, a conceptual framework with the relation between the theories will be presented to provide the reader with a better understanding._

2.1 Sustainability

In today’s high competitive fashion society, it is no longer enough to have good products and services as a company. Values and responsibility has also become competitive factors that fashion companies are forced to take under consideration. Consumers are more informed than before regarding these kind of issues and require a more sustainable production (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003).

According to Niinimäki (2010) sustainable fashion is about production, marketing and usage of clothes, accessories and shoes in a sustainable way in consideration of environment, ethical and socio-economic aspects. It is about the pursuit of companies to constantly improve all the links in their production chain, everything from logistic, raw material production, sewing, and transportation to marketing and sales to the end customers. From an environmental perspective, the ambition should be to minimize unwanted environmental effects and in the same time, streamline the usage of natural resources. From an ethical and socio-economic perspective the goal is to improve the working conditions (Green Strategy, 2016). Furthermore, it is also the consumers responsibility to act sustainably by choose the right company to purchase from and give the clothes a long last living by recycle the garment (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003).

The reason for increased textile consumption depends on, according to researchers, three factors; economic, social and cultural. The economic aspect is a reason of increasing apparel consumption because of better welfare in Sweden, easier to get loans and the fact that it is cheaper to buy clothes. How consumers look and dress has become more crucial and our identity expression is more important today than it used to be, which is why the social factor have had an impact on the sustainability. Also cultural aspects as the increased meaning of fashion and differences across the
country is a reason why people waste more clothes than ever today (Handelsrådet, 2016).

There are seven different formations of sustainable fashion (figure 1.0). Some fashion companies claim that the best way to reach a green future is to produce more clothes that fulfill the sustainable goals, while other operators advocate the advantages with recycling clothes (Green strategy, 2016). All different ways and strategies to produce and consume more environment, ethical and socio-economic sustainability are all important parts in the fashion industry’s development to a greener world (Parguel et al., 2011).

The most profitable option would be if all the factors from figure 1.0 could be combined and used for every garment. Every textile would then be produced according to number one and five, in an environment and ethical way (Green Strategy, 2016). Furthermore, Yeniyurt, Henke and Yalcinkaya (2014) state that it is important to create good relationships between the company and the manufacturers. Therefore, more long lasting relations lead to that companies have more impact on the production and the materials. Piece number seven will later on be demanded from customers in a specific performance (Green Strategy, 2016). Consumers have to understand the whole procedure of the production and that the companies have to be

Figure 1.0 Seven formations of sustainable fashion (greenstrategy.se, 2016)
informative (Clark, 2008). The next step would be a high quality manufacture in timeless collections, according to number six. Fussing (2004) explain that already in the 1800’s, timeless apparels was discovered to create a longer living for the garments. Niinimäki (2010) support this statement and mean that opportunities for longer utilization of the garment are opened up by creating timeless collections. Furthermore, the garment would be used carefully and upcycled to create life, as number four indicates (Green Strategy, 2016). Furthermore, Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016) agree with this statement and mean that it is important to take care of the garment by for example, follow the washing instructions. Further on, the garment would be reused of new individuals by secondhand, swap or rental, number two and three (Green Strategy, 2016). Finally, when the garment is all worn-out it can be left at a recycling station for manufacturing of new clothes (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013).

The figure 1.0 shows seven different formations of sustainability from both a producer and consumer perspective. The ideal would be that this was how the production and usage of clothes actually was taken care of, but the reality looks different and it is still a long way to go until the whole figure is completed in the fashion industry (Green Strategy, 2016).

2.1.1 Triple bottom line
According to Slaper and Hall (2011) sustainability is a growing factor and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is a framework that many sectors have embraced to evaluate their performance in sustainability. The authors define TBL as a tool to measure a company’s social, environmental and financial factors. It is also known as the three P’s; people, planet and profit. Elkington (1999) who founded the TBL concept year 1997, states that companies that are following the triple bottom line concept take the effect their actions has on all the people involved in the business, under consideration. This includes everyone from the farmer who is producing the raw materials, to the company’s CEO. Furthermore, fashion companies that are following TBL are offering acceptable working hours, human rights, wages, safe working areas and the fact that they do not exploit their labor, like sweatshops or child labor (Grant, Bafarawa, Vargas-Prieto, Gonzalez & Sivasankar, 2013).

Grant et al. (2013) further states that fashion companies with a sustainable TBL system do also care about our planet. They strive for a more sustainable environment
and agree that a greener mind will be profitable in the future. These companies take their responsibility by; decreasing the energy usage, produce safe products and then try to use renewable energy sources and materials. Elkington (1999) states that the third factor, profit, means that profit in the companies is supposed to sustain the community as a whole and not just go straight to the CEO. The three bottom lines are all dependent on one another. The society factor depends on the economy which depends on the environment (Elkington, 1999).

It has been argued that the TBL is an important measurement; however, the research is limited in how to use it for competitiveness (McWilliams, Parhankangas, Coupet, Welch & Barnum, 2016). A further problem that has been argued about TBL is the difficulties of measurement. The accounts of people and planet cannot easily be measured in the same terms as profit, which is, in cash. For example, the cost of displacing communities to forests or divest children their freedom to instead make them work, is not measurable in monetary terms (The Economist, 2009).

Figure 2.0 Triple Bottom Line (ridg.com, 2016)
2.2 Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is today a current subject within the fashion industry. Companies need to make arrangement to confine climate changes and adapt to today's environmental question to create a better world. The company's way of acting should have a positive impact on the natural resources. The definition of corporate social responsibility is that companies are supposed to take responsibility for their effect on the society in both an economic, environmental and social perspective, which also is the goal for the Triple Bottom Line model. It is important to have all these three aspects in the business strategy. Companies also have to look into and respect ethical values to reach commercial success (Parguel et al., 2011).

According to Tai and Chuang (2014) it is important for companies to not only focus on CSR from a profitable perspective of the business. They also need to consider a sustainable development and take responsibility for the environment. Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) claims that it is necessary for companies to have ethical and social norms within the business. Furthermore, by having CSR activities, it will give the brand a better reputation and positioning on the market. However, the application of CSR has different influences on how the companies and management are working with it. It is proved that CSR have positive impact on financial aspects, in forms such as increased profit. By constantly work to prevent pollution and unfair working conditions, companies can decrease their cost of example managing waste and occupational accidents (Graafland & Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten, 2012).

Companies that are working with CSR questions in their business strategy, have today become more attractive for investors (Graafland & Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten, 2012). However, as mentioned above, by working with CSR results in an increased profit which have made this approach criticized. Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite (2012) claims that CSR can be a helpful tool in order to increase the company's turnover. Therefore the companies are only focusing on the minimum that is required on ethical acting’s and are the laws framework. The strategy is mainly to focus on how to avoid occupational accidents that could occur within the business (Buciuniene & Kazlauskaite, 2012). On the other hand, Graafland and Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten (2012) point out that the motives for CSR is not only based on financial aspects, it can be established by the management desire to create a better
business environment for their employees or by ethical and moral questions. These perspectives is dealing with a social engagement without any interest in getting own benefits or rewarding (Buciuniene & Kazlauskaite, 2012). Furthermore, the implementation of CSR standards can be costly for the companies since it takes time, require resources and some efforts to reach advantages in the competition. However, De Colle, Henriques and Sarasvathy (2014) state that one risk can be that companies are focusing too much on the implementation of these standards that companies do not follow their basic purpose. The author continues and state that the standards of CSR affect the way of thinking and the focus is more on deciding in a right way instead of making the right decisions (De Colle et al., 2014).

Nowadays, Swedish luxury fashion brands move their production to other parts of the world to decrease the costs for the business. These countries usually have a lower level of knowledge and education which result in lower wages. However, even if they move the production abroad, it causes expectations on the responsibility over the working conditions. Intangible aspects, such as education and health, still have the same value and are important factors even in other countries (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003). By using CSR, Löhman and Steinholtz (2003) argues that luxury brands can strengthen their positioning on international markets. It is an advantage against the competitors since the consumers will notice that the brands are taking responsibility for the society. The authors continues and state that with CSR strategies, the brands have higher possibilities to create more long-lasting relationships to their customers, both on the domestic and international markets (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003). Swedish fashion brands have started to publish more information about CSR on their webpage. However, the CSR policies by budget brands are usually easier to find. Therefore, they have in general lower trustworthiness compared to luxury brands. Information within luxury brands can be harder to find, but their attitude for CSR is clear compared to budget brands, which are more pushing out their message of their responsibly taking (Magazine Ellui, 2014).

### 2.3 Luxury branding
A luxury product is produced to create value for the customer. It is not a product that can be thrown away because another season is coming (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). It
is significant for luxury fashion brands that their products is fulfilled and appealed with a meaning to become successful (Keller, 2009). Luxury fashion brands usually have a long history with a strong and rich heritage, which have a great impact on the traditional design of the products. These histories are also shared with long-term customers (Okonkwo, 2007). Furthermore, the value of the product is increasing during the time and the proposition of value is all the benefits that come within the product. This strategy helps to create more long-lasting relationships between the fashion brands and their customers. Consumers want to purchase products with materials that enhance over time and they feel attached to (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). This creates a more long-standing perspective for the brand and the customers becomes more loyal (So, Parsons & Yap, 2013). The satisfaction that consumers get by investing luxury clothes is contributed by emotional feelings and value of premium image (Keller, 2009). The brand's name is significant when branding the products because the logo and symbol of the brand is attractive for the customer since it will be connected with luxury (Okonkwo, 2007).

Branding luxury products involves several of intangible aspects that are created and associated with a luxury image (Okonkwo, 2007). The market communication needs to be aligned with the quality of the product for the consumer to get good experiences of the brand. The message of the brand is to attract both users and non-users to be prospects of the brand. Furthermore, the message will have different influences on them. For non-users, it is more about a desire of enjoying the privilege as the current users of luxury clothes have. The decision making process by non-users is built upon the influences and the consideration of doing possibly purchase in the future is in progress (Keller, 2009). Therefore, it is an appropriate strategy to prejudice the customer's future investment in luxury brands. By branding the exclusivity, it affects the consumer's senses of luxury products (Okonkwo, 2007).

The brand's identity is significant for the products to create a luxurious expression in form of packaging, logos and symbols (So et al., 2013). Luxury brands can be associated with events and personalities but also the premium location of stores. It is depended on which channel strategy the companies chose for the branding of the products. The purpose of branding luxury products is to show an image of luxurious
lifestyles (Okonkwo, 2007). It is distinguish between the brands identity and the image. The identity is what the company wants to be and their marketing message. It can be both tangible and intangible characteristics and expressions of the brand. These values should benefit and give power to reach out to the customers and affect influences in their behavior (Keller, 2009). Image is the brand's value for the customers and how they perceived the brand. The identity and image need to be connected to each other for the brand to be competitive on domestic and international markets. It is important for companies to have clear strategies to be able to positioning themselves on the markets. The consumer's expectations of the brand need to comport with the experience otherwise it can damage the value of the brand. Therefore, both the stores and the communication need to be linked to the brand identity to be competitive on international markets (Ross & Harradine, 2011).

Several of luxury brands want to be global and established on international markets. Therefore, they need to communicate the brand identity to their market segments. Luxury fashion is unique and identified with passion and to the personal taste by the consumers. By having its own story to tell and symbols to be identified with, the Swedish luxury brands will be more competitive (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). However, Ross and Harradine (2011) state that the visual identity of the brand is more significant than symbols. The author claims that it is important to separate the brand and the visual identity, since the visual identity is an extension of the brand. Furthermore, in the future, the concept of brand identity is crucial and fundamental for the consumers to understand the brand's vision and expression. It is only when the brand has reached a high level of understanding of the consumers; the development of the visual identification can start. Therefore, the management has to make sure that all the employees are well-known with the brand's identity and values within the company, since it will have influences on the image (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). According to Rowden (2003) the identity is built by the social response and creates the positioning on the markets. However, the author claims that the identity is misleading, because it is only a mask of what the brand chose to be. On the other hand, the identity helps the brands to be discovered and stand out in the hard competition on international markets (Dahlén & Lange, 2009).
2.3.2 Product development
Kapferer and Bastien (2012) state that luxury products are handmade and that the consumers have the possibility to trace the imprint of the person who produced the clothes. Within the fast fashion industry, the consumers do not have the same opportunity since it is mass manufactured and the clothes are sold in several stores. Luxury fashion products are associated with more exceptional and special clothes with premium prices. As mentioned before, Okonkwo (2007) mean that luxury brands usually have an important history, which can be found in their product. This is significant for loyal consumers that share the same vision, compared to the younger generation, who are more judging the brands by their products. Therefore, a few of the classic luxury brands also design trendy collections to adapt to more in vogue people (So et al., 2013).

Clark (2008) states that sustainability within product development, is an important factor. The consumers need to understand the whole procedure from raw material to end-product and not only how it is consumed. The author also claims that the slow fashion industry put more attention to environmental issues and focuses more on how to decrease the mass consumption. The products have higher quality and a longer consumption perspective to create “permanent fashion”. This results a longer length of life for the products, although still stylish (Clark, 2008). According to Black (2008) sustainability within the fashion industry is an up to date question and should be discussed. The subject is fulfilled with contradictions and there is a gap between sustainably consumption and the changeable fashion industry, since the customer have a constant strive of updating identity and clothes (Black, 2008).

Considerations have been set regarding the possibility to recycle the materials from the textile in clothes. The subject is highly debated and findings are discussed about the responsibility taking and the relevance for luxury fashion companies to adopt (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013). According to Eriksson (2014), several of the big fashion companies have started to recycle clothes to design special collections made by recycled clothes. During the years, fashion companies have been criticized for their negative effect on the environment. 40 % of the entire textile consists of cotton, which is one of the most water demanding crop in the world. Nosti (2012) states that cotton can be scarce commodity in the future since the farming industry is not
increasing anymore. That is why the recycling has started to take place in the big companies business strategies. However, recycled clothes can have negative effect on the luxury fashion industry because the consumers do not see a relation between luxury fashion products and second hand clothes (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013). Furthermore, Keith and Silies (2015) argue that recycling clothes in the luxury fashion industry is increasing. Several of the luxury brands have started to take responsibility and are presenting new designs and projects. Therefore, consumers have started to show a more positive attitude against recycling and luxury products.

According to Antanavičiūtė and Dobilaite (2015), the fast fashion industry has the biggest negative impact on the environment because of the mass production. Furthermore, they set new trends conscientiously to attract consumers to purchase more, which lead to more waste of clothes. Therefore, Antanavičiūtė and Dobilaite (2015) state that the slow fashion approaches will reduce relevant problems regarding the environment. By transfer the concept of more sustainably produced clothes, the slow fashion designers will spread their ideas and visions to their customers about the positive affects the clothes have (Antanavičiūtė & Dobilaite, 2015). However, Joung (2014) claims that the fast fashion industry is working to encourage their customers to recycle more. Fast fashion companies are taking more responsibility to create a better environment. As Eriksson (2014) describes, the fast fashion vendor's H&M have for example designed a collection with recycling clothes.

Swedish luxury fashion brands have started to open second hand stores with recycled clothes, but also to sell recycle clothes in their premium stores. Older brands usually call their recycled clothes for vintage (Matsson, 2011). The high quality within luxury brands has made this concept possibly, since the clothes are produced in a
long-lasting perspective (Clark, 2008). According to Matsson (2011), brands want to take their responsibility by taking small steps towards a sustainable development. The usage of ecological cotton has increased but also to recycle fibers from old cotton clothes to produce new clothes (Miljönytta, 2014).

2.3.1 Green market communication
In order to keep a sustainable market communication, it is important that companies have sustainable strategies and models (Ottoson & Parment, 2013). To convince the consumers to purchase sustainable products, an effectual market communication is crucial for the companies. Olausson (2009) states that companies that are working with green communicating strategies are strengthening their brand and thereby, become more competitive. It is a topic that interest many consumers, which is why it is important to continue the communication and keep the interest alive, to be able to make a sustainable change. Ottman (2011) mean that according to consumer’s expectations, the time has passed for commercial promotion and green marketing is the new paradigm. This requires that companies are working proactively to advance and keep an open communication to create sustainable relations with their customers. This kind of strategy will later on be rewarded by loyal consumers. Companies which are actively working with green marketing and communication, ally themselves with other companies to figure out holistic solutions to different challenges which are all related to the triple bottom line (Ottman, 2011).

Research has shown that when it comes to communicating environmentally friendly clothes to consumers, it requires more clear information, compared to regular clothes. The companies has to put more effort in showing their knowledge and awareness of the green products advantages to reach even the less interested customers (Yan, Hyllegard & Balesi, 2012). Further on, Grant (2007) explain that marketing today is all about educate the consumers and not mislead them with wrong information and promises that they cannot keep. In the same time, Chen (2010) means that too much information can lead to confused customers and they will thereby find it hard to make a decision. Because of this, it is important for companies to provide their customers with just enough amount of information to decrease the risk of a too big flow of information.
Do Paço and Reis (2012) argue that today it has appeared skepticism among the consumers in relation to the environmental aspects that the companies want to convey by the sustainable communication. The skepticism is increasing and the result of this is that the positive effect of the green communication has decreased. The reason for the raise of skepticism within in green communication is mainly because of the false green picture some fashion companies have shown. Consumers claims that companies only use their green communication to enhance their green image and get competitive advantages, but not really proved any sustainable improvements. Thereof, the fashion companies need to improve their communication design to be able to provide their customers with more believable information (Do Paço & Reis, 2012). However, it is a challenging mission for the companies to design their communication in order to succeed with encouraging the consumers to make sustainable choices.

Greenwashing is a concept that has been used intensively by numerous of companies to attract consumers. Do Paço and Reis (2012) explain that this concept is used by companies which are marketing themselves as green, but the reality is different. These companies are misbehaving their communication and their statements are misleading. To be green has become a trend that companies exploit in their market communication to win customers. This behavior results in, as mentioned above, skepticism (Do Paço & Reis, 2012). Furthermore, Ottoson and Parment (2013) claims that greenwashing can in the long run have a negative effect on the whole market of fashion companies which are marketing themselves as green. The brand can suffer huge damage and consumers decide to not purchase from companies with green marketing. Eventually, the transition from unsustainable to sustainable products will be hard to reach for the companies. Choi and Cheng (2015) continue and explain that this could jeopardize the whole fashion industry quest after being green.

Van den Ven (2008) states that it is important that companies do not brag about their CSR initiative in their communication. They have to find the difference between bragging and being informative. According to Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) it is proven that stakeholder’s skepticism can be triggered by companies CSR initiative. Van de Ven (2008) continues and means that companies in their communication
must review the company’s trustworthiness. To not communicate the CSR initiative at all because of increased skeptic would not be recommended, since this could reduce the company’s ambition to continue their CSR work.

2.4 International competition within the fashion industry
A strong economy during the last century has drifted the production to be more efficient but also opened up the markets (Ghauri & Cateora, 2005). The new global market is affected by different trends which influence the economy. Nowadays, the companies are more depending of each other for the expansion to foreign countries (Darwis, 2013). With increased welfare, the purchasing power has started to be more powerful. Furthermore, the increased technology has made the availability within the communication between companies easier. Companies can email each other instead of calling, which save money and reduce time. The technology has also made the distribution more convenient because of the transfer of information and more developed system. The cultural aspect has made the product development more adaptable to international markets. The demographic aspect is also considered, the segmentation groups are similar in several countries, which have made the international competition harder (Ghauri & Cateora, 2005).

Nowadays the competition on the domestic market is hard. There are several actors within the fashion industry, which have put more pressure on the management and designers to be innovative to differentiate themselves from the competitors. The statured domestic market and increased competition have enabled for companies to seek for new opportunities on international markets. On international markets, the companies have the advantages to reach more market shares but at the same time there are new competitors to take in to consideration (Bramati, Gaggero & Solomon, 2015). When entering new international markets, the companies must have a clear entering strategy. Therefore, they need to do something special to stand out in the competition. The luxury fashion industry has its own history, which is shown in the design and the style is more specialized which makes the market position stronger and more competitive (Okonkwo, 2007).
To succeed on the international market, a fashion brand has to be more than just a brand. It has to be a name that is used to identify a product to separate it from competitors (Keller, 2009). The author means that a brand is existing in the customer's mind and make them think about the specific product, which is something that fashion brands have done with success. As mentioned earlier, fashion companies are highly competitive on international markets today. Since the Swedish market has become too small, companies are required to move outside the borders in order to be a successful business. Still, the Swedish fast fashion chain H&M is dominating on the international market, but the amount of smaller luxury companies are increasing rapidly global as well (Sundberg, 2006). The reason why Sweden is such a great competitor in the fashion industry is according to Hauge, Malmberg & Power (2009) because of the improved economic situation, ability in producing innovative products, brand value and good logistic and distribution channels. Consumers outside of the Swedish borders appreciate the Swedish fashion brands because of its quality and functionality. Therefore, Sweden has great potential to grow even bigger on the international market in the future (Visit Sweden, 2011).

2.5 Conceptual framework
The fashion industry is highly exposed from media regarding working conditions in the production countries and the negative effect on the environment. The literature review has demonstrated that sustainability and CSR are two important main factors to for the competitiveness in the future. Due to of consumers awareness and attitude towards the environment, fashion companies are forced to implement these factors into their strategies to become a successful business. The triple bottom line is a framework which is focusing on fashion companies ability to work with these types of questions and measure their market position compared to other actors. Researchers claim that in the future, sustainability will not be an option but a matter of course. Product development and green communication are two aspects that luxury fashion brands have to take under consideration, since this have an important impact on the consumer’s behaviour. By analysing the conceptual framework (figure 4.0), it is possible to see that the theories are connected to each other to be able to reach successful international competition.
Figure 4.0 Conceptual framework (own figure, 2016)
3. Method

The method chapter will present the deductive approach of the thesis and the qualitative research method. For this study, semi-structured interviews will be used because of the flexibility in answering the questions. Furthermore, the method chapter will examine the data collection to give a more detailed insight of the study's design. Finally, the method criticism part will criticize the resources of the study and its relevance for the subject. During the next chapter the theoretical framework for the study will be presented, which will form the basis of the analysis.

3.1 Deductive approach

There are three types of approaches which are conducting scientific research. Two of them are more traditional, deductive and inductive (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). The deductive approach can be explained as the logic relation between different theories and the collected empirical data. The empirical data will be tested and analyzed with help from the framework of relevant theories to be able to answer to the research questions. The theories and existing knowledge are the basis for this approach and depending on the correlations between the results and theories; the research questions can be accepted or rejected (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The inductive approach is based on the empirical data collection, where observations have been done and leads to theoretical improvement (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). The deductive approach can be found as more reliable since it is a more logical process because of implementing empirical data into the theoretical framework. Compared to the inductive approach, that can be related to uncertainty because of the research implications, which rely on the general truth (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

A third approach, abduction is emerged as a combination of the deductive and inductive approach. It can be explained as during the process, the inductive approach can be used with the empirical data as a starting point for the scientist choice of theoretical frameworks. Thenceforth, the scientist can develop the theories and hypothesis to the deductive approach (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). The abductive approach is often used within case study research, which means that a case is formulated through hypothetical pattern in turns explain the case. The method can also be used when a preliminary theory is used then tested on new cases to develop the primary theory (Wallén, 2008).
For this study, the deductive approach has been chosen, since sustainability within Swedish luxury fashion is relatively unexplored. The findings for the research are derived from the theoretical framework, instead of the empirical findings. Therefore, the deductive approach is more suitable for this thesis. Considerations have been made and more pre-understanding about the area was needed to be able to identify different pattern in the collected empirical data.

3.2 Qualitative research method
According to Kumar (2014), research methods can be divided into two main categories, quantitative and qualitative method. The quantitative research method provides a result in terms of numbers, amounts, statistics and other factors that are countable. In other words, factors that are possible to quantify. To be able to collect information, the main problem is studied through surveys, questionnaires or interviews with only yes/no questions or at least very strict designed questions. The researcher has already from the beginning a clear picture of what he/she wants to investigate. On the other hand, the qualitative method goes much deeper into the problem to analyze how and why certain things are happening. Kumar (2014) argues that the qualitative method is not as formalized as the quantitative one. Information is collected by observations, interviews where the discussion is open and interpretation of different kinds of text. While analyzing the data, different types of relevant theories are emerging during the progress.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how Swedish luxury fashion brands are working with a sustainable business. According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) this can be classified as a qualitative study, since the problem definition have an impression and the respondents perceptions and opinions has to be conveyed to get an answer of the study. The study is targeting different fashion companies, which provides a deeper understanding, since it is related to a concrete and real situation. Sustainability, which is the main focus, is a broad and a non-measurable concept and therefore it would be more difficult to use a quantitative research method for this kind of study (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).
By a qualitative approach, it is possible to put oneself in the respondent's situation and thereby get a deeper and more realistic understanding of the problem (Kumar, 2014). A qualitative method can also facilitate to receive a broader view of the problem with new angles that may not have been studied in earlier cases within luxury fashion. A quantitative method would not have been able to provide the thesis with such as valuable and detailed information as a qualitative can manage. This type of study requires open questions in order to give the respondents the possibility to answer with their own words, which provide a better understanding. Therefore, a qualitative approach will be used through the process in order to give the study a deep and clear research to be able to answer the research questions.

3.3. Research design
According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010, p. 56) research design can be defined as an “overall plan for relating the conceptual research problem to relevant and practicable empirical research”. It describes how the theories will be used and also provides a framework of which way data is about to be collected. Different kind of study designs can be used within a qualitative research method. Examples are surveys, experiments, case studies, history and archival analysis (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Case studies are defined as a form of qualitative descriptive research, which is applicable when examining a group of participants, individuals or a whole group. Compared to a survey, which gives statistic information, a case study provides a more depth in the problem. It is used to narrow down a broad subject into one easily researched topic (Yin, 2015). If the main problem of the study is to understand how a phenomenon works, it is argued that a case study is the most relevant research method to apply on the study, in order to get as deep information and understanding as possible.

In view of the analysis above, a case study is the most preferable research design for this thesis. Sustainability is a broad subject and to expect the best answer to the thesis research questions, personal interviews with individuals will be made. Yin (2015) also claims that this design is applicable on thesis with ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions. Since the questions for this thesis are “How does Swedish luxury fashion brands work with sustainability in product development to be competitive on international markets” and “How does Swedish luxury fashion brands use green
communication to be competitive on international markets”, a case study design will be a suitable choice. Further on, case study design can be divided into two parts, multi-case studies and single-case studies.

3.3.1 Case study design
When conducting a case study, it is possible to choose to design the case study with a single case or multiple cases (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). The single case’s approach is used when collecting the research and does only need one unique case. By using the multi-case study, several different cases are collected and then are they analyzed and compared against each other. This approach is considered to be more valuable since the collected data from different cases are supporting the analyze and are regarded to be stronger evidence factor (Yin, 2014). By using a multi-case study, the result will be more reliable, compared to only use the single case method where research will only get one company's approach (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). In this thesis, several Swedish luxury fashion companies will be compared against each other, which required a multi-case study to be able to investigate the area.

3.3.2 Purposive sampling
When collecting data information, the researcher needs to consider which unit should be used for the selecting process. It is divided into two main sampling methods, which are probability and nonprobability (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Probability samplings are used in forms when the researcher is doing a random selection of samples. The process allows to do generalize statistics of the collected samples (Kumar, 2014). The thesis aim is to understand the phenomena sustainability within the Swedish luxury fashion brands, which make the non-probability method appropriate to use together with the qualitative research. Within the non-probability method the most common one is purposive sampling. During this thesis the purpose is to understand and analyze a certain problem which the purposive sampling allows (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). According to Kumar (2014) the collected data gives the possibility to get relevant knowledge around the area and the research problem. To be able to identify the issue different companies are chosen that is suitable for this case study.

The criterions that are created to answer the research question of the thesis are the samplings limitation to the companies which participant in the case study. The
companies have to be Swedish founded and recognized as Swedish luxury fashion brands on international markets. As Sozzani (2011) states, luxury is more than just the price of the product. It is about quality, purity, innovation, uniqueness and exclusiveness. If a garment fulfills these requirements, the price does automatically become higher. To be able to decide whether the chosen companies for the thesis are considered as luxury or not, a table was created to state the definition of Swedish luxury fashion brands. Furthermore, the companies was analyzed according to the statements and marked with a tick or a cross if they fulfilled the requirements or not.

Table 1.0 **Criterion of Swedish luxury fashion brands** (own table, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Boomerang</th>
<th>Elvine</th>
<th>SixtyDays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good quality</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusiveness</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3. **Companies chosen for the case**

The companies that are chosen are based and found from the criterion from previous part and table 1.0 to be able to reach the empirical data that is needed for the subject of the thesis. The companies are:

- **Boomerang** - The company was founded year 1976, inspired by the Scandinavian ocean and nature. Boomerang has physical stores in Sweden, Finland, Norway and are in progress to start up in China, but they offer the possibility to shop online from several countries (Boomerang, 2016). In 2014, they had a turnover of 180 010 000 Swedish crowns (allabolag.se, 2016)

- **Elvine** - Year 2001 Elvine was founded in Gothenburg, inspired by skating and graffiti painting, with a focus on functional jackets (Elvine, 2016). In 2014, Elvine had a turnover of 88 917 000 Swedish crowns (allabolag.se,
Today they have agents and distributors in numerous of countries all over the world, France, USA, Russia and Canada to mention a few. Online shopping is also an alternative worldwide (Elvine, 2016).

- **SixtyDays** - In 2011 the company was founded in Helsingborg. The clothes have a bohemia inspiration with combination from the southern Europe and Scandinavia. SixtyDays have retail stores in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland and agents in Norway, Denmark, Germany and Australia. In 2014, they had a turnover of 11 000 000 Swedish crowns (SixtyDays, 2016).

### 3.4 Data collection

Empirical data can be collected by two different approaches, primary and secondary data collection (Patel & Davidson, 2011). The authors claim that primary data is the most relevant way to collect information regarding a specific research problem. Because of this, the most of the empirical findings will be primary founded. In order to provide a well-established and designed theoretical and methodology chapter, primary data will be supplemented by secondary data.

Primary data is the empirical data which is collected by the researcher itself. It is collected from primary sources, which through a qualitative research is by observations or interviews (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). It is argued that primary data is more reliable since it is collected for the researchers own purpose. Interviews can be performed through different kind of forms, email, phone or meetings face to face (Patel & Davidson, 2011). To be able to collect the most valuable information for this thesis, personal interviews have been completed. This provides the opportunity to receive a better understanding in the respondent's behavior, perceptions and how he or she interprets different situations and statements. Since this thesis is following a qualitative method, the information collection has therefore mainly been by primary data.

Secondary data on the other hand, is information which already exists and has been collected for another purpose. Sources that are connected to secondary data are for example scientific articles and books (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The secondary
data that has been used through this thesis has been found in scientific articles, relevant websites and textbooks.

### 3.4.1 Structure of interviews
Interviews in a qualitative research are, according to Patel and Davidson (2011), mostly conducted by a low level of structure. This means that the interviewer asks questions that provide space for the respondent to answer with own words and thoughts. This kind of interviews is called *unstructured*. Another type of interview is *semi-structured* interviews where the questions are still quite open, but follows a specific list of topics that has to be touched. The third way of accomplish interviews is *structured*. Here the questions are high formatted from an already written list and the answers are already predetermined and limited (Patel & Davidson, 2011). To be able to get as valuable information as possible and give the respondent the opportunity to answer in own words, a semi-structured interview has been conducted. This type of interview is more flexible and the interviewer is allowed to ask follow-up questions to get more detailed information from certain questions (Kumar, 2014).

In order to give the respondent an insight in the subject and a chance to prepare for the meeting, the questions has been send in advance to the respondent. The questions are open, but follow a specific topic during the whole interview, which is the company's way of working with sustainability. Since all of the companies are Swedish founded and the respondents has Swedish as mother tongue, the interviews where therefore held in Swedish to avoid any kind of inconvenience. The answers from the interview have been translated to English in order to be usable in the thesis empirical findings. It was argued that a face-to-face interview was the most suitable option, since it is proved that the respondent then provides the interviewer with high quality answers and chances of a trustful relationship is high. Since the companies are located in different Swedish cities, the interviews were held by Skype, in order to save time and still be able to get a face-to-face impression.

### 3.5 Operationalization
Guidelines for the interview were conducted from the literature review. The questions are based on former scientific research about the subject. Therefore, a better understanding is created of what already has been investigated and is used as a
framework for the interview questions. The questions are linked between the concepts in the theoretical framework of the thesis and aspects from the reality (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). In Appendix A, the interview question will be represented.

Table 2.0 Operationalization (own table, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>The respondents will be asked to give a short presentation of the company, themselves and their positioning in order to provide us with the right information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>Questions about sustainability will be asked in order to achieve a higher understanding in how the companies are working with this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>In order to be able to analyse how the companies have implemented CSR into their business strategies, questions will be asked within the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury branding</td>
<td>10-13</td>
<td>The respondents will be asked questions about luxury branding, which contains their strategies in product development and green communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International competition in the future</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>To be able to understand the importance of sustainability to be competitive on international markets, the respondents were provided with questions within this area. Questions will also be asked regarding their future visions and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>To conclude the interview, the respondents were asked if they wanted to add something and also if we were allowed to contact them again regarding complements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Quality of research

Reliability and validity discuss the trustworthiness from the collected empirical findings based from the interviews. Reliability is used as an instrument when research is testing the stability within the answers. To be able to do this, the same
person should answer the same questions at repeating times (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). However, Kumar (2014) claims that there is a complexity in the answer by the respondent, since the behavior is considered to not be invariant. Which can therefore result in that the outcome is not the same even if the qualitative research’s case study is similar. The existence of the issue is independent by the human’s experience, which are limited by the subjectivism, knowledge and prejudice. The research needs to develop a method that eliminate these problems and measure the answers even if it is not reliable and acknowledgeable. The analysis and result needs to take in consideration on how the answers were obtained. Furthermore, examine the outcomes in the conclusion based on its reliability (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). Validity is measured by using subjects to answer the questions and explain the first intention from it (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). According to Wallén (2008) the measure instrument should not give any systematic problems, it shall only investigate the purpose of the question. A clear definition of the background and research questions for the study needs to be elaborated for the planning of the experiment to be able to collect the right empirical data. Concerning the validity in the respondent's answer, the information from the questions needs to be gathering correctly (Wallén, 2008). To increase the validity, the researcher can return to the respondents with the empirical data and to see if they understand the findings. Furthermore, the researcher can collect data from several different perspectives to analyze to obtain a more valid understanding of the area, which is called triangulation (Kumar, 2014).

For this thesis, the validity approach is used to collect the empirical findings. The questionnaire was carefully read through before the interviews with the companies to avoid any misconceptions. Before starting the interviews, two volunteers were asked to read through the questions in order to evaluate their first impressions and reactions. The interpretation was correlated to the researches intention of the questions. The same questionnaire was used to all the respondents to collect the findings, which were examined against each other to obtain different aspect in their internationalization process to a more sustainable environment.
3.8 Method criticism
During this thesis the study has mainly been based on primary resources for the empirical findings. Therefore the primary sources is considered to be reliable than secondary sources. However, secondary data in primarily form of scientific articles will support the findings in the chosen area (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). They are considered to be reliable since it is published as accepted scientific articles. It is an up to date subject, therefore the articles are published within a timeline of 17 years. Information from recent researchers is more relevant for this thesis and brings more value to the subject and the theoretical framework. Furthermore, all internet sources have been discussed and reviewed to ensure that it can be used as relevant sources. Beyond internet sources and scientific articles, different literature has been used to support the method chapter, for example, Ghauri and Grønhaug’s Research Methods in Business Studies (2010). The publication of the literature is significant and the latest edition has been used to get the most current information of the thesis research (Thurén, 2005).

3.8.1 Ethical considerations
By using the qualitative approach, various ethical considerations need to take under consideration (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). According to Denscombe (2009), there are four main requirements, which are information, concurrence, confidentiality and enjoyment of rights. Before the interviews, information was sent out by emails to the respondents with the subject and the purpose of the thesis. For this case study the emails were sent out to Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays. The respondent’s participation was voluntary and they could interrupt when they wanted (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). However, Denscombe (2009) states that confidentiality requirements are implemented when asking about the usage of their name and position in the company in the thesis, which were accepted by the respondents in this multi-case study. Information was told that the material would be used strictly for this research purpose and only be used by the researcher. Furthermore, the thesis will be available on the internet for other people to read. To ensure the empirical findings were correct, the respondents received the thesis to read it through and accepted the information.
4. Empirical data

The chapter will present the empirical findings gathered from the respondents. A presentation of the company will be provided, followed by the respondent’s perspective of sustainability in the fashion industry. The findings have a structure that follows the conceptual framework.

4.1 Boomerang
4.1.1 Company profile

“You cannot do everything 100% right when being sustainable, no one in the fashion industry can, but you can do something” (Majer, 2016)

Year 1976, the two entrepreneurs Kenneth Andram and Peter Wilton decided to start an apparel brand together. They wanted the brand to symbolize their common values and passion for quality. The name of the brand was supposed to be strong and simple, but also have a connection to a symbol. Therefore, the name Boomerang became the final choice. The first collection Andram and Wilton came up with, consisted of cotton shirts, pikés, oxford shirts and pant made of corduroy and canvas. Today, this is still the base of Boomerangs assortment (Boomerang, 2016). In the startup Boomerangs collection was unisex. It was designed for men but women still bought pikés and shirts. In 1999, the first women collection was released which turned out to be a huge success. Already from the beginning when the first collection was produced, the focus was put on sustainable textiles. The founders wanted Boomerang to be connected with good and sustainable quality clothes already in the start. As the company grew, the focus was put more and more on sustainability. 2008 was an important year for Boomerang since this was when the Boomerang effect was created. The point with this idea was to let customers return old garments to give them new life and as an appreciation, they got 10% discount on a new garment or product from Boomerang. If the garment still looks good and clean, it will be sold again as a vintage garment; otherwise the textile will be recycled and made into something else. As an example, textiles from old shirts got a new life by being redone as a carpet, which Boomerang then could sell in their interior collection (Boomerang, 2016).
By interviewing the CSR coordinator, Sofia Sandell and the sourcing/production director and head of men’s, Dennis Majer, of Boomerang, it was possible to gain valuable information about the company. Majer (2016) explained that when he entered Boomerang four years ago, the plan was to strengthen the CSR job. This mission was then put on Majer’s role together with other tasks. Since it is a relatively small company, the employees are forced to have more than one task. Today, the importance of being sustainable and green thinking in the fashion industry has become even bigger. Therefore, Boomerang decided to hire one person who is supposed to work 100% with CSR questions in order to become even better and stronger within this topic. Sandell was then hired in early 2016, with a background of working with suppliers in both Bangladesh and China. As a CSR coordinator, the mission is to find new suitable solutions in the production chain (Sandell, 2016). During the years, Boomerang has grown even outside the Swedish borders. Today 90% of the sales are still within Sweden and 10% outside, mostly in Scandinavia. However, the plan is to grow even bigger international to bring the whole world into the sustainable thinking for a greener future. The nearest plan is to enter Kina, Beijing (Majer, 2016).

Boomerang is a company with ageless collections and the idea is that you should be able to use the same garment in different occasions; it is all about how you decide to style it (Majer, 2016). “We want everyone to be able to wear garments from Boomerang, even if the wallet does not always allow it. Therefore, the Boomerang effect gives more people the opportunity to purchase clothes from Boomerang” (Majer, 2016).

4.1.2 Sustainability
The dyeing of jeans was one the aspect that provoked an interest of taking more sustainable responsibility. The water consumption was high, which affected the environment negatively. Therefore, Boomerang realized the importance of changing their way of production and which materials they are using. Waste of clothes was also an aspect to take under consideration. The garment should last over one season. Majer (2016) states that the customer should be able to wear a knitted sweater
produced in organic cotton at an event in two years and it will still have a good shape. It is more about the quality and the styling.

As Sandell (2016) mention, issues within the production is one of the main problem that the fashion industry faces. Companies compose well detailed contracts and code of conduct but then they handle over the responsibility. The suppliers are taking advantages and working on the limit to not break the rules. However, Boomerang is working in another direction. They handle the problems before they occurred and it has been that way since the startup (Sandell, 2016). Furthermore, Majer (2016) mentioned that they are cooperating with HållbaraHav (sustainable oceans) which are working with the critical situation in the Baltic Sea. The waste and pollution have resulted in that several fish species have decreased and the algal blooms have become more (HållbaraHav, 2012). Boomerang support this cooperation by round up the prices with one Swedish crown to give to the project (Major, 2016).

The most important factor within the sustainability is, according to Majer (2016), the Boomerang effect. It permeates the whole concept of the working procedure. At the time, Boomerang is working with a new business plan and a new vision where the sustainable thinking has a more central role. Sandell (2016) agree, and points out that the Boomerang effect will be the main part in the sustainably strategy. Majer (2016) describes that there is information in every label on the garment which states that the customers are allowed to return clothes, as long as they look fine and clean. In return the customers will get 10% off on the next purchase. Sandell (2016) states that this concept is good for public relations, but also claims that the companies need to take under consideration if it is affecting the environment in a positive way or not. Furthermore, Sandell (2016) describes that Boomerang have vintage stores where they sell the clothes that customers has given in return. This is a good concept which does not have high impact on the environment. It also gives the opportunity to buy luxury clothes to a more affordable price. Majer (2016) states that “you cannot do 100% right, but you can do something”. It is not possible to work 100% organic since the farmers cannot seed ecological cotton every year. The farmers also have to seed other crops. Furthermore, Majer (2016) claims that it is important to not focus on just having organic cotton in their production. The companies need to look into if it makes any difference and have positive impact on the environment. Majer (2016)
describes that Boomerang want to be proactive in their sustainable acting. Therefore, they take these questions serious and try to handle them before they occur.

4.1.3 Corporate social responsibility
Boomerang (2016) policy regarding their corporate social responsibility is that every employee should be freely chosen. No one should be forced to work and no one should be discriminate at their working place because of, for example race, color or religion. Physical abuse and other harassment and punishments are prohibited. Boomerang (2016) also states that they do not use child labor. Their quest is to give their employees living wages. It is important to look into all these details. Sandell (2016) states that it is common that companies just sign well-formed and detailed contracts. However, in several cases, manufactures are just working just above the limit to no break the contracts. Sandell (2016) continues and claims that this is a big issue, which companies needs to take their responsibility and be more aware of the working conditions in their production process. Majer (2016) point out that Boomerang is putting big effort into strengthen their CSR. Their focus is to find new solutions in their production to reach a higher level of sustainability.

4.1.4 Luxury branding
Boomerang has mainly focused on increasing the impact of sustainable materials in their base assortment, instead of producing one specific sustainable collection. They figured that it is more profitable to develop the bestselling garments into sustainable materials. Therefore, the sales of these clothes have higher volumes, which create better condition in the environment. “By producing just one sustainable collection, we will reach a small amount of people. But by developing our most popular clothes into more sustainable materials we will reach a lot more customers and the impact on the environment will be more positive” (Majer, 2016).

To be able to provide the consumers with correct information, the green communication is an important factor. A big part of Boomerangs customers are periodically receiving digital newsletters. Here the mission is to communicate with the customers and provide them with news from the company. Majer (2016) explains that they put a lot of effort in this, so the customers experience that they are updated about the work Boomerang is doing when it comes to green acting. Furthermore, to
get the customer's opinion is also something they want to improve, in order to see what they want the company to do better and what they are satisfied with. Majer (2016) continues and mean that Boomerang is learning a lot from their customers to, it is not supposed to only be a one way communication. Furthermore, Sandell (2016) explain that it is important that the staff located in the stores is well educated within sustainability. Boomerang wants to have employees who are passionate for the subject. Customers are supposed to be able to enter the store and feel comfortable about asking questions and getting answers. Later on, the goal is to have specific CSR lectures with inspiring lecturers so the knowledge in CSR gets even wider and stronger. When discussing the risk of skepticism within the customers, it is not an issue that Boomerang has had to deal with noticeable. Majer (2016) explain that they receive emails to the head office sometimes, but not often. The physical stores may receive more customers that have questions, but then they will be provided with the right information and knowledge to decrease the confusion (Majer, 2016).

Both Majer and Sandell (2016) agree that there is an existing gap between consumer's valuation and acting and mean that it is important to decrease this gap soon. “We have to continue the green communication with our customers, make sure that we provide them with the right information and not withhold anything. The costumers deserve to learn the truth, why it is more expensive with sustainable materials and that it will become cheaper in the future, when the demand increases” (Majer, 2016). In order to decrease the gap nationally, it will require arrangement on a government level, new rules and laws that will force the companies to produce more sustainable clothes and decrease the consumer’s throwaway behavior. However, this is a long process and several recourses will be required (Majer, 2016).

4.1.5 International competition
As mentioned previously in the text, the Boomerang effect is one of their main competitive advantages against their competitors. The fashion industry is very exposed in media and more people are aware of the problems that the fashion industry is involved in (Sandell, 2016). Therefore, the apparel companies are carrying a huge responsibility to do their job in order to reach a greener world with fair working conditions. The Boomerang effect creates interest and attention from
new potential partnerships from different directions. They find this as an important factor in international markets since it is something new and unique and make the consumers open their eyes (Majer, 2016). Furthermore, Majer (2016) describe that Scandinavians are more ahead in sustainable thinking compare to other European countries. It mainly depends on that in Sweden, the inhabitants are more used to recycling and the economic gap is not as big as in many other countries. Therefore, Sweden is in frontline within the international competition with the sustainable thinking. In England for example, the gap is much bigger which makes it more crucial to have budget clothes chains as well. Furthermore, several of the other countries in Europe are larger; therefore it takes longer time but the sustainable thinking present. Sandell and Majer (2016) continues and mean that it is important to clearly show the consumers how Boomerang is working with sustainability and hopefully it will reach people all over the world. “We have to show the world the importance of acting green when it comes to purchase decisions, to make a difference” (Sandell, 2016).

In the future consumers will have to change their purchasing behavior. Companies will be forced to have more long-lasting strategies to be competitive. It is a tough market, both domestic and international, which makes it harder to reach higher turnovers. The companies have to do changes and the sustainable aspect will be even more important in the future (Majer, 2016).

4.2 Elvine
4.2.1 Company profile

“There is no doubt about that sustainability is the only right thing for the future within in the fashion industry” (Kiriazidou, 2016)

Elvine was founded year 2001 by Daniel Mänd. Mänd, who had a big interest for skateboarding and graffiti painting, found it hard to discover clothes that were connected to him and his friend’s style. Therefore, he decided to create his own brand with an idea such as “sophisticated clothes for unsophisticated behavior” (Elvine, 2016). Today Elvine is most famous for their functional jackets, which constitutes the biggest part of the turnover. The company has grown into an
international well-known brand and is today established on more than fifteen different markets outside the Swedish borders, by agents or distributors.

Malin Kiriazidou (2016), who is the market manager at Elvine since one year back, explained that it has always been an existing sustainable thinking at Elvine. Since the main focus at Elvine is functional jackets, it is important to not use hazardous chemicals. Therefore, Elvine have a close relationship to the chemical group, which make sure that they are following the rules and laws (Kemikaliegruppen, 2016). Kiriazidou (2016) explains that it can be difficult to keep the production 100% free from chemicals. Since the factory where Elvine produce their clothes do also have customers from other countries, where they do not care enough about this topic, it can easily result in that Elvines production take damage of this. Furthermore, this is something that Elvine are trying to reduce and are working a lot with to be 100 % free from hazardous chemicals. It is also important to educate all the employees within the subject. Scientists have been visiting the company to transfer knowledge and increase the interest in working for a chemical free company (Kiriazidou, 2016).

Kiriazidou (2016) mean that it is important that the company do everything they can in order to reach a greener planet. Even small things will make a difference and it would be optimal if more fashion companies could understand this. Elvine have taken an active decision to not use any fur or leather in their production. The reason for this is that they cannot be totally sure that the animals have been treated the right way. Although Elvine have close relationships with their own producers, they do not know who they are working with in the production chain, which makes it hard to guarantee that the animals has been living and treated under good circumstances. Furthermore, all the employees are taking their own responsibility by exclude taxi and instead travel by local traffic, focus on recycling and not print unnecessary papers (Kiriazidou, 2016). Kiriazidou (2016) indicates that the employees are proud to be a part of Elvine since they take these kind of questions seriously and this makes it okay to be in the fashion industry.

A factor that Kirirazidou (2016) values high and mean is a new term, especially within the fashion industry, is circular economy. The meaning of this is that all the
steps in the production take place properly, from start to goal. The cotton plantation should produce ecological cotton and have fair conditions; the sewing and producing of the garments should be done right and then be transferred to the stores correctly. Later on, when the customers purchase it, they should take care of it, by following the cleaning advises, try to fix it if it breaks, give it away or sell it when it does not fit anymore. Eventually, it should be recycled and then be remade into a new garment. Kiriazidou (2016) describes that this is the goal for the company, but it is hard and takes a lot of time to complete all steps. It is easier for companies who are starting up now then companies which already have routines and strategies, since they then have to change most of it. Therefore, Elvine is focusing on one step at the time to be able to make it 100% right, instead of all the steps mediocre.

4.2.2 Sustainability
Sustainability is much more than just focusing on the environment. It is about how to avoid to breakdown the environment even more. There are several important aspects to take under consideration, such as suppliers. It is significant to sign contract regarding the company's policies. Furthermore, Elvine have good contacts with their suppliers and they believe in long-lasting relations. They have mainly focused on jackets and they have worked hard to reduce chemicals in the material. Kiriazidou (2016) continues and states that it is important to look into every step in the production process and see that is done correctly. This is the concept of circular economy. However, this concept is easier for new startup companies, compared to aged companies. Therefore, it takes longer time to make changes in the production. Kiriazidou (2016) describe that Elvine have an endeavor towards this concept and work hard to find new solutions in production and materials to reach a more sustainable environment. Elvine is a smaller company, which results in the textile suppliers do not have the same understanding in the production procedure. Bigger companies can affect them more since they produce larger volumes and they can push the production prices to a lower level. Therefore, Elvines good relationships to their suppliers have a significant impact since their cooperation’s make them feel as a part of the company (Kiriazidou, 2016).
4.2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility
Kiriazidou (2016) states that CSR is really important and something companies cannot avoid working with in the future. It is a hygiene factor and it should be obvious in every strategic plan. Employees in the whole production chain should not be allowed to work under minimum wages and everyone should have their lunch breaks. The human rights are of big importance and at the same time focus on the environment. Kiriazidou (2016) also claims that the companies which are in front in the development in the sustainable thinking should share their knowledge to give the opportunity for other companies to reach the same level. Everyone must work towards the same direction to reach the best effect (Kiriazidou, 2016).

4.2.4 Luxury branding
To develop the company’s products in a sustainable direction is a factor that Elvine takes seriously and are working with constantly. One factor that they have been taken under consideration is how to change the plastic bottoms on the garments into a more environment friendly material. To use corn based plastic, which is biodegradable, has turned out to be a successful implement in the strategy. Kiriazidou (2016) mentioned more than once during the interview that fashion companies are forced to work with sustainable product development, since this is a matter of course in the future. “When we are developing our products, we want to do it 100% good; therefore we are focusing on one product at the time. For example, since our jackets are the biggest part of our turnover, we feel that it is there we can do the most different right now” (Kiriazidou, 2016).

Green communication is an area where Kiriazidou (2016) means that Elvine is behind, but they are in progress to improve the communication with their customers. The plan is to provide information about what they are doing to become a greener brand on the homepage. Right now the focus is on the actual work to become a circular economic company and after this the green communication will be improved. However, Kiriazidou (2016) points out that Elvine is not a company that wants to brag about their sustainable work, since they mean that it should be as obvious as anything else. Elvine does experience customers that are skeptical concerning sustainable question sometimes, but not often. When it happens, information is provided by Elvine and the customer is in most cases leaving satisfied.
Furthermore, Elvine is frequently receiving praise when showing and explaining what they are doing in order to reach a greener fashion industry. However, the praise according the sustainable work is not something that appears spontaneously. Kiriazidou (2016) believes that it mainly depend on that Elvine is not showing their sustainable work official, for example the website, yet.

When discussing the gap between consumer’s valuation and acting regarding green choices in the fashion industry, Kiriazidou (2016) mean that it depends on the desire to have the newest clothes. Because of the fast fashion today, it is easy to find new and cheap clothes easily and the consumers do not reflect over the production. “It is hard to say what is the right thing to do to decrease the gap, but if we keep on developing our products in a sustainable way, the gap will hopefully reduce and we have done what we can do” (Kiriazidou, 2016).

4.2.5 International competition
The competition within the luxury fashion industry is hard, both on the domestic market and on international markets. Kiriazidou (2016) states that their competitors are brands such as the Danish brand Revolution, to the Swedish brand Hope. As mentioned above, Elvine have created good relations to their suppliers, which give them the opportunity to sell clothes with high quality to good prices. This gives them competitive advantages against their competitors (Kiriazidou, 2016). Jackets are Elvines main products and their biggest source of income. The jackets are designed to suit the city lifestyle. They want the customers to feel dressed but with a touch of the street style. Their hard work to reduce the chemicals makes their jackets together with the design attractive on the markets. The customers get the impression of purchasing good quality and stylish jackets for good prices (Kiriazidou, 2016).

Kiriazidou (2016) states that sustainably work are the only right in the future to survive on the competitive market. There is no way back, the companies have to put even more afford towards a better environment. The vision for Elvine is to be a company that works completely with circular economy. Every garment should be produced in a material which can be recycled (Kiriazidou, 2016). Kiriazidou (2016) claim that is not an easy process and it takes time but they are working in the right direction with their sustainable thinking.
4.3 SixtyDays

4.3.1 Company profile

“Sustainability is an important factor within the fashion industry and our garments has been produced in 100% ecological cotton since the beginning” (Kryger, 2016)

With inspiration from different cultures and beautiful places in the world, the Swedish designer Efty Kvist founded the apparel brand SixtyDays year 2011 in Helsingborg. Sea shells, animal prints and earth colors are some details that Efty have focused on in her collections (SixtyDays, 2015). During an interview with SixtyDays production assistant Anne-Marie Kryger (2016), it is mentioned that the company is seen as a luxury bohemian brand. The prices are set from 1000-2000 Swedish crowns, with some exceptions of higher prices. Kryger (2016) compare SixtyDays to brands as Odd Molly and Hunky Dory. The four recent years, SixtyDays has grown rapidly with a five times doubled turnover. Today they have sales to 80 different stores in Sweden and 40 stores in the rest of the world. Recently, SixtyDays opened up a sales office outside of Sydney in order to become even bigger worldwide (8till5, 2016).

Kryger (2016) explained that SixtyDays have been a one man company earlier, which has put the CSR works a side. Since the founder, Efty Kvist, have a lot of experiences in good quality fabrics (SixtyDays, 2016), the clothes has always been produced of 100 % ecological cotton. “Now when I have entered the company, I am supposed to take more responsibility within the CSR questions, which is something I will start to take under consideration now” (Kryger, 2016).

4.3.2 Sustainability

Kryger (2016) means that sustainability is mostly about the social part and the importance of good working conditions in all the parts of the production chain. Also, the environment is a big part of sustainable fashion. The consumers have to realize that it is not a long-lasting strategy to throw away clothes after a short period of time. Since SixtyDays are only producing their clothes in 100 % ecological cotton, the lifetime of the apparel is thereby longer and does not have to be thrown away after a short time. Furthermore, Kryger (2016) says that here in the western part of the
world, we should take more responsibility, since we actually can afford better quality. When trying to reach a more sustainable brand, Kryger (2016) have taken new ideas under consideration. To produce a recycled collection is something that has been working with. However, Kryger (2016) describes that it is not that easy and some difficulties within the process has shown. While visiting a production team in Portugal to discuss this idea, the experience was that the understanding and level of knowledge were low. It was hard to get answers and they did not know a lot of the background of the recycling. When the knowledge is insufficient, the collaboration becomes hard. To produce a recycled collection requires a lot of resources, which makes it crucial to ask the question; “Is a recycled collection really an environmental friendly option or does it just look good from the outside?” (Kryger, 2016)

4.3.3 Corporate social responsibility
SixtyDays is still a fairly new company since they have only been on the market since 2011. Therefore, it has not been put any specific focus on CSR questions yet. Although, Kryger (2016) states that it is an important factor within the fashion industry and they will eventually start to take this question under consideration. As stated earlier, SixtyDays was a one man company before and have just now hired more employees. Kryger (2016) have the mission to make the company more CSR conscious which is a project that is in progress.

4.3.4 Luxury brand
Product development into a more sustainable option is an aspect that SixtyDays is not working noticeably with today. As mentioned earlier, they are producing all their clothes in sustainable materials and have always done. According to Kryger (2016), they are in the progress of developing the labels on the clothes with more information about the material and the fact that it is 100 % ecological cotton.

Green communication is an aspect that SixtyDays is about to develop and be better on. Kryger (2016) says that it will soon be easier to read about this on the homepage, to get a better understanding in what they are actually doing. Also, to develop the label with more information is also a way in the right direction for a greener communication. Although, Kryger (2016) mention that their customers are not
asking questions about material and sustainability. Furthermore, Kryger (2016), agree that it exist a gap between consumers valuation and behavior when purchasing clothes. Because of today's demand of wanting the latest and newest within the fashion world, the priority is not to buy sustainable clothes which cost more, but cheaper clothes which gives the ability to buy more. Kryger (2016) states that this is mainly within the younger generation, where the looks and image is a daily and important factor. Furthermore it is hard to say how to decrease the gap. To communicate with the customers about the importance of sustainable clothes is important and at least something SixtyDays can do to make a smaller gap (Kryger, 2016).

4.3.5 International competition
It is definitely important to work with CSR and sustainable questions to be able to compete on the international market. The customers become more aware of this, which makes it important to keep up with these kinds of questions. “I think that Sweden are a bit ahead other countries in the way to a greener world within in fashion” (Kryger, 2016). In the future, Kryger (2016) explained that clothes made from high quality materials will be the only right thing. Fast fashion companies will also have to understand this, because fast fashion will not be able to make it in the long run. The vision for SixtyDays is to become better in the green communication with their customers and to continue the good work with high quality material in the clothes. However, the future for sustainable fashion looks bright (Kryger, 2016).
5. Analysis

In the following chapter, the theoretical framework will be connected to the empirical findings, which will result in an analysis. A discussion between the theoretical framework and the empirical findings similarities and differences will be provided. The structure of the analysis will be in accordance with the literature review.

5.1 Sustainability

According to Löhman and Steinholtz (2003) values and responsibility regarding a more sustainable environment are factors that companies need to take under consideration. When analyzing these three companies, Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays, sustainability is an aspect that is significant. Niinimäki (2010) states that consumers have higher levels of knowledge within sustainability and are more aware of it, which force companies to improve their production process, from raw material to end-products. Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays strategies are different from each other. Boomerang and Elvine are focusing on the subject and are working with several aspects to find solutions in their production process. According to Kryger (2016) sustainability is important, but SixtyDays is still a new company, which is why they have not been able to put the same effort in sustainability questions as Elvine and Boomerang.

Kryger (2016) states that even since the beginning, they have produced their collections in ecological cotton. Boomerang, which is a larger company compared to SixtyDays, focus more on specific garments. Majer (2016) describes that they have sustainable textiles in their base assortment. One reason for this difference can be that Boomerang cannot focus on the whole collection since it is much larger compared to SixtyDays. They have to take it stepwise and focus on one thing at the time. However, Boomerang has high quality in their clothes and Majer (2016) states that the consumers should be able to wear their knitted sweater in two years and still look new. Boomerang gives the consumers washing instructions on their labels, which gives according to Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016) the clothes a longer life cycle. Elvine's collection consists mainly of jackets. Their focus is more on how to reduce chemicals in the materials. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, Niinimäki
(2010) states that is important to identify all links in the production chain and the
same pattern can be seen in these three companies. Boomerang, Elvine and
SixtyDays all have different focus in their sustainable thinking. However, the
importance is that they are taking responsibility to create a better environment and
are taking steps in the right direction. The main focus is the quality; the material in
the garment needs to have a more long-lasting living. According to Handelsrådet
(2015) the society throws away large quantities of clothes yearly. One solution for
this is that better quality clothes can be recycled (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013).
Boomerang has invented the Boomerang effect, which gives the possibility to recycle
the garments and sell them in vintage stores. The same pattern can also be seen in
Elvine’s and SixtyDays future strategies.

Yeniyurt, Henke & Yalcinkaya (2014) state that long-lasting relationships to
suppliers are an important aspect. Kiriazidou (2016) claims that Elvine has good
relations to their suppliers, which also is an important factor in the progress of the
concept circle economy. A deeper investigation shows that SixtyDays had more
difficulties of finding production teams with high knowledge. Majer, Kiriazidou and
Kryger (2016) also claim that Sweden is in front when it comes to sustainable
thinking. Therefore, this can be the reason for lower level of knowledge in the
production countries. On the other hand, Elvine has more long-lasting relationship to
their manufactures, which means that they can transfer knowledge and have higher
impact on the production process. This is also defined by Yeniyurt, Henke &
Yalcinkaya (2014) that long lasting relations have bigger impact on the production.
However, Kiriazidou (2016) mean that Elvine have difficulties as well since they are
considered as a small company. New startup companies as SixtyDays, have more
difficulties to find good collaborations with the needed knowledge and resources for
producing clothes with high quality. However, both Boomerang and Elvine are
considered as smaller companies as well, but they have been on the market for a
longer time and have been able to create stronger bonds to the suppliers.

When analyzing the figure prospected by Green strategy (figure 1.0) it is possible to
understand that there are both similarities and differences between the three
companies. First of all, the factor “Green and clean”, the three companies are putting
effort in, together with “Fair and ethical”. Boomerang, Elvine and Sixty days do all mention that it is important that all parts in the production chain are environmentally friendly and ethical. Clark’s (2008) statement about the importance of every step in the production chain being treated fairly and ethically is consistent with the companies valuations. As mentioned previously, Kiriazidou (2016), claims that Elvine have close relationships with their suppliers and can therefore feel safe when it comes to green and clean production. During the interviews, all the companies mentioned how important it is to take responsibility for a greener production chain. Kryger (2016) explained that SixtyDays value good quality clothes high. 100 % ecological cotton has been used in every garment since the start up. Sandell (2016) also explained the importance of green, clean and ethical production and that they focus on one part at the time, to be sure they are doing it 100 % right.

Furthermore, in seven formations of sustainability (figure 1.0) the part named “on demand” is not a factor that the companies have taken into their business strategy today. “High quality and timeless design”, is partly one of the main aspects these companies are taking under consideration. In accordance with Niinimäki (2010), to produce clothes in high quality material, which creates a long lasting lifetime for the garments, is highly valued by the respondents. Sandell and Majer (2016) mentioned more than once that they want Boomerang’s clothes to be ageless and never run out of style, which is why they produce simple and basic collections. SixtyDays on the other hand, have a more protruding collection where the focus is put on different kind of patterns, prints and designs. The result of this could be that consumers get tired of the clothes faster and do not want to use them for a long time and therefore want to purchase new garments. “Remake, repair and upcycle” is a factor that Boomerang is far ahead other companies because of the Boomerang effect. By turning old clothes into new items, the lifetime of the textile becomes longer and this is a factor that Boomerang believes in for future success.

Elvine and SixtyDays are not on the same level as Boomerang at this part; put them both points out the importance of not using clothes for a short period of time and then go to waste. If the garment somehow breaks, the consumer should try to repair it before waste it and thereby create a longer life time. Furthermore, when the garment
is used until its end by its owner but is still in good shape, it can be sold again as “Second hand and vintage”. Boomerang offers the customer 10% discount on a new garment when returning an old Boomerang garment, which later on can be sold in vintage stores. This indicates on Boomerang’s awareness regarding sustainable fashion. Even though Elvine and SixtyDays are not working in the same way as Boomerang with second hand, it was still possible to notice that they find it important, which may open up opportunities in the future. “Rent, loan and swap” is mostly on the consumer's private level, where they can, for example, exchange or loan clothes from each other.

To conclude the green strategy from the three respondent’s perspective, it is noticeable that there are differences and similarities between them. They do all have the knowledge about the problem and that the company has to be developed in a green direction. Boomerang is in the forefront compared to Elvine and SixtyDays, since they have more pieces from the model where they are active. However, Boomerang is an older and larger company, which has given them more time and resources to develop the sustainable work. If this thesis were made in a few years from now, the chance is increased that both Elvine and SixtyDays would be on the same level as Boomerang and more pieces would be fulfilled.

5.1.1 Triple bottom line
Slaper and Hall (2011) state that the triple bottom line is a framework that several companies have embraced in order to improve their work within sustainability. The thesis findings show that all three companies are taken sustainability under consideration since it has become an important factor to take responsibility. All the companies points out that they have always have been focusing on the sustainability. Elkington (1999) states the importance to involve all employees in the business. Similarities can be seen in the respondents answer. SixtyDays and Elvine are smaller and have to take more responsibility and broader their roles, which results in that more employees are involved in these types of questions. By comparing to Boomerang, who is a bigger company have hired Sofia Sandell as the company’s CSR coordinator to focus mostly on these types of questions regarding CSR and sustainability. This result in a deeper knowledge within the area and more time can be spending to do changes in the CSR work. However, Elvine and SixtyDays are in
progress to put more effort in sustainability. Since SixtyDays is quite new on the market and have been just a one man company, their sustainable work has come behind. Therefore, Kryger is now hired to take this question under consideration and now a project is in progress. Elvine’s market manager, Kiriazidou (2016), means that she has been working for Elvine in one year and is supposed to take the sustainable factors into consideration. Grant et al., (2013) statement regarding accepted working conditions is an important aspect by all these three companies. Results from the empirical findings shows that they put a lot of effort to create a good working environment. Kiriazidou (2016) states that they are not using child labor and everyone should have their lunch breaks. Sandell (2016) argues that no one should be forced to work.

Even though Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays do all claim that sustainable questions have always been an important part of the company, it is possible to notice that they are today taking the work even further in a green direction. What seems to be the most important factor that they are discussing is in accordance with Grant et al., (2013), statement regarding the “planet”. Both Boomerang and SixtyDays claim that recycling is a good option for the garments to be reused. However, questions have been asked if is it really an environmentally friendly decision or does it just look good from the outside? This can be related to McWilliams et al. (2016) theory, the authors argues that TBL is limited as a measurement in the competition between companies on both domestic and international markets. The Economist (2009) continue and claims that “planet” and “people” are hard to measure compared to profit and therefore the companies have difficulties in measure the effect on the environment.

However, high quality clothes produced from ecological cotton and free from dangerous chemicals are two aspects that all three companies value high. It is easier to measure the consumer’s attitude towards sustainable clothes in terms of sales and profit. The factor “people” is not mentioned as much as “planet” but all three companies as mentioned above, do not accept unfair working conditions in their production chain. The importance of fair wages and fair working hours indicates that they have the factor “people” under control. “Profit” is a factor that is the future goal
for the sustainable work and projects. Majer (2016) mentioned that it is not always that profitable to run sustainable projects but when consumers have realized that slow fashion consumption is the better option, the profit will thereby increase. The respondents describes that it requires a lot of time and knowledge for slow fashion brands to win the majority of the consumers. This can be correlated to Elkingon (1999), who states that all three aspects in the TBL are all dependent on each other and results can be identified in the companies way of thinking regarding sustainability. By taking responsibility over the environment and the working conditions it can lead to increased profit, maybe not just in terms of higher turnover but also in creating a more sustainable environment.

5.2 Corporate social responsibility
According to Parguel et al. (2011) CSR is an up to date trend within the fashion industry. Companies need to focus on three main perspectives, which are the economic, environmental and social perspective. This can also be connected to triple bottom line by Slaper and Hall (2011). To connect CSR to the economical aspect, companies should not take it under consideration from a profitable perspective (Tai & Chuang, 2014). According to Majer (2016), Boomerang is working hard to strengthen their CSR. They are not using unfair working conditions and child labor and Boomerang is focusing on finding new solutions in the production process. Kiriazidou (2016) states that CSR is going to be a matter of course in the future and claims that every employee should not be forced to work under minimum wages.

Comprehensions between Boomerang and Elvine show that they put huge effort in their CSR strategy. Both brands are working towards a higher level of working conditions and focus more on the social perspective then the economical. Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) state the importance to have social and ethical norms, which is shown and connected to both Boomerang and Elvine strategy regarding CSR. The economical factor can also according to Graafland & Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten (2012) lower the cost for Elvine and Boomerang. Furthermore, SixtyDays is still a decent new company and therefore have not taken CSR questions under considerations on the same level. However, Kryger (2016) explain that CSR is important and that they have a project in progress. According to Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) focusing on CSR can strengthen the brand’s positioning both on the
domestic and international markets. However, Graafland & Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten (2012) claims that the application can have different influences, which is shown between these three brands. Elvine and Boomerang are more established on the market, which result in a more developed process regarding CSR compared to SixtyDays.

Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite (2012) argue that CSR can be used to reach an increased turnover. However, in all these three cases it is focused on creating better working conditions and do not use it to reach more market shares. Sandell (2016) and Kiriazidou (2016), both state the importance to have good relations to their suppliers to be able to have control over the working environment, which is a connected to the theory by Graafland and Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Shouten (2012). Long-lasting relations is a result of that they have been on the market for several years. By comparing with SixtyDays, Kryger (2016) argues that they had some struggles to find suppliers with the right knowledge. They are a smaller company compared to Boomerang and Elvine and do not order the same amount of garment, which can affect the impact on the suppliers. However, SixtyDays are smaller, which can also be beneficial, since they can easier switch suppliers without affecting the company to much. Larger brands have more aspects to take in to consideration before doing business with another partner. As De Colle et al. (2014) argues that one risk can be that companies are putting too much focus on implementing CSR and forgot to follow their basic purpose. By examine the three cases, Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays, it shows that the companies have taking it stepwise regarding implementing CSR in order to avoid adventuring the business. However, they are on different levels now but they have the same goal and strive to reach better working conditions and human rights.

5.3 Luxury branding
5.3.1 Product development
As Clark (2008) mention, product development within sustainability is an important factor, which Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays do agree with. Boomerang and Elvine have both understood the importance of developing their products in a green direction and have taking this factor into practice. Instead of producing one specific collection in sustainable material, they are instead focusing on the most important
products. Majer (2016) and Kiriazidou (2016) both explained that by developing the main products, they can reach more people and thereby make a clear difference. However, they are still focusing on their specific design since the history of the brand is important when it comes to luxury clothes (Okonkwo, 2007). Furthermore, Kryger (2016) argues that green development of products is important but is not an aspect that SixtyDays have been taking into their business strategy today. Mainly, because of the young age of the company and the low amount of employees. With their luxury bohemian design, SixtyDays collections are more adapted to the in vogue consumers, which is correlated to So et al. (2013) statement regarding luxury collections that are trendier. By comparing SixtyDays with Boomerang, Boomerang is considered to have a more classic style on their clothes.

Furthermore, Clark (2008) means that slow fashion companies have understood the importance of the impact that fashion companies have on the environment. The author means that necessary measures have been taken under consideration. This statement is consonant with the three companies valuations regarding the environment. Boomerang and Elvine mention several times that fashion companies have to act now to save the future’s environment. Several factors have been taken into their business strategies and it is possible to notice the high knowledge within this topic. For example, Elvine has developed their buttons on the jackets to a more sustainable material. SixtyDays are not on the same level due to the company’s young age. However, it was noticeable that SixtyDays have the potential and desire to become more environmentally conscious. Black (2008) states that the gap between consumers acting and attitude is a difficulty, since they constantly want to have the latest trends. Majer (2016) states that nowadays it is about the desire to have the newest garments. This is a problem within the slow fashion industry, since it takes longer time to produce the clothes because of the high quality compared to the fast fashion industry. Therefore, this is an issue since the consumers want the garment directly after it shows on the runway, instead of waiting half a year.

Eriksson (2014) mention that several fashion companies have adapted recycling into their business because cotton is the most water-demanding crop. Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays did all give the impression that recycling is a factor that will take
more space in the fashion industry in the future. Achabou and Dekhili (2013) state the significance for luxury brands to adopt the phenomena of recycling into their business strategies. This can be correlated to Boomerang’s and Elvine’s strategies. Boomerang is today working with recycled material on daily basis in their business strategy considering the Boomerang effect. Elvine are producing buttons in recyclable material and mention that they want to develop even more solutions. SixtyDays is, as mentioned before, still quite new on the market. Although, recycled collections is a discussed subject within the company and an aspect they want to develop into their business. Because of the low level of knowledge that SixtyDays experienced from their co-partners in Portugal, the process of recycled collections is still in progress. In accordance with Matsson’s (2011) statement about older luxury brands to open up vintage stores, Boomerang is the one company of these three that has adapted this project. Since Boomerang is the oldest company of Elvine and SixtyDays, the statement by Matsson (2011) is thereby correct with the reality.

5.3.2 Green communication
When analyzing the companies green communication strategies, it is possible to notice a clear difference between them. As Olausson (2009) describe, green communication makes the company more competitive on the market. What can be found from the empirical findings is that Boomerang is putting significantly more effort into green communication with their customers. Olausson’s (2009) theory stands for that companies with a higher level of green communication are more competitive and possess as a stronger brand, which therefore could be placed upon this analyze. Boomerang is the leader in terms of yearly turnover, compared to Elvine and SixtyDays. The reason for the market position could also depend on the fact that Boomerang is an older company. Majer (2016) mentioned that green communication is an important factor to be able to catch the consumer attention. Furthermore, according to Grant (2007) it is important to be honest with the consumers and not hide any information, which both Sandell and Majer (2016) agree with. This is something that Boomerang has done with success, which could be a contributing factor to the market position. Elvine and SixtyDays are still in progress to be more communicative with their customers by publishing more information on their webpage. However, Kiriazidou (2016) claims that Elvine’s aim is not to be too
boastful in their green communication, since they believe that green thinking should be a matter of course.

Do Paço and Reis (2012) claim that greenwashing is a concept that companies are taking advantage of to attract more customers. By analyzing the empirical findings, it is possible to understand that Boomerang, Elvine nor SixtyDays are utilizing this concept. They are not sharing any information that they cannot be honest with and stand for. Certain companies tend to brag about their way of working with CSR by communicating too much, which result in skepticism among the consumers (Van den Ven, 2008). From the empirical findings, it can be concluded that this is not an issue for Boomerang, Elvine or SixtyDays. They have not experienced that a large amount of consumers have questioned their sustainable strategies or shown any tendency to skepticism. In the unusual cases it happens, Elvine explain that it is important to be clear when providing the consumers with information, to provide them with a better understanding.

Previously, it has been mentioned that there is a gap between consumer’s valuation and their acting when it comes to purchasing sustainable garments (Black, 2008). Most of the customers agree with the statement that it is important to care about our world and fellow human beings by making sustainable changes in the fashion industry. However, when it is time to open up the wallet and pay, the less expensive alternative wins in most cases. When discussing this gap with the respondents, it is argued that it has to be decreased. Majer, Kiriazidou and Kryger (2016) mean that better communication and sharing of knowledge would be one step closer to a decreased gap. Majer (2016), explain that to reach as many people as possible, the information has to be provided already in school in order to make consumers conscious from the beginning. The reason for the gap, is because of the obsession of constantly have the latest trends. In today’s society, it has become important to wear new clothes for different occasions and the fast fashion companies can offer this because of the fast production (Majer, Kiriazidou, Kryger, 2016).
5.4 International competition
To succeed within the hard competition on international markets, brands have to focus more on just being a brand (Keller, 2009). According to Kiriazidou (2016) Elvine’s competitors can be everything from budget brands to brands who sells similar products to a higher price. Therefore, brands are nowadays more forced to expand to international markets because of hard competition and saturated domestic markets (Bramati et al., 2015). However, with new developed technology, the transfer of information and knowledge has become easier. The availability of communication has also reached a higher level (Ghauri & Cateora, 2005). Both Boomerang and Elvine have good relations to their suppliers, which can be connected to Ghauri and Cateora (2005) theory. With high technology, the companies are provided with the opportunity to email each other instead of calling. Internet communication is more convenient since companies do not have to take time differences under consideration. Furthermore, the technology has provided the possibility to sell clothes on different websites. Boomerang and Elvine have online shops and they also sell their clothes through distributors as well as SixtyDays. This contributes with the opportunity to compete on international markets. Patterns that can be identified are that they are established in neighboring countries and have then expand further to different countries in the southern Europe and other continents.

By analyzing Elvine, Boomerang and SixtyDays concepts, different competitive advantages can be examined. Boomerang focus mainly on the Boomerang effect, which is an attractive and unique approach. They are also selling recycled clothes in their vintage stores. Elvine put more focus on their jackets with high quality and reduced chemicals. Their design is invented to suit the city lifestyle. SixtyDays design is more of a combination from Scandinavia and the southern Europe. Okonkwo (2007) describes the importance of having its own history and special design. By investigating the three companies, it shows that they have their own history and specialized designs, which gives them stronger positioning on the domestic and international markets. They have created their own identity, which will be connected to Keller’s (2009) statement. The author states the importance of creating their own brand identity to separate them from their competitors.
In the international competition the respondents agree that Sweden is in the frontline when it comes to sustainable thinking. All three companies argue that high quality clothes and sustainably work is the only right in the future. Recycling clothes will be one of the main aspects to take under consideration in the production process and therefore the choice of material will be even more important. By relate this to Hauge et al. (2009) a pattern can be analyzed and similarities can be found between the author's statement and the respondents valuation. By produce high quality products the company reaches a higher level to succeed on international markets.

The future vision for Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays shows a clear pattern that they are striving in the same sustainable directions to set more competitiveness in international markets. However, they are on different levels now. The main reason is that they have been established on the market for different time of years. SixtyDays will put more focus on their green communication and their sustainable thinking. Kiriazidou (2016) mean that Elvine’s vision is to become a circular economy and to communicate more with their customers. Boomerang will continue working with sustainability to reach a high level but also inform consumers to be more aware of the problems and the importance of acting green.
6. Conclusion

In the following chapter, the thesis research questions will be answered followed by theoretical and practical implications, which the thesis have resulted in. Furthermore, the chapter will be concluded by limitations and future suggestions for further studies.

6.1 Answering the research questions

In today’s fast growing fashion market, it is crucial for companies to expand to international markets in order to increase sales. Sustainability is a factor that has increased and more fashion companies have brought it into their business strategies. Since the fashion industry is one of the world’s most polluting industries, the companies have today understood the importance of sustainable production. To be able to compete on international markets in the future, sustainable work is an important factor in order to not break down the environment even more. The challenge is now to make the consumers understand this by providing them with information and knowledge. There is no doubt that consumers are aware of the problem, because of the attention media have put into the problem. To get a deeper understanding in how fashion companies are dealing with sustainability, this thesis has been based upon two questions. Answers were found after analyzing the empirical findings through the theoretical framework. The questions that further down will be answered are: (1) How do Swedish luxury fashion brands work with sustainability in product development to be competitive on international markets? (2) How do Swedish luxury fashion brands use green communication to be competitive on international markets?

(1) How do Swedish luxury fashion brands work with sustainability in product development to be competitive on international markets?

From the analysis, it is possible to understand that Swedish luxury brands have realized the importance of sustainable fashion. The respondents all claims that Sweden is in the forefront compared to other countries and have come further in the development. The literature review demonstrates that there is no doubt that sustainable fashion will be dominating the fashion industry in the future
internationally. Since implementing sustainability into the business strategies requires times and resources, it is important to start today in order to be able to compete on the international market in the future. It is important to understand that it is not possible to do everything right at one time, but to take it stepwise to be able to put 100% focus on each part.

We can notice a high level of knowledge within Swedish luxury fashion companies and the vision to develop into an even greener firm is clear. What seems to be the most important factor within sustainable fashion is the effect on the environment and the constant developing of solutions to decrease the negative effect. High quality of the garments is one main factor; since the clothes then will stay in good shape for a longer time and the consumer do not have to waste the garment. From our empirical findings, it is demonstrated that by producing one specific collection of sustainable garments, it is not possible to reach a high amount of consumers. Therefore, it is concluded that the solution is to focus on the whole assortment, with a start on the main garments, in order to reach as many consumers as possible.

Recycling is also an aspect that Swedish luxury fashion brands have taken under consideration, though on different levels. Our empirical findings prove that by receiving old clothes from consumers, which later on be sold once again or be broken down and reproduced into new garments, provide the understanding of the phenomena recycling. Although, we can notice that they all strive to work for a sustainable products, since it is argued that a fashion company will not be able to survive the international market without green product development.

(2) How do Swedish luxury fashion brands use green communication to be competitive on international markets?

What we can conclude from the literature review is that green communication is an important factor which has to be implemented in the business strategy properly. From the empirical findings, it demonstrates that to publish information on the company’s webpage is a strategy to consumers in order to be international competitive. It can be concluded that an understanding in how to educate the consumers is important. Information regarding why sustainable fashion is more expensive, the importance of high quality clothes and the effects the fashion industry
has on the environment has to be provided correctly. Furthermore, it is also proven that to be honest with the consumers about the aspects that the company could improve, is an important factor. This will create trust between the companies and the consumers and knowledge will be spread.

The empirical findings provide an understanding of the reason for the gap between consumers valuation and acting. It depends mainly on the desire to have the latest trends and an upgraded wardrobe. By decreasing this gap, the thesis findings demonstrate that communication is a crucial factor. By educating the consumers and provide them with knowledge about how the fast fashion is manufactured might make the consumers rethink and understand the importance of sustainable clothes. To be able to do this, it is important that all the employees are educated within the subject in order to provide the consumers with relevant a convincing answer. However, with no green communication, the goal to reach a sustainable fashion industry would be hard.

6.2 Theoretical implications
The fashion industry is growing rapidly. Former researches have mainly focused on the fast fashion industry’s effect on the environment. The thesis aim was therefore to investigate the topic from a perspective of Swedish luxury brands and filling the scientific research gap. It was conducted from a relative non-existing research within Swedish luxury fashion brands. The findings were correlated to the literature review regarding previous investigations about sustainable work in the fashion industry. The thesis has therefore contributed with new knowledge within Swedish luxury fashion brands strategies in product development and green communication.

The research has increased the consciousness about how successful Swedish luxury fashion brands are using green strategies in order to become even more successful in international markets. The study can also bring attentions to the consumers, who today are not aware of the environmental problem that the fashion industry causes. It can encourage consumers to purchase sustainable garments and thereby decrease the gap between consumer’s attitude and acting. Furthermore, the thesis can provide other companies with new ideas within sustainable strategies in product development
and green communication. It will also contribute with inspiration to the thesis respondents, Boomerang, Elvine and SixtyDays.

6.3 Practical implications and recommendations
The understanding from the thesis is that sustainability is a subject that has to be taken seriously and fashion companies need to act now. The three respondents that have provided this thesis with information gave the impression that they have understood the meaning of sustainability. However, it is a long process for a fashion company to become 100% sustainable. What have to be understood is that small steps in the right direction is better than nothing and if everyone realize this, the future for the fashion industry will become greener. It is important that Swedish luxury fashion companies take opportunities to learn about the subject and collect knowledge in order to avoid misunderstandings and skepticism from consumers. For the future, it will not be an option to be green; it will be a matter of course, which is why the fashion companies will be forced to implement sustainability into their strategies in order to survive on the markets.

Product development into higher quality garments is a factor that the three companies seem to have under control. The recommendation is to continue to develop the products stepwise in order to feel confident with doing it 100% right. It is important that the products do not become less attractive just because they are sustainable, but retains the same style. Furthermore, a recommendation is to involve the consumers in the sustainable process. Green communication is an important factor, but is has to be a two-way communication in order to receive the customers opinions and thoughts. In today’s society, social media is a usable tool to reach out to consumers. Therefore, the fashion companies should put effort in their social channels to be able to get the consumers attention in a simple and modern way. It is easier to attract even the younger generation by being active on social media and thereby make them aware of the company’s sustainable work and ideas.

Furthermore, to work with sustainability on an international level, good relationships and cooperation’s between the companies will be required. The recommendation is thereby to put effort in creating good relationships with suppliers and co-partners.
The result will then be that the company can feel safe and be able to trust that their requirements in the production will be fulfilled the best possible way. Cooperation’s between the companies will also be required. Sustainability is such a large and broad subject which makes it difficult to develop successful strategies alone.

6.4 Limitations
The thesis has identified a few problems, which had a certain limitation of the progress. These limitations had influences of the outcome of our findings. Moreover, it affects the quality and ability to do a deeper and more extended analyze. One of the main limitations was to get in contact with respondents. Several companies were contacted but with negative results. The subject is sensitive and therefore we believe companies pulled back to answer our questions. Therefore, we sent the questions to the respondents in beforehand to let them prepare. Because of technical difficulties, one of the interviews was held by telephone instead of Skype. The outcome of this was that we could not identify the respondent’s body language and expressions.

Another identified limitation, is regarding the three companies involved in this multi-case study. They are working differently with sustainability and have been established on the market for various times of years. This results in differences in their turnover and how far they have come in the progress of more sustainably strategies. By identifying companies that are more similar to each other and have the same market experience, would have given a more generalized perspective on the attitude towards sustainable work. Another aspect of limitation is that the thesis is only analyzing sustainability from a luxury brand’s perspective, which also called slow fashion. By also investigate from the fast fashion industry perspective, comparison could have made between these two different approaches regarding the sustainable work.

6.5 Future research
Regarding the fashion industry there a several amount of researches. However, research within luxury fashion on international markets is not that distinctive. During the thesis, relevant discussions have been made on topics that can reduce the scientific research gap.
1. Further studies can be made from the consumer’s perspective regarding sustainability. Therefore, to get a more clear understanding over the consumer’s decision-making process when it comes to purchase sustainably clothes. The research could contribute in how the gap between their approach and value is reduced.

2. Another study to investigate is to get the ability to visit the companies manufacturers to get their own experience. The working conditions could be analyzed from a closer perspective. We believe this could result in a better understanding how companies work with their CSR policies in foreign countries. Furthermore, to investigate cultural differences and moral aspects in achieve higher levels well-being.
References

Interview participants
1. Majer, Dennis, Sourcing/production director/head of men’s & Sandell, Sofia, CSR coordinator at Boomerang, Skype interview, 2016-04-26
2. Kiriazidou, Malin, Market manager at Elvine, telephone interview, 2016-05-04
3. Kryger, Ann-Marie, Production manager at SixtyDays, Skype interview, 2016-05-08

Books, articles & online sources


Appendices

Appendix A Interview guide

Background information

1. Explain the company’s position on the market.
2. Explain your position in the company. Is there a specific CSR-role in the company?

Sustainability

3. What is sustainable fashion for you and why do you find it important?
4. Within sustainable product development, do you focus on one specific collection or the whole assortment?
5. How big parts of the assortment consist of sustainable garments and products?
6. Which factor is the most important one within sustainability that you put the most focus on?
7. What obstacles have you faced when investing in sustainable methods?

CSR

8. Do you find CSR important to be competitive on international markets, why?
9. What advantages do you have compared to your competitors within CSR?

Luxury branding

10. How do you develop products in a sustainable direction to be competitive on international markets?
11. How do you communicate with your customers in a green way?
12. Today it exist a gap between consumers valuation and acting within sustainable fashion, what do you think is the reason for this gap?
13. What are you doing to decrease the gap?
International competition in the future

14. What is the future vision for sustainable fashion?
15. What are your plans and visions within sustainable fashion?

Other

16. Would you like to add something that we have missed?
17. Could we contact you by email/telephone for complementary questions?
Appendix B Tables and figures

Figure 1.0 *Seven formations of sustainable fashion* (greenstrategy.se, 2014)

Figure 2.0 *Triple Bottom Line* (ridg.com, 2016)

Figure 3.0 *Recycling* (cleanshelby.org, 2016)

Figure 4.0 *Conceptual framework* (own figure, 2016)

Table 1.0 *Criterion of Swedish luxury fashion brands* (own table, 2016)

Table 2.0 *Operationalization* (own table, 2016)