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FRAMING A SUSTAINABILITY POSITION

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to gather an answer to the question of how companies frame their sustainability position in the fashion industry through their websites. This question originates in the unclarity in how companies use websites to clarify their position on sustainability through both visuals and text. This research is performed through a qualitative content analysis focusing on visuals and text used. The companies stem from a public database with companies originating from the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. The results are gathered through coding web pages of 144 companies with Atlas.ti. The results show that companies can use visuals and text differently as they differ in their approach to sustainability. The results also show that companies can use different frames with different chosen positions. This study concludes that companies identify different sustainability positions and use different ways of communication to clarify these positions. Three different positions are found with the same number of dominant frames. The managerial implications from this study are that managers should include visuals in their framing and that they must ensure transparency in the framing of their position. A limitation is the lack of Swedish companies and missing most of the big companies from each country.

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Index

1. Introduction	4
2. Theoretical background.....	9
2.1 Sustainability.....	9
2.2 Positioning.....	11
2.3 Framing	14
2.4 Positioning and sustainability	16
2.5 Framing and sustainability	17
2.6 Framing and positioning.....	19
2.7 Positioning, framing, and sustainability	22
2.8 Conceptual model.....	23
3. Methodology.....	25
3.1 Methods	25
3.2 Sources and measures	27
3.3 Data analysis procedure.....	29
4. Findings.....	32
4.1 What do organizations understand by sustainability?	32
4.2 How do organizations position themselves around sustainability?.....	33
4.3 How do organizations use framing?	36
5. Discussion	41
5.1.1 What do organizations understand by sustainability?	41
5.1.2 How do organizations position themselves around sustainability?	43
5.1.3 How do organizations use framing?.....	43
5.2 Theoretical implications.....	44
5.3 Practical and managerial implications	48
5.3 Limitations and research ethics	51
5.4 Further recommendations	53
5.5 Reflection.....	54
6. Conclusion.....	56

7. References	57
8. Appendix:	71
Appendix 1: Main characteristics sample	71
Appendix 2: Example Co-Occurrence option	72
Appendix 3: Overview Burberry webpage and its codes in Atlas.ti	73
Appendix 4: Screenshot of part of the researchers' shared document.....	74
Appendix 5.1: The codebook pt.1	75
Appendix 5.2: The codebook pt.2	76
Appendix 5.3: The codebook pt.3	77
Appendix 5.4: The codebook pt.4	78
Appendix 5.5: The codebook pt.5	79
Appendix 6: Code division per concept.....	80
Appendix 7: The three types of sustainability in a text by Environ-Design	81
Appendix 8: Example connecting sustainability with company benefits by Serolo	82
Appendix 9: Example by Barbour.....	83
Appendix 10: Example external motivation by I Just Saw It	84
Appendix 11: Example external reference by Burberry	85
Appendix 12: Example inherent reasoning instead of economic references if sustainability is core by Ayten Gassion + Clothing used in visuals.....	86
Appendix 13: Example future and past focus by O'Neills and	87
Appendix 14: Example three companies positioning themselves on sustainability	88
Appendix 15: Example buzzwords usage if sustainability is core by Afriek	90
Appendix 16: Example short text size by Burberry	91
Appendix 17: Example relation visuals with text by Environ-Design	92
Appendix 18: Example visuals supporting the text by Janna Drakeed	93
Appendix 19: Example using visuals of resources by Björn Bjorg.....	94
Appendix 20: Example usage white visuals by Eton	95
Appendix 21: Overview dynamics between framing, sustainability, and positioning	96

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1. Introduction

Globalization continues to deem a powerful force that shapes human behaviour and understanding in many ways. In the last decades, the global consumer culture has grown as a vital force in the marketplace (Steenkamp, 2019). Globalization has led to increased income inequality in advanced industrial societies (Alderson & Nielsen, 2002). It also made it possible for local markets to start competing with each other on an international scale (Coffee Jr, 2002). Additionally, sustainability has grown a lot in importance for society (EnviroNics International, 1999). Both researchers and practitioners are devoting increased attention to the topic as they face the challenge of achieving a balance between environmental and business needs (Clark & Clegg, 2000). It has become a valuable tool for companies to explore ways to reduce costs, manage risks, create new products, and drive fundamental internal cultural and structural changes (Azapagic, 2003). Sustainability is a way to maintain the practice of producing goods for as long as possible (Nidumolu, Prahalad & Rangaswami, 2009). Because sustainability has gathered attention, institutions have begun incorporating it in their rules and regulations (Reinecke, Manning & Von Hagen, 2012). The institutions also impose these environmental rules and regulations on organizations (Pache & Santos, 2010). Examples of these rules and regulations are ISO regulations used across multiple industries and the EU's Emissions Trading System, limiting the emissions produced (Laing, Sato, Grubb & Comberti, 2013).

Pressure on these issues is high in industries where the environmental impact and the public visibility is high (Seuring, Sarkis, Müller & Rao, 2008). These influences lead to more rules and regulations, which incur extra costs (Teeter & Sandberg, 2017). However, it is challenging to incur sustainability when competition is primarily based on price (Guo, Choi & Shen, 2020). This price-based competition makes shifting towards sustainable production difficult. In addition, many firms' value chain activities, such as fabricating their garments, are in low-income countries where practices are largely not sustainable and working conditions poor (Hall, 2021). Continuing the production in the way the companies are doing it now is clashing with the rules and regulations and the sustainability demands of the customers (Xiao, Wilhelm, van der Vaart & Van Donk, 2019). These issues collectively increase the sustainability pressures through the customer expectations on the companies, backed up by the environmental rules and regulations.

The fashion industry is also facing these sustainability pressures. The production processes, particularly the dyeing phases, drying and finishing, make intensive use of natural resources

and generate a high environmental impact (De Brito, Carbone & Blanquart, 2008). Companies are held responsible for ecological and social problems caused by themselves directly and their suppliers (Koplin, 2005). The social and industrial developments show that sustainability is becoming an unquestionable requirement for the fashion industry (Environics International, 1999). Companies try to comply with these pressures by displaying that they proactively strive for sustainable products and production (Post & Altma, 1994). They do this by adhering to ISO regulations that are connected to the environment. This compliance is communicated through companies' reports (Busco, Frigo, Giovannoni, & Maraghini, 2012). Such a report can provide an overview about the compliance with the ecological, economic, and social measures. Examples of such measures are the water wastage in the production, the diversity in the employee base, and the shareholder rights. However, companies' websites share these messages also (Solér, Baeza & Svärd, 2015).

The focus of this study is on these online messages published. Meyerson and Scully (1995) already showed that organizations consider sustainability when producing messages aimed at their audience. Firms are likely to behave responsibly if they experience pressure from regulators (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) show that companies, both passive and proactive, "make" their interpretations about sustainability. These interpretations are seen as the company's judgements about sustainability. These self-made interpretations are related to the previously mentioned pressures as companies strive to reach acceptance in this process with their customers (Busco et al., 2012). This notion gives insights into how companies differ in their interpretations and communicate sustainability differently (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018).

Nonetheless, there remains a gap in how companies frame a position on sustainability. This gap is critical to research since companies need to understand how to communicate their judgement on these environmental needs. This importance stems from the management and business field that recognizes that companies are being exposed to these sustainability pressures (Kreps & Monin, 2011). Most work in this field identifies that framing sustainability in reports is possible (Beck, Dumay & Frost, 2017) and that framing can be improved by clarifying the position of a company (Weder, König & Voci, 2019). This framing is the technique that a company uses to communicate about certain issues (Wang, 2017). Furthermore, Garcia and Greenwood (2015) showed that framing messages about a company's position on sustainability can be supported by using visuals in their reports. Nevertheless, studies that focus on the connection between framing and a sustainability

position is lacking. Positioning is the company's judgement about the issues that a company faces (Wang, 2017). This research will explore the relationships between sustainability, positioning, and framing by looking into this gap. The main research question is: How do organizations in the fashion industry frame their sustainability position? This thesis will answer the main question based on the following sub-questions: What do organizations understand by sustainability? How do organizations position themselves on sustainability? And how do organizations use framing?

These shortcomings in the literature limit the theoretical and practical understanding of management as websites are nowadays a regular mode of communication (Du & Vieira, 2012). These weaknesses limit the practical understanding as this gap shows that knowledge is missing about how to make good messages about a company's sustainability position. This research can enhance this communication through insights into how companies use visuals and text to frame a sustainability position. Furthermore, companies can grow their quality of communication and positioning by answering this knowledge gap. Following this gap, a connection needs to be made between sustainability, positioning, and framing. Explanation about these concepts is following. Lastly, this research also provides insights into how this position is framed in the Netherlands, UK, and Sweden. Most research focuses on a company, industry or a specific country (Gwin & Gwin, 2003; Kreps & Monin, 2011). This thesis will provide insights into the industry's overall approach by including multiple countries from the same industry.

Sustainability in the economic field stems from the principles of the Brundtland Commission: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 256). This accepted definition identifies its three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Vos, 2007). These three pillars of sustainability are closely related, and their impacts interconnected (Scaltegger & Synnestvedt, 2002; Townsend, 2008). Their interconnectedness is due to the threat of climate change resulting from human activity (IPCC, 2007). This research will use sustainability as a sensitized concept since it is unclear how companies use sustainability. Positioning is a concept originating from the marketing field (Zhao, Fisher, Lounsbury & Miller, 2017).

The benefit of positioning strategies is that it helps differentiate a brand from competitors (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986, p. 139). For this research, positioning is defined as "the place a brand tries to occupy in the mind of its target audience concerning sustainability". Through this definition, more focus is on sustainability.

In economics, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) showed that framing could affect the outcome of choice problems so that some of the classic axioms of rational choice become invalid. Framing is using a “schemata of interpretation” on which customers rely “to locate, perceive, identify, and label events in their own terms” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). For this research, framing is defined as “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular position around the sustainability issues”. This definition clarifies how sustainability is included in a company’s message to reach a position on sustainability.

Sustainability is an essential factor for positioning (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) showed that companies “make” their interpretation of sustainability. In the business field, the same authors showed how different organizations design and distribute messages with stakeholders to accomplish effective positioning on sustainability. In their work, positioning is taking a position around a subject that is substantiated through messages linked with the right discursive resources and producing the right strategic messages (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018). Adding to this, Hahn, Figge, Aragon-Correa, and Sharma (2017) explained that, alongside the dominant resource-based and institutional view of sustainable organizing practices, differences exist in the company’s perception of sustainability. The notion about the difference in perceptions is helpful for this research and will be researched.

Organizations can communicate sustainability in multiple ways. This dissemination of sustainability can vary among companies based in different cultures (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015; Onkila, Joensuu & Koskela, 2014).). This means that companies frame sustainability differently based on the cultures faced (Creed, Langstraat, & Scully (2002). Furthermore, organizational size could be influencing the way a company states its messages. Schreck and Raithel (2018) show that organizational size matters, while Gallo and Christensen (2011) oppose this. Nielsen (2001) showed that most consumers worldwide (83%) consider it crucial for companies to consider the environment. These results indicate that an effective framing of sustainability is an essential activity for organizations. Even though customer perceptions can be affected by news communicators (Kim & Kim, 2014), this research focuses on the messages created on companies’ websites. This choice is supported by the literature that shows that companies can frame sustainability in both words and photographs (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015; Höllerer, Jancsary & Grafström, 2018).

The scientific relevance is that this research can give more insights into how companies frame their positions on sustainability through the previously mentioned knowledge gap. This

research must present perspicacity about sustainability, positioning, framing, and their combination to deliver these insights. This research helps the management field become aware that framing and positioning of sustainability can differ across contexts and organizational size. Additionally, based on this research, the results can expand the impact of the company size in the literature. The social relevance is that managers can be more confident about communicating their sustainability actions on their websites. Managers are better aware of how to position themselves on sustainability through framing. Based on this knowledge, managers can improve the communication on their website. Managers can achieve this improvement since the link between the message and the company's position on sustainability is better communicated. Furthermore, a new reason can be identified why organizations show lacking performance. As a company is unclearly framing and positioning, this can have an impact on its performance. The implications for business practices in implementation are that organizations become better at producing clear messages about sustainability. Due to this clear communication, the managers can improve the organizational performance and competitive position. This work contributes to understanding the communicative skills required to confront complex institutional and organizational pressures.

This research first discusses the theoretical background to answer the main and sub-questions. To answer the questions, this research will examine the content analysis used that focuses on both words and visuals used on the company's website. This discussion is done in the methodology chapter. Through the codebook, the results are presented in the chapter after that. Based on these findings, this thesis can deliver insights to answer the sub-questions and the main question. Hereafter, the discussion will give an in-depth exploration of the results, which explains the findings. After that, the limitations, propositions for further research, recommendations, and self-reflection are presented. Finally, a conclusion is given to sum the findings.

2. Theoretical background

It is essential to look into sustainability, positioning, and framing to provide insights into the gap about how a company can frame its messages to communicate its position around sustainability. Reaching this insight is vital for answering the research question. This chapter will discuss the theories related to these concepts. This chapter starts with providing the relevant views/perspectives about the identified problem. Then, this research will deliver insights into the key concepts, assumptions and conditions. Hereafter a conceptual model will be generated that reflects the problem.

2.1 Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad and evolving construct. Economists emphasize the actions that 1) at minimum do not harm people or the planet and at best create value for stakeholders and 2) focus on improving environmental, social, and governance performance in the areas in which the company or brand has a material environmental or social impact (Whelan & Fink, 2016). Sustainability identifies as a part of a bigger picture in corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR determines that a company is not embedded only in a market where it competes against others but is also a part of a social context (Doh & Guay, 2006). Based on CSR, the company should consider the needs and values of this social context (Doh & Guay, 2006). Padin and Svensson (2013) argue that the contemporary view of sustainability has not acknowledged that business efforts are dynamic rather than lethargic and that business sustainability is open and iterative.

One dominant viewpoint from the economic discipline stems from the Brundtland Commission: “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 256). This definition is used in plentiful organizational papers (de Lange, Busch & Delgado-Ceballos, 2012; Hahn & Aragón-Correa, 2015). This definition identifies its three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Vos, 2007; Biggemann, Williams & Kro, 2014; Elkington, 1997). Figure 1 shows the interdependence between these three pillars. First, economic sustainability is core to financial success—in the long run, the company cannot survive if costs exceed profits. Second, social sustainability is linked to companies’ social context and relates to poverty and income inequality (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Third, environmental sustainability considers the impact of business on the quality of natural resources, the environment, waste management, and improved pollution and emissions management (Epstein & Roy, 2003; Townsend, 2008). Finally, the threat of climate change resulting from

human activity (IPCC, 2007) shows that the three pillars of sustainability are closely related and interconnected (Scaltegger & Synnestvedt, 2002; Townsend, 2008).

In this study, it remains the question of how companies use sustainability. Therefore, it is a sensitizing concept in this work. Nevertheless, the definitions that are used have consensus in the economic field. Furthermore, this study analyzes companies that make it logical to use the dominant illustrations in the financial area. Therefore, this thesis will apply the previously mentioned definition from the Brundtland Report (1987) and the triple bottom line (see figure 1). Including both the Brundtland definition and the concept, the focus remains on the company's current actions that influence the future and the recognition that sustainability exists in multiple ways. Furthermore, by including both, this work can identify whether a company uses sustainability in their short or long-term focus and what type of sustainability is emphasized.

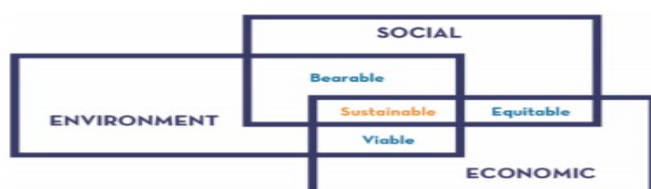


Figure 1: The triple bottom line for sustainability (Clune & Zehnder, 2018)

Some argue (Drews & van den Bergh, 2017) that one of the deeper reasons behind unsustainability may be the capitalist economic model. However, this economic model is not subject to explicit critical consideration. Although internalizing sustainability is not yet a mandatory requirement for companies, the internal and external pressures force companies to look at these issues. Pressure has come from three general sources: internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, and institutional forces (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Waddock, Bodwell, & Graves, 2002).

Internally, pressure from investors, employees, and customers has pushed sustainability up the companies agenda. A condition for sustainability issues to be incorporated is if these issues gain much attention among the customer base (Doh & Guay, 2006). Furthermore, according to the Millenium Poll, citizens in 13 of 23 researched countries think there should be more focus on social and environmental goals than economic ones (Environics International, 1999). This same poll shows that the customers expect the company to demonstrate their commitment to society's values and their contribution to society's social, environmental, and economic goals through actions (Environics International, 1999). Leisinger (2005) shows that

citizens in twenty countries think about this to be the vital responsibility of companies. According to this research, 73% found protecting the environment to be a crucial responsibility. This number shows the importance of sustainability for firms nowadays. Externally, legislation, regulations, and voluntary codes of practice, such as the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC; UN, 2007), have added pressure for corporations to act sustainably. Institutional forces in the shape of norms and expectations have required corporations to acknowledge the importance of sustainability (WBCSD, 2000). Companies can address sustainability through voluntary actions and communication in both words and visuals used in reports and websites (Höllerer et al., 2018).

On the other hand, few would disagree that social and environmental problems require attention—but the question remains whether sustainability is a company's responsibility (Bansal, 2005). Although there is an argument of whether companies should be held accountable for sustainability issues, implementing it into their strategy gives several benefits. It signals to stakeholders that a company is committed to social and environmental goals, and this has been linked to positive corporate performance (Orlitsky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003); competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006); customer loyalty (Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000); enhanced image and goodwill (Peterson, 2004); legitimacy (Suchman, 1995); entrance into new markets, and long-term economic returns (Droppert & Bennett, 2015). However, investing in sustainability can also incur increased costs (Jaffe, Peterson, Portney, & Stavins, 1995) since companies should ensure that their expenditures align with shareholders' interests.

2.2 Positioning

According to Wang (2007), positioning is when a company has judgements on a specific social cause. The author adds that this position taken can differ based on the amount of commitment to it. The position a company chooses to fulfil is directly influencing itself (Kim, Croidieu & Lippmann, 2016). Miller and Brannon (2021) showed how the positioning of a brand could also impact customers who are deciding on which product to purchase. Positioning originated in the marketing field (Zhao et al., 2017). It is defined as the place a brand occupies in the mind of its target audience (Maggard, 1976; Sarkar, Sarkar & Yadav, 2019;). In their seminal work, Ries and Trout (1986, p. 2) conclude: "Positioning starts with the product, a piece of merchandise, a service, a company, an institution, or even a person.". In other work, Ries and Trout (1986, p. 25) define positioning as an "organized system for finding a window in the mind.". Park et al. (1986) echo that positioning strategies are generally implemented to differentiate the brand from competitors. An example of such a

“place” is shown in the work of Gwin & Gwin (2003). Here they show why a specific car brand is more popular than others. The authors argue: “Why is the Taurus so popular? Ford markets the Taurus as “America’s smart family car” on its website” (p.39). This example shows that how a company positions its product on their website directly influences its popularity.

The management field recognizes that positioning activities must be carefully planned and reconciled with other marketing strategies and business activities (Frankwick & Sulo, 2015). A firm’s unique positioning is further supported by an internal alignment among critical components of strategy and structure as well as an external alignment among crucial elements of the environment and internal structure, generating an activity system that is more robust and resists piecemeal imitation (Miller, 1996; Kim et al., 2016). A critical notion Wall and Berry (2007) made in their research was “In choosing and using restaurant services, customers frequently behave like detectives as they search for information and organize their perceptions into a set of feelings” (p.60). This notion shows how external influences can determine one’s position about a specific characteristic of a company. Fuchs and Diamantopoulos introduce an alternative perspective on positioning (2010). They explain that positioning is central to consumers’ perceptions and choices (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010). The same authors argue that positioning is created by the customer and not by the companies (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010).

These notions that show the importance of positioning can be backed up by the legitimacy theory. This tool takes the stakeholders’ perceptions into account to attain organizational legitimacy. This ‘management of perceptions’ is the occupied position that a company has taken and the actions to maintain/enhance it (Simms & Trott, 2006; Burlea & Popa, 2013). Fuchs and Diamantopoulos showed how different positioning strategies exist (2010). Consequently, legitimacy offers an organization the right to perform its activities in consensus with stakeholders’ interests and access resources (Suchman, 1995; Kim et al., 2016; Lefsrud, Graves & Phillips, 2020). These actions reinforce the company’s position (Simms & Trott, 2006). This theory is helpful since it can help understand why organizations choose a legitimate place around sustainability issues. The choice for this theory is strengthened by previous research that already identified an existing link between legitimacy and brand position (Czinkota, Kaufmann & Basile, 2014; Kim et al., 2016). Based upon this research, the legitimacy theory can help identify how stakeholders’ perceptions are used to take a specific position on sustainability.

In this research, positioning is defined as “the place a company tries to occupy based on its judgements that it has on sustainability”. This definition is chosen because it focuses more on sustainability. The position this research tries to identify is not a standard definition concerning products offering or luxury perceptions. By limiting the meaning, only the perspectives of the customers on sustainability are considered. This limitation helps the research focus on the positioning efforts of the companies concerning their customer base. Furthermore, the definitions stemming from the marketing field are justified as the company’s websites are analyzed. The messages produced on such platforms are primarily directed at customers and created by the marketing department of a company (Rahimnia & Hassanzadeh, 2013). This fact makes a definition from the marketing field applicable to this research.

For the positioning, a company needs to understand what the social cause is about and which position they want to take in this (Miller & Brannon, 2021). Positioning to be effective, it must identify and attempt to “own” a marketing niche (Ries & Trout, 1986). Ries and Trout show that such a niche is captured through pricing, promotions, competition, and communication (1986). The goal is to create a unique impression in the customer’s mind to associate something specific and desirable with the company distinct from others (Dowling, 1993; Zaltman, 2003). Hassan and Craft (2005) claim that strategic effectiveness does not stop at selecting desirable market segments but includes the need to position brands effectively relative to the target market. Therefore, market orientation requires careful examination of complex decisions related to strategic positioning in conjunction with segmentation. Another reason why positioning is important for companies is that it tries to establish a relationship based on shared or aspired values, belief systems, and business practices (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). This finding shows that when a company understands the social cause its concerned about and its customer base, its communication can become more effective, which helps to gain a stronger position in the customer’s mind and competitive advantage (Wang, 2007; McDermott & O’dell, 2001; Hooley, Greenley, Fahy & Cadogan, 2001).

A company can experience the consequences internally and externally (Blankson, Cowan, Crawford, Kalafatis, Singh & Coffie, 2013). Aguinis & Glavas (2012) identified that working for a company that is positioned as socially responsible can raise levels of organizational identification, engagement, retention, sense of belonging, and commitment among employees (2012). Consensus exists that positioning is a crucial tool impacting the companies’ performances (Bronnenberg & Wathieu, 1996; Kim, Song & Koo, 2008). Externally,

positioning generates more favourable attitudes and a higher willingness to buy (da Luz, Mantovani & Nepomuceno, 2020; Blankson et al., 2013). Effective positioning directly influences companies' growth and profit margins (Neirotti, Raguseo & Paolucci, 2016). In the same vein, Day (1990) claims that market orientation creates the way for a strong, inimitable competitive positioning advantage.

2.3 Framing

In economics, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) have shown that framing can affect the choices one makes so much that some of the classic axioms of rational choice are not true. This finding led to the development of the prospect theory. This theory shows that the framing of problems adopted by decision-makers results in part from extrinsic manipulation of the decision options offered and from forces intrinsic to decision-makers, e.g., their norms (Levy, 1992). Framing can be defined as “schemata of interpretation” on which rely to “locate, perceive, identify, and label events in their own terms” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Framing differs from mental modelling, as it resides in individuals' perceptions and reflects a larger social and cultural context (Rein & Schön, 1996; Kreps & Monin, 2011). Wang (2007) showed that it generally refers to the relationship between context and information when examining framing as it determines its meaning.

To persuade people to mobilize for a cause, organizations explain certain aspects and encourage particular reactions (Wright, 2013). Howard-Grenville & Hoffman (2003) defined framing as “the process of constructing or using frames to legitimate and propel action within an organization” (p.72). Kreps and Monin (2011, p. 103) identified that framing could refer to two different things: “On a public level, it can refer to the way an individual communicates about the issue when discussing it with others, and on a more private level, it can refer to the way an individual personally understands what is at stake in a given decision.”. Translating this definition to this research, framing can help organizations express themselves about sustainability. They are aware of the harmful consequences if they neglect such problems. An exciting notion by Kaplan (2008) is that framing suggests that frames are not only instrumental tools for the ex-post justification of actions taken through power but rather an ex-ante part of the political process that produces decisions. This notion shows that organizations use framing to justify both their actions and decisions related to sustainability.

Entman (1993) provides the definition: “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation

for the item described” (p. 52). This definition fits neatly with this research. The communication forms are researched to understand how the perceived reality is made more salient in communicating text or visualizing websites to promote a particular position around sustainability. To make the definition from Entman (1993, p. 52) fit this research framing will be defined as “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text with visuals, in such a way as to promote a particular position around the sustainability issues”. This definition may reveal an overlap with the positioning description in this research. Nevertheless, positioning focuses on the judgements and its position on sustainability, while framing is considered the meaning-making of this judgment. This is also backed up by Wang (2007). The institutional theory can be used with the chosen definition as this theory identifies which aspects of the perceived reality companies are likely going to choose. Through this theory, it can be understood which parts are essential for stakeholders. By doing this, a company will choose aspects that they will frame to gather a specific position.

The conditions for using framing are various. Framing is a deliberate attempt to shape a customer’s idea about an issue so that they will take action (Benford & Snow, 2000). Benford & Snow (2000) also showed that the potential payoff of effective frames is a solid incentive to spend time constructing the most compelling frames possible. Howard-Grenville & Hoffman (2003) identified that if organizational members seek to inspire social initiatives, they must ensure “frame alignment” between their presentation of the social initiatives and the dominant cultural frames. Howard-Grenville & Hoffman show in the same article that no prescription will work in every situation as every company has its own unique culture. (2003, p.72). This notion defends the reasoning used in this research that companies can frame sustainability differently. Additionally, the potential for alignment between the company and framing used to motivate action on social issues has increased (Lefsrud et al., 2020). As Scott (2003, p. 880) argues, framing is central to the cultural-cognitive aspect of companies that “involves the creation of shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made”. This high social relevance explains why framing is essential to be included in organizational strategies. Through framing, a company makes its communication fit with the shared conceptions present in social reality (Lefsrud et al., 2020). This finding is valuable for this research as it provides insights into how framing gives meaning to sustainability.

Cornelissen and Werner (2014) provided in their overview that framing can have multiple consequences. It has significant implications for firms in that they stick to a set of capabilities and a course of action and blinds them to alternative options (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). This finding shows that it is both helping and hindering a company from adapting to its environment (Guedes, Paillard-Bardey & Schat, 2018; Kaplan, 2008). Grau and Folse (2007) revealed that positive message framing serves as effective message cues to produce favourable company outcomes among their market segment. This revelation overlaps with this research as it can help differentiate the way how companies construct their messages. Positive framing can increase the effectiveness of the messages (Kim & Kim, 2014). By using this technique, a company can stick to its discourse to realize the company's efforts into purposeful action (Wright, 2013). Based on this notion, it can be concluded that framing helps companies realize practical activities. Through these actions, managers can improve a company's performance (Basdeo, Smith, Grimm, Rindova, & Derrfus, 2006).

2.4 Positioning and sustainability

Scholars in the business field studying sustainability generally are concerned with how different organizations design and distribute messages with stakeholders to accomplish effective positioning around sustainability (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018). The discourse approach shows how it shapes organizational actions. Rather than one-way information transfer from practitioners to stakeholders, this approach recognizes that crucial issues are translated and transformed in conversations with a fluid set of actors (Whittle, Suhomlinova, & Mueller, 2010). This notion shows that positioning is not a one-time action but a dynamic process that can change over time.

Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) show that positioning is more than active and passive meaning-making because companies are both accorded and proactively "make" their interpretation of sustainability. This finding connects with this research as the different positions on sustainability are one of the concepts researched. Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) add that effective positioning on sustainability is based on the right discursive resources, for example, self-branding and producing the right strategic messages. Adding to this, Hahn et al. (2017) explained that, alongside the dominant resource-based and institutional view of sustainable organizing practices, differences exist in the company's perception of sustainability issues. Rodriguez, Svensson, and Eriksson (2018) also show that companies can have a different sustainability position. Rodriguez et al. (2018) show that sustainability positioning factors are mandatory or optional, long-term focus versus short-term focus, and whether sustainability

actions are structured or improvised. Including these factors in this research can help understand why companies position themselves in a particular way.

Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) proposed identifying whether other sustainability positions can exist in different nations. However, also some difficulties are identified in combining sustainability and positioning. Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) show that this combination influences political subjectivities, regulatory structures, and societal discourses. Explicitly taking political sides can escalate conflict and delegitimize companies. Moreover, emphasizing job and economic growth through sustainability helps a company justify its decisions to sceptical investors and voters (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018).

Furthermore, conditions for positioning on sustainability were mentioned previously by Rodriguez et al. (2018). These conditions help understand why and how a company positions itself. One of the conditions is whether sustainability is an option or whether it is mandatory. If sustainability is compulsory, it is a part of the common in contrast to a choice. These conditions are included to check whether the analysis can identify these patterns in the fashion industry. Another reason to position themselves on sustainability is that companies face more pressure to comply with social norms and regulatory rules (Liao, Lin & Zhang, 2018; Smink, Hekkert & Negro, 2015).

Mitra & Buzzanell (2018) showed that a consequence of sustainability positioning is political conflicts. These conflicts arise by choosing a position a business reflects its political side. By getting involved in too much strife, an organization can lose its legitimacy (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018). This finding shows that a company must be careful in creating a place around social issues. Furthermore, by creating its position around sustainability, it can expect its performances to increase (Choi & Wang, 2009; Delmas & Blass, 2010). This increase can be expected as a business fulfils the customers' needs by taking into account their social and cultural norms and values (Schein, 1996; Evans & Davis, 2005). Lastly, through positioning, a firm can expect that its customer behaviour will shift over time and demand more sustainability initiatives (White, Habib, Hardisty, 2019).

2.5 Framing and sustainability

The connection between framing and sustainability has received increased attention in the business and management field. The main difference is identified about the usage of framing. The literature separates between using frames for managers (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse & Figge, 2014; Gladwin, Kennelly & Krause, 1995) and using it on customers (Garcia & Greenwood,

2015; Höllerer et al., 2018). The literature on framing used for managers explains how different framing leads to differences in scanning and interpreting the surroundings and the different responses to sustainability issues (Hahn et al., 2014; Starkey & Crane, 2003). This stream of literature aims to clarify that by considering alternative framing, a better understanding of managerial decision-making is reached (Mazutis, Slawinski & Palazzo, 2020; Wright & Nyberg, 2017). This stream helps understand decision-making processes in organizations. Even though this stream is significant in this research, the focus is on framing used on the customers.

There is also a discussion about the effect of organizational size on sustainability efforts in the field. Schreck and Raithel (2018) show that organizational size matters, while Gallo and Christensen (2011) state that organizational size does not lead to more sustainability efforts. This research can help with further identifying whether organizational size matters as it can compare the websites of the small firms with larger ones. Furthermore, studies focused on framing sustainability primarily aim to investigate how marketing communications are communicated through organizational publications (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2014). These studies show that sustainability communication differs among multinational companies based in different cultures (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015). Furthermore, the major criticism of framing sustainability concerns the lack of stakeholder accountability (Onkila et al., 2014; Cooper & Owen, 2007). The lack of transparency and failure to communicate environmental costs are also identified problems (Raiborn, Butler & Massoud, 2011). Customers receive most of these messages through media channels and not directly from organizations (Hiatt & Carlos, 2019).

This research focuses on the messages created on companies' websites. In this way, the effectiveness of framing by companies is analyzed. This research can help identify improvements in framing sustainability that improve the messages' effectiveness. The literature's understanding supports this choice: companies communicate sustainability through words and photographs (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015; Höllerer et al., 2018). The results in this study can help companies identify framing patterns that are useful in the industry.

With the increase of companies actively advertising a green image (Leonidou, Leonidou, Palihawadana & Hultman, 2011), the repercussion of making misleading or false environmental claims are dire (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015). Nielsen (2001) found that most consumers worldwide (83%) consider it crucial for companies to take the environment into

account. These numbers show that implementing an honest and effective framing of sustainability is an essential activity. Onkila et al. (2014) discussed that previous literature identified that multiple stakeholder groups set environmental demands for companies and that differences in business responses in different business sectors exist. Because of this demand by stakeholders, companies need to know how to frame their messages. By fulfilling this demand, a company can reach legitimacy (Kim et al., 2016). This legitimacy is an important reason for companies to include sustainability in their framing (Lefsrud et al., 2020). Another condition for framing sustainability is to see the customer as recipients of these pro-environmental messages (Narula & Desore, 2016). The companies need to frame their messages as motivated by society-serving, rather than self-serving, interests, to be effective (Bolton & Mattila, 2015).

Consequences identified by using framing on sustainability are multiple. Garcia and Greenwood (2015) showed that companies achieve high standards concerning environmental and financial sustainability, quality products and services, employee welfare, and proactive involvement in the local and global community by framing sustainability effectively. Onkila et al. (2014) showed that by reaching these factors, legitimacy is achieved. Consequently, this legitimacy helps benefit the company and its shareholders (Onkila et al., 2014). Nonetheless, if these communications are perceived as a marketing ploy, this is seen as consumer scepticism (Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009). This scepticism becomes a significant obstacle to overcome, especially in framing positions (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015). On the other hand, organizations whose holistic activities are perceived to align with their environmental claims can achieve legitimacy with their stakeholders (Schmidt, Langner, Hennigs, Wiedmann, Karampournioti & Lischka, 2017). It can even help maintain market positions (Hiatt & Carlos, 2019). Finally, Kim & Kim (2014) showed that including sustainability in framing can improve the attitudes and attention of customers towards the messages of companies.

2.6 Framing and positioning

The combination of framing and positioning is well-known in the management and business field. Gordon (2015) noticed the following: “Theories of framing and positioning focus mainly on meaning-making and constructing identities, respectively, and both are used in discourse analysis to investigate communication as a social phenomenon.”. This notion shows that framing and positioning are similar and interconnected. Framing and positioning are concerned with how a company communicates their judgments on issues towards its customers (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014).

However, these concepts are not the same. While positioning is the judgement a company has, through which a customer can identify itself with the brand, framing is the technique used to communicate its specific positioning (Wang, 2007; Olsen et al., 2014). Wang (2007) showed how positioning is the judgement that one can have on social issues, while framing is the connection between context and information functioning as the meaning-making of the position. Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2007) showed an example of the positioning where a company built an identity around social responsibility efforts. In that same study, they show that this identity is created by implementing the correct framed messages. Reed, Forehand, Puntoni, and Warlop (2012) support this. They show that a position, through framing, becomes a label with which one is identified, either by choice or by endowment. Positioning is thus a technique through which a judgement is selected around some issues or subjects. Framing is the technique that is communicating this selection. Finally, Olsen et al. (2014) explain the interconnectedness of framing and positioning through an example. In this example, brand managers aiming to generate an environmentally sustainable brand identity will introduce green new products and communicate how these products are green by emphasizing green-specific attributes or claims in the framing of the message.

Nevertheless, there is a discussion about the number of claims that need to be implemented to frame effectively. Olsen et al. (2014) expect fewer green claims to be more effective in enhancing this relationship. Their explanation for this is that customers will experience information overload, impairing their processing capability. Furthermore, having fewer claims decreases the chances of confusion (Park et al., 1986). Friestad and Wright (1994) add to these claims by stating that making many claims about a specific identity will lead to customer scepticism. This scepticism decreases the effectiveness of framing a position. However, Creed et al. (2002) stated that if a company wants to promote a new message, it must be consistent and persistent with its claims to be remembered and believed by its customers. Rucker, Petty, & Briñol (2008) also support this as they show that customers that possess more excellent knowledge are more likely to purchase products.

The effectiveness of framing also depends upon the context in which it is used (Creed et al., 2002). This notion explains that using the same frame in every situation may not work. Instead, the framing needs to be adjusted towards the context in which a company will use it. Lastly, Olsen et al. (2014) added that there is no difference in using negative or positive valance in framing an identity. Nonetheless, Schneider et al. 2001 opposed this by stating that positive valance is less effective than negative valance. These authors declare that customers

are more prone to believing a frame if it helps them to prevent harmful consequences. Ganzach and Karsahi (1995) support this by showing in their results that customers are less receptive to messages that stress gains versus the messages that emphasize the losses one could incur.

There are multiple requirements for framing a position to be effective. Already previously mentioned is the dependability on the context (Creed et al., 2002). Not every frame will work in every situation. Furthermore, a company uses frames for a position to define what a given problem is and why it is essential (Creed et al., 2002). The number of claims made in a message is also of influence (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Furthermore, for framing to be effective, it needs to have a good alignment with the position. Olsen et al. (2014) support this by explaining that the claims need to support the positioning to have effective framing. Rucker et al. (2008) add to these requirements that if a company frames their position with a high level of transparency, it can expect its effectiveness to increase. Furthermore, Cunningham, Thach and Thompson (2008) identified that to present a good message on a website, the text used should not be too long. A long text increases the chance for information overload and the customer to miss the message (Cunningham et al., 2008). Lastly, Aslam (2006) identified that using colours in the framing process influences the perceptions of the customers on the products promoted. Based on the research of Kauppinen-Räsänen and Jauffret (2018), it is showed that colours do have a different meaning. The colour white, for example, is associated with cleanliness, purity and safety. For effective framing, a company should make sure they use the right colours to deliver their messages.

Multiple authors notice the consequences of aligning framing with a position. Firstly, Ibrahim and Gill (2005) showed that framing does create numerous different positions in an industry as perceived by customers. Furthermore, based on Olsen et al. (2014), a good alignment between a frame and position does improve the sales of a product and strengthens the company's identity. The increasing sales are especially true if the amount of claims and the valance of the frame is aligned with the context in which the customers will encounter the messages. Rucker et al. (2008) support this increase in sales through the transparency in the frame about the position. Ibrahim and Gill (2005) also show that an effective framing of a position improves the power of recall in a customer's mind. This finding indicates that a good alignment between these concepts makes a customer remember a company and its position around a subject.

2.7 Positioning, framing, and sustainability

This research identifies a limiting amount of articles about combining all three concepts. Beck et al. (2017) show how companies use framing in their messages in reports. They distinguished that organizations could improve the framing of messages about sustainability in the company's reports. A criterion to achieve this is by connecting the framed sustainability message to the firm's strategic positioning. Tran and Paparoidamis (2019) identified that the positioning on sustainability could be more potent if the framing used makes the customer feel more responsible for their actions. Therefore, framed sustainability messages are primarily focused on customers (Weder et al., 2019). A problem identified here is that this framing lacks effectiveness as the association between a company's message and its position is vague for the customer (Weder et al., 2019). Aggerholm and Trapp (2014) show that companies started to change towards positioning themselves thematically around sustainability in their reports. But, to realize this positioning, the companies used framed messages towards sustainability. Lastly, Garcia and Greenwood (2015) introduced a notion that this framing of statements about a position on sustainability can be supported through visuals in their reports.

Based on the literature, the combination of the three concepts is justified. However, where knowledge is missing is about how companies precisely frame their messages about their position on sustainability through visuals and text on their website. The existing literature is either focusing on the textual messages or visuals in corporate sustainability reports. This research focuses on the gap where both text and visuals are combined to frame a position. Another missing notion is the use of websites instead of reports. The focus on the websites is justified as a website is more approachable for customers and will be more visited than a report of the company (Du & Vieira, 2012). Analyzing websites is important because the communication on here is directly geared towards the general customers. When searching for a company, the customer is more likely to encounter their websites first and not their reports (Srinivasan, Anderson & Ponnayolu, 2002). These are the distinct additions this research wants to add to the existing body of knowledge in the field. This focus on visuals and text on websites will help answer the research question. Through the focus, new insights are provided into how the combination of visuals and text is used to frame a position on sustainability.

2.8 Conceptual model

Now that these three theoretical concepts are defined, it is also essential to understand what type of relationships are expected to be seen. Figure 2 shows this expected relationship.

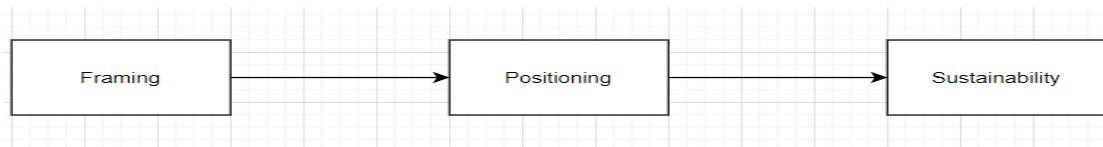


Figure 2: The conceptual model

To present perspicacity about sustainability, positioning, framing, and their combination to deliver insights into how companies use these concepts to frame their sustainability position, the conceptual model in figure 2 is developed. Figure 2 shows that a company chooses a position on sustainability, which is the dependent variable. This positioning on sustainability is communicated through framing. Using specific framing techniques through messages and visuals, the company strives to clarify its position on sustainability. Incorporating sustainability in the messages leads to legitimacy (Czinkota et al., 2014). Sustainability is the dependent variable here since framing is used to form a position around this theme. These connections are backed up by theory in multiple ways.

Firstly, the aggregation between sustainability and position is backed up by numerous papers. Czinkota et al. (2014) identified that choosing an accepted position leads to legitimacy. Due to this legitimacy, the company reaches sustainability and a competitive advantage. Whittle et al. (2010) show that the positioning of companies around sustainability is not a one-time action but a dynamic process changing over time. Based on the institutional theory, a sustainability position helps to reach legitimacy in their environment from their stakeholders (Marcandella, Garcia-Bardidia, Wannenmacher & Simon, 2012). Framing can help to increase the amount of legitimacy. This increase is reached through the right framing (Höllerer, Jancsary & Vettori, 2013) and copying behaviour from competitors (Lefsrud et al., 2020). This intriguing notion is the reason why those two concepts have been put together. Secondly, framing is used to communicate sustainability and create a place in the customers' minds (Höllerer et al., 2013). Frames have, at their core, an organizing idea to assign meaning to a diverse array of symbols and words to cluster them in a coherent pattern (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015). The authors make sense of the composition of these words and visuals and, therefore, indicate a specific "position" for interpretation (Höllerer et al., 2013). Framing should, thus, not be seen as an end but as a tool to reach a position (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015).

Figure 2 can help to answer the question of how companies frame their sustainability position on websites. This conceptual model helps with providing insights and a better understanding of the relationship between the used concepts. In addition, this conceptual model shows the expected relationship that this thesis can find to understand the knowledge gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methods

This research will answer the research question through the interpretations of the messages and visuals from the company's websites. These visuals and messages are analyzed because these two components combined is what companies use for framing. Without these components, a company is not able to clarify what its judgements are about sustainability. Triangulation is reached by using a set of observations, theories and data sources (Vennix, 2016). Through this triangulation, the most likely conclusion is strived to be found to answer the research questions. Qualitative research is used to generate answers to explorative and explanatory research questions. A qualitative approach prevents a predefined model from being tested only, whether true or false. A qualitative approach can help with overcoming this because of its continuous reflection (Vennix, 2016). There is a constant interaction between theory, observation, and analysis (Vennix, 2016). Through this interaction, the results reflect the open-ended nature of questions this study tries to answer. The qualitative process is open to identifying new knowledge and using open coding (Vennix, 2016). These characteristics justify the use of qualitative approaches and Atlas.ti.

Moreover, through this interaction, the results are not analyzed to fit a specific scheme. Instead, these results are used to identify patterns that help in answering the (sub)questions. This freedom in form allows for a broader interpretation of the results (Jackson, Drummond & Camar, 2007). The broad interpretation helps the research gather critical insights and create knowledge about the knowledge gap. Such broad understanding helps prevent this research from being stuck on specific numbers, close-ended questions, and literature (Jackson et al., 2007). For that reason, qualitative research is used to provide a more in-depth look into the behaviour of companies (Jackson et al., 2017).

Moreover, the qualitative approach fits the research question because observations are used to collect data (Merrick, 1999). The fact that observations are used does not mean that the study itself is immediately qualitative. Nonetheless, the way this study is observing the websites focuses on the characteristics of the companies approach. Moreover, the core of this observation is to identify how companies frame their position, not the number of times a specific frame or position is used. Therefore, these observations provide data that this research can link directly to how companies frame their messages.

Furthermore, inductive codes make a qualitative approach fit well with the research question (Thomas, 2006). These inductive codes collect data bottom-up. These codes help with being more open in data collection and identifying patterns in behaviour. A qualitative approach is functional here since it considers the company's context, which can help understand the specific position chosen (Miller & Dingwal, 1997). The data containing information from the context can provide insights concerning the research question and knowledge gap. This information provides a complete picture of how companies are framing their messages and why they communicate them in that way. Moreover, as the research method focuses on the written language concerning its social context, a content analysis perfectly fits these requirements (Stemler, 2000). This type of analysis aims to understand how language is used in real-life situations. This analysis covers the purposes and effects of different kinds of framing used. The data gathered from such content analysis helps understand the meaning of specific words and how these words are used to frame a sustainability position.

Validity and reliability are also taken into account in this research. Reliability is considered by assuring consistency of the results over time and across different observers. It strives in the coding process that all items refer to the same theoretical concept. This successful referment is reached by creating a coding dictionary based on consensus between the three researchers. Together, these codes were constructed and accepted. This coding dictionary helps with applying the method consistently. The goal here is to develop items that give similar results if they measure the same concept (Vennix, 2016). Furthermore, reliability is assessed by providing transparency in the data analysis procedure. Transparency in the steps in the data analysis procedure makes the results reproducible. At last, reliability is maintained by keeping the circumstances as consistent as possible to reduce the influence of external factors that might create variation in results. This research realizes standardized conditions by ensuring that all companies are from the same industry and have a website. Validity is assured by developing enough insights about the concepts through literature studies. By doing this, the existing operationalization and measuring methods are identified and used as an inspiration for this research (Vennix, 2016). By knowing this, validity is assured by striving for high-quality measurement techniques to measure what should be measured. This research uses parts of others accepted measurement techniques. This tactic assures that the used methods are based on preexisting support from the field (Vennix, 2016). The chances are higher that errors made in the process are identified and prevented (Vennix, 2016). Validity is reached by using appropriate sampling methods for selecting the subjects. This validity is also maintained

by using stratified random sampling. This sampling method helps to achieve this by clearly defining the researched population. Furthermore, it is assumed that enough participants are included. This research has a population of 144 companies. By defining the studied population and using the right sampling size, the data is representative and generalizable.

3.2 Sources and measures

The chosen sample is extracted from the Orbis database. This database is chosen as it is easy to use in the holistic comparison between organizations. One can enter this database through the University Library of Radboud. The requirement for the selected companies is that they should operate in the fashion industry, have a website, and originate from the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The initial sample consisted of 373 companies from these countries. After deletion and a new random sampling, the final sample consists of 144 companies. The companies that got deleted either did not have a website or did not sell any garments. Some companies also appeared multiple times. They are also deleted. Seventy-nine companies are Dutch, 48 are from the UK, and 17 are Swedish. These countries are chosen because their information has good availability in the Orbis database. Furthermore, the research group can understand Dutch and English, making the Dutch and UK companies easily approachable. Their main characteristics are summarized in appendix 1. There was no limitation concerning the organizational size, amount of revenue, or other aspects such as whether they are part of a bigger business group. The sample consists of companies with employees ranging from 1 to 992. Both public and private firms are chosen. Most of the included companies provide whole clothing collections, specific clothing for either work or a particular target group (e.g., baby clothing), or sewing workshops. Furthermore, a website is the main criteria since this is the central phenomenon analyzed. The sample size includes public and private companies, B2B companies, profit, and non-profit companies. The motive for this is the inclusion of all types of companies. Furthermore, it could lead to insights into whether this research can identify differences in framing between companies.

The data is gathered from the sample through coding the text and visuals. This coding is performed through Atlas.ti with two other researchers. After this coding is done, the codes are analyzed through functions like ‘Co-Occurrence’-option ([appendix 2](#)). In addition, Atlas.ti provides an overview per webpage of which and how many codes are used ([appendix 3](#)). Through the analysis of these codes, the results are gathered. In this analysis, the focus is on how many codes are identified, the number of times these codes are shown, how often certain relationships are identified, and whether specific codes are dominant in the relationship with

the general characteristics of companies. There are in total 222 screenshots used for this analysis ([appendix 3](#)). Four hundred twenty-nine numbers of text are included with 517 images. The findings are summarized in a shared document between the researchers ([appendix 4](#)). In this way, the researchers focused on the same codes to be consistent in their coding approach. The findings of these codes are then put in this shared document so that these results can be used for answering the research question.

The fashion industry is a contributor to pollution and climate change (Hibberd, 2018, 2020). The industry is characterized by being dynamic with a high speed of development. The fashion industry encompasses the design, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, retailing, advertising, and promotion of all types of apparel (Čiarnienė & Vienažindienė, 2014). Today, this industry is an international and highly globalized industry, with clothing designed in one country, manufactured in another, and sold in a third (Burns, Mullet & Bryant, 2011). The fashion industry has long been one of the largest employers, and it remains so in the 21st century and accounts for a significant share of world economic output (Shahbandeh, 2021). The global fashion industry is projected to grow from 1.5 trillion US dollars in 2020 to 2.25 trillion dollars by 2025 (Shahbandeh, 2021). This expected growth shows that the demand for clothing is rising. In the EU, the turnover in 2019 was 162 billion euros. The UK and Netherlands are together in the top 6 countries in the EU with the largest apparel market based on revenue. They made 77.5 billion and 16.5 billion US dollars in revenue in 2019. The Swedish apparel market realized revenue growth of 10.6% that made 2,718 million US dollars in 2021 (Statista, 2021). Sustainability is an essential factor for this industry since it helps take the entire supply chain and life cycle of a garment into account (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). In addition, customers find it essential to think about how their purchase affects the environment, the lifecycle of their product, and how to invest in clothes that last longer (Environics, 1999).

Anonymity is not strived for in this research. The companies are withdrawn from a public database, so they are voluntarily involved. Mentioning their names or seeing their name on images is not excluded. Furthermore, the study of patterns is performed with two other students to deliver consistency in the research process (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013). This research maintains ethics by only using information that is shared publicly on their websites. No other sources of information are used from the involved organizations. If the information is not publicly shared, it is not discussed.

The rationale for entering more companies into the database is to prevent the negative impact of a decreasing sample size. This way, the sample size maintained sufficient to continue the analysis and create reliable data that the investigation could use to answer the research question. Creating reliable data supports the research ethics by making the results applicable to the population.

The variables studied are how companies frame their messages, their approach to sustainability, and the position taken on sustainability. These variables are analyzed based on the data collected from the websites of the companies. More precisely, the focus is on the words and visuals used in the company's approach. Furthermore, their references to external institutions will be considered. Additionally, this analysis will check the colours used on the websites to identify whether patterns exist in the way companies frame their messages and the colours used.

3.3 Data analysis procedure

The analysis starts with a content analysis in which a database is used to provide all the companies' websites. This content analysis is performed in a research group of two other people. The websites are entered, and a screenshot is uploaded to the database. The web pages that are screenshotted are either the main page, the 'about us' page, and, if available, the pages related to sustainability. Once all the screenshots of the websites are made, the content analysis can start. This analysis focuses on heritage, language used, and images on these websites. Nevertheless, before the analysis start, inductively developed codes and categories are made.

These codes and categories refer to the manifest (content and stylistic elements) and latent (symbols and connotations) aspects of the websites included in the sample. These codes are stored in Excel ([appendix 5.1 till 5.5](#)). The detailed codes serve to understand better the specific (visual) vocabulary used. These codes refer to characteristics such as colours and fonts used. These codes refer to the text and images available on the website. Through these texts and photos, this analysis can assure that all aspects from the websites are covered, and it can be examined, for example, whether relations exist between the usage of images with the text on websites. Such analysis helps categorize and discuss the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences related to the used pictures. The result of the codes is that a dictionary will be developed that refers to the different aspects of the potential positioning. The analysis of patterns in text and images on the website is performed based on the generated dictionary.

Through Atlas.ti all the codes are categorized. Through this categorization, the codes become traceable after the analysis is performed. Through this analysis, the researchers can identify patterns in the company's behaviour. With these patterns, discourse-carrying dimensions can be developed that underlie the main elements identified. The next step is to consider other aspects of the data to receive a comprehensive picture of the discursive formation/landscape; for example, if a company mentions sustainability, what is the number of external references on that page? This analysis is also done with Atlas.ti. This program shows how often specific phrases are used in a company's text or what type of pictures are dominantly used. This approach illustrates which categories and dimensions occupy similar positions in the discursive space. It helps to provide insights into the general patterns of behaviour.

The codes are developed through collective discussion in the research group and existing literature. How the codes are divided for the concepts is shown in [appendix 6](#). The ones relating to the sustainability focus in the words mentioned, and images on the websites are divided based on the triple bottom line (Townsend, 2008). By including ethics, more insights can be delivered into what moral principles or values drive behaviour to take sustainability into account (Creyer, 1997). More precisely, the focus is on the utilitarian approach. In this approach, behaviour is judged by its effects on the overall welfare of everyone involved (Creyer, 1997).

The codes relating to positioning are coming from Rodriguez et al. (2018). These refer to the type of external legitimacy focus, the number of external references, and the motivation for sustainability. These references show how the positioning is performed and why it is vital for them. It also gives information about how legitimate this position is (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018). The code 'profit of sustainability' refers to whether sustainability is used as is in the Brundtland Report. This is included because it shows the sustainability emphasis of the company.

The codes connected to framing relate to whether sustainability is seen as something fulfilling the company's own needs or for the society, the time focus used, and whether this sustainability is accepted in the norms of the society (Rodriguez et al., 2018). These also show whether the messages can be seen as trustworthy (Garcia & Greenwood, 2015). However, some of the information that is needed for the codes was missing on the websites. If this info was missing, it is searched on public sources whether there is information. If the public sources provided it, it was added. If not, the researchers did not add the code.

Hereafter, the results are analyzed based on the number of times specific codes were added to the text on websites. Based on these results from Atlas, the codes were analyzed with the help of analytical tools such as the ‘Co-Occurrence’. The data is used to interpret how firms use framing to create a message about sustainability. Furthermore, the analysis also helps understand how firms interpret sustainability in their operations. An example of how the data leads to results: if a company is dedicated to sustainability, they mostly show a structured approach. This finding is based on the combination of mentioning the words related to sustainability and ‘TextWriting-Vision’ ([appendix 5.1](#)). This data is seen on the websites of Barbour: *“We will always ensure that we comply with relevant and local current legislation and industry standards to ensure that labour standards and human rights at the workplace are met.”* and Solo: *“In a world where we now have overexploited the earth’s resources, there’s only one way to go forward and we must talk together to get what’s required. In cooperation based on relevant knowledge we can both innovate and improve.”*

Like in this example, results gathered from findings in the data show that a company primarily is dedicated to a structured approach when discussing sustainability. An example of how such webpage coded in Atlas.ti looks like is previewed in [appendix 3](#).

4. Findings

Multiple notions are identified in this analysis that are useful for answering the research question.

4.1 What do organizations understand by sustainability?

To provide insights on what sustainability is for organizations, it must be clear how sustainability is used in their communication. Different types of sustainability are identified:

1. Economic sustainability, mentioned 76 times. Although this type is mentioned the least, it is still a significant part of the sample.
2. Social sustainability, mentioned 102 times.
3. Environmental sustainability, mentioned 145 times.

As identified, organizations can interpret sustainability differently (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2018). From the results, these three types of sustainability are still primarily used through visuals and text. If the company focuses on sustainability, these three are mentioned often together. The sample shows that the combination of all three is occurring 19 times together. An example of three types of sustainability in a text is showed in [appendix 7](#). Furthermore, economic and social sustainability is mentioned 34 times together. The social and environmental are mentioned 32 times, while the economic and environmental sustainability is mentioned 45 times together. These results show that companies, when talking about sustainability, often use multiple characteristics of sustainability. The results show that the economic and environmental combination is the most prevalent. This finding shows how companies try to connect sustainability benefits with the benefits that the company can experience. An example is seen in [appendix 8](#), where Serolo claims that they can both innovate and improve through collaboration by the notion that they have overexploited the earth's resources.

Based on what these firms communicate, sustainability is a characteristic that companies incorporate in their operations to experience positive outcomes for the environment, people involved in the social context, and the company themselves. Barbour best shows this in [appendix 9](#), exhibiting their corporate social responsibility statement. The company explains that they can help their environment, both in social and environmental respect, and become market leaders through this approach.

Based on the code 'TextValence', it is showed how companies see and use sustainability in their communication. Most companies see sustainability as something positive. Sustainability is used positively 70 times, as opposed to 17 using a negative description. This finding shows that sustainability is used primarily to frame it as something helpful for customers and companies. Furthermore, through the code 'Motivation for sustainability,' it is determined

whether sustainability is seen as required or based on free will. The results show that 69 companies do not consider sustainability, 23 companies see sustainability as essential for existence, while 52 times the motivation for sustainability is external. This external motivation is showed by the company I Saw It First, in [appendix 10](#), stating that they take the people involved in their operations into account as far as the local council's rules and the Health and Safety Executive are covering.

This result shows that some companies base their approach towards sustainability as something they are obligated to do, not because they want to do it themselves. However, the references for external motivation are dominant compared to internal motivation. This finding provides the insights that the external regulations related to the environment imposed on the companies work to make companies incorporate sustainability.

The results show that sustainability can differ in meaning based on the different perspectives firms have. Some companies do not consider sustainability. Others see it as something they do, based on internal motivation, while most perceive sustainability as something they must do based on external rules. In addition, despite the motivation for sustainability, the importance is recognized to keep their environment in good condition for future generations. Because of this, sustainability is most often used by companies to emphasize such positive outcomes instead of preventing negative consequences.

4.2 How do organizations position themselves around sustainability?

The analysis shows, when companies position sustainability as a requirement, they use external references. The used external references are institutionalized and accepted requirements such as ISO-codes and UN Sustainable Development Goals. According to the code 'Amount of External References', 33 companies use a high amount of external references in their communication. These companies use at least three external references in their text.

Companies using sustainability as their core also use external references, but their motivation is primarily intrinsic. An example is by the company Environ-Design: *"We are a clothing label completely focused on sustainability. We are trying to change the way the fashion industry is currently running."* The focus of these companies is mainly on the social benefits of sustainability. Environ-Design demonstrates this excellent by stating, *"Let's take care of our planet together by paying attention and buying recycled polyester fabrics made from post-consumer plastic waste."* It is most clearly illustrated by small-sized companies that

sustainability is not a checklist for everyone. These companies focus on regulations and production techniques implemented to maintain sustainable production and improve human and environmental conditions. Afriek shows on their website: *“Social justice is environmental justice. As a fashion brand, we take responsibility for our environmental impact on this planet in a holistic way.”*. Companies like these, either small or big, recognize that they should take care of their environment because this is their leading supplier for their primary resources.

Another attractive website is Burberry ([appendix 3](#)). Here, they refer to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and how they are the leading luxury brand. Furthermore, the whole page is covered in pictures of all the other external references. An example of such a reference is illustrated in [appendix 11](#). In this way, this company is framing sustainability as a crucial requirement. All the external references back this up. This company sees sustainability as a checklist set up by third parties that check companies to fulfil these environmental requirements.

Larger companies such as Barbour, Burberry, and Kwaspen Group mention actions in their written text on reaching and maintaining sustainability. In this text, companies mainly refer to a mix of self-fulfilling and social sustainability profits. Burberry states on their websites: *“Our 2022 goals were developed with the help of key stakeholders to address the most material issues for our business, as well as the most pressing social and environmental needs along our value chain.”*. This sentence shows that actions are undertaken based on the acceptance of the key stakeholders, which involve essential issues for the company. These actions also involve social and environmental consequences. Even though social and environmental issues are important, it is the acceptance of the critical stakeholders that justifies its sustainability actions. On the website of the Kwaspen Group, the whole section that is justifying their sustainability action is called ‘Code of conduct’. In this way, the company framed these actions as obligations from the external environment, not because they want to be sustainable. Sustainability is here a checklist they need to comply with, similar to Burberry.

Furthermore, some companies do not incorporate sustainability in their positioning. For example, Refined Apparel stated: *“We use the highest quality materials with a personal touch to make sure we keep our promise on comfort without compromise.”*. This example shows how they are not primarily focusing on sustainability. Instead, they focus on good quality and their promise that they offer great comfort in their products. These companies focus more on the heritage and the quality of the products and resources used. This combination where the

focus is not on sustainability but they mention either their origin or the excellent quality of their resources is identified 39 times.

When diving deeper into how companies position on sustainability, the code ‘External Legitimacy’ is helpful as it shows what type of references are used. [Appendix 11](#) is an excellent example of an external reference. The results show that companies using sustainability as a requirement use the most external references. These companies use economic concerns 90 times, quality references are included 84 times, while intrinsic references are identified 23 times. The approach towards reaching a legitimate position on sustainability is logical by companies seeing it as a requirement. However, the way how companies position themselves around it as their core is different. These companies use economic concerns 49 times, quality references 80 times, and intrinsic references 100 times. The difference is that the last position focuses more on inherent reasoning instead of the economic references than the positioning of sustainability as a requirement ([appendix 12](#)).

Nonetheless, to expand this notion, the code ‘Sustainability Profit’ is used to check for whom this sustainability strives. In the analysis, 159 references towards societal interest are shown when a company aimed for sustainability. Of these numbers, 93 references stem from companies that see it as their main reason for existence. One hundred eight references for self-serving interest are identified when striving for sustainability as a requirement. This finding means that some companies see sustainability as something that is needed to fulfil their own needs. Therefore, these companies have a significant motivation for providing themselves. An example of such self-fulfilling interest is by the company Cars, which explains that they plan to implement Organic Cotton because they can limit water usage in their productions. This positioning is self-fulfilling as the company does not explain the positive outcomes to be, for example, more drinking water available for the people living nearby the production site. This finding shows that by using such self-serving references, they position themselves on sustainability that is profitable for themselves. Therefore, these companies recognize that striving for sustainability is also suitable for themselves.

Furthermore, the code ‘Time Focus’ is used to receive an additional dimension into how companies position themselves on sustainability. The following is identified: when companies talk about sustainability, they are more likely to include the short-term and long-term focus (235 times in total), while if they do not have sustainability in their text, they are most likely referring towards the present and short-term focus and the past (321 times in total). An example is showed in [appendix 13](#). The explanation behind this approach might be that a

company is better at messaging its quality by providing information about its heritage and its distinct characteristics. In contrast, when talking about sustainability, the companies mainly refer to what is about to change in the future based on the sustainability actions they implemented. This result shows that positioning around sustainability is done by focussing on the future instead of looking back. This focus helps companies set themselves around these future sustainability benefits, making them more attractive for customers. No differences are identified between the two positions on sustainability.

Based on the results companies relate to each other in positioning on sustainability. The primary way of how companies position themselves on sustainability is showed in [appendix 14](#). There are three ways how companies position themselves around sustainability. They see sustainability as a requirement, core for existence, or do not mention it. As the previous results have shown, within these approaches, companies relate to each other through the overlap in usage of buzzwords, time focus and number of external references. The results lack in showing proof that companies overlap in multiple positions. Companies, based on the results here, mainly offer evidence for one dominant position on sustainability.

All in all, positioning is used by companies to reveal their judgements. Through this positioning, the company shows its relationship with sustainability. There are three ways distinguished how companies position themselves. The first one is where sustainability is not considered, as showed by Refined Apparel, the second one is where sustainability is seen as a requirement, as demonstrated by Burberry. The third one is where sustainability is the primary reason for existence showed by Afriek. Most companies position themselves around the future benefits of sustainability. These benefits are a mix of both societal and self-serving interest. Most companies back up this positioning on sustainability by referring to external references. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the number of references used, where companies that see it as a requirement have a high amount of external references. Lastly, companies do make a lot of use of pictures to strengthen their position around sustainability. This usage of images is primarily enforced by the finding where the company mention their name in their photos used related to sustainability.

4.3 How do organizations use framing?

The code 'Text Writing' tries to identify to what extent organizations use a specific approach in their text. Do they focus on being descriptive? Are they focusing on their actions? In the sample, 260 texts are coded as descriptive, and 257 times the text is considered action-focused. When looking at the action approach in the text, it can be noticed that this approach

is used by most companies talking about sustainability. Companies that do not consider sustainability also use an action approach, but they focus on using the best quality products and other resources. These companies do not consider the effects of their production on sustainability. With the option Code Co-Occurrence in Atlas, it is known that the combination of an action-focused text with sustainability is coded together 98 times.

A distinction is identified in the usage of buzzwords between companies with different positioning. A company that does not consider sustainability uses buzzwords related to heritage, innovation, production, processes, hand-made, and quality. This combination is found 201 times. Companies that see it as a requirement focus more on buzzwords related to explicitly mentioning sustainability, the level of importance, and production. An example is showed in [appendix 15](#). This relation is identified 156 times. Meanwhile, the positioning that sees sustainability as the reason for existence uses more buzzwords related to organic, innovations, responsibility, and the customer. This combination is seen 185 times. Because of this proactive approach, both companies positioning on sustainability are more likely to talk about actions it is about to perform. This finding is supported by the number of buzzwords present in such action dominant texts. An example where a company speaks about sustainability in an action-focused way is Aysen Gasson. They say the following: *“But we believe this is a very important issue on an environmental and social level and we will always attempt to produce our lingerie as sustainable as possible.”*. This sentence shows how they understand the environmental and social impact of their production. Therefore, this company is focusing their actions on maintaining to be sustainable as much as possible.

Most sentences used when talking about sustainability are descriptive as opposed to being analytical. Analytical sentences are only identified 15 times in the whole sample. These descriptive sentences primarily explain how their quality and sustainable products are being used. An example of this is by the company Forest Fleece Ltd which states on its websites that *“All our products are handcrafted to the highest standard utilizing many years of acquired knowledge and specialist skills.”*. This sentence describes how the company makes their garments and, based on what the customer can conclude, the quality is good. Based on this sentence, they do not consider sustainability as the production focus is on hand-made, focus on quality, and specialist skills. But, it is noticed that if the company uses analytical text, it is almost always about sustainability. In this study, 14 out of the 15 analytical sentences are related to sustainability. These sentences are mostly used is sustainability is seen as a requirement. An excellent example of using analytical sentences is Burberry:

“Progress during 2019/20: 75% of cotton procured more sustainably. Goal: to procure 100% of our cotton more sustainably by 2022 by using a portfolio approach.”. This finding shows how Burberry analyses the environmental impact of their operations and calculates how sustainable they are. Furthermore, these numbers are supported by an external link showing the exact percentages of how much of their resources stem from sustainable sources. These numbers are helpful to be used to further frame the sustainability position.

Furthermore, most positions are framed by using small text sizes to explain their approach and actions towards sustainability or production. The codes' `TextSize_Small` is by far the most used code, 269 times. An example from Burberry of such short text size is viewed in appendix 16. This code identifies text that is between 0 to 200 words. The results show that even though companies are framing their sustainability position, they are not likely to use much text. Based on this reasoning, it is reasonable that companies use short text sizes to stay clear, concise and straight to the point. However, it is noticed that when a company uses sustainability as the main reason for existence, medium text size is used more often. This combination between talking about sustainability and using medium sizes texts is 69 times identified. The results show that companies use more words in their messages to cover the problematic environmental aspects and clearly explain every company's action targeted towards sustainability. Thus, the results identified that companies use more words as sustainability is highly important for the company.

The code `TextValence-Overall` checks what focus a company uses in its framing while talking about sustainability. A positive valence in combination with sustainability is used 97 times, while a negative valence is used 31 times in combination with sustainability. In this sample, when companies talk about sustainability, they are more likely to frame their sustainability position around the positive outcomes than on the negative ones. No differences are seen between the two sustainability positions. Companies mostly try to frame their sustainability position as something positive. Based on this sustainability position, companies try to convince their customers that maintaining and striving for their sustainability position will help them and their customers experience positive outcomes. The valence is the same for companies not considering sustainability. However, they focus on the utility that customers gain when buying their products in the usage. The focal point is not on the gains on an environmental or social level.

An example of this positive valence is by the company Barbour. They state: *“BCI was formed in 2009 to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the*

environment it grows in and better for the industry's future, by developing Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity.". This notion is seen as something positive in this research. The outcomes are improving conditions, through business practices, for the people, environment, and the industry. This focus on the positive is the approach used by most companies. Their sustainability actions are linked with increasing their impact on specific aspects of their environment and production to increase the company's welfare, industry, people involved, and environment.

Furthermore, when checking how companies use visuals in their framing, the following is found. If the company sees sustainability as a requirement, many pictures relate to the environment, clothing, and people (73 times). Also shown in [appendix 12](#). These pictures are used to support the positioning where it is suitable for social, economic, and environmental sustainability. If sustainability is the main reason for existence, the images used are showing nature, happy people, clean working places, and resources used for production (68 times). Nevertheless, one tactic that these companies use is mentioning their names in these pictures ([appendix 17](#)). This tactic is identified 14 times. In this way, a company mixes both text and visuals to promote its sustainability position. If sustainability is not considered, visuals show the company's products, production sites, and logos. This is done 144 times.

How companies frame their sustainability position in combination with text and visuals, the following patterns are identified. Firstly, the most used images when companies communicate their sustainability position are related to the environment. A perfect example of this combination is the company Environ-Design. In [appendix 17](#), it is shown how this company combines a view of a forest as a background with the text "*Wearing your own future.*" and "*A clothing brand completely focused on sustainability*". This combination clearly shows that this company used the framing of their sustainability position so that sustainability is core for its existence.

To build further upon this notion where the picture is used to support the framing of a company, the code 'Rel_Image_Text' is helpful. This code helps this relationship where the image supports the text by identifying this relationship 248 times in the whole database ([appendix 18](#)). Across the entire database, the connection where the text is supporting the picture is only 34 times identified. When checking how much the images support the text when the subject is sustainability, this happens 197 times. However, an exciting notion that is specified here is that when checking the combinations between the code 'Rel_Image_Text' and 'TextValence-Overall', most companies use pictures in their framing when the text

produced is focusing on preventing adverse outcomes. It must be said here that these pictures do not show the catastrophic outcomes as such. Indeed they show either the other side of the spectrum or show the resources used to prevent the negative consequences. An example of this is Björn Borg ([appendix 19](#)), which states that their production will continue to use much water if they do not start using biological hemp. This text is then supported on their website by a simple picture of hemp. This same notion is identified for companies not considering sustainability (158 times). Nevertheless, the photograph's content differs as they show their finished products or the owners and employees.

The last notion identified is the colours used in the process of framing. The top 3 most used colours, when discussing sustainability, are white, dark, and earth tones. These colours are used 112, 59, and 55 times respectively. Earth and dark colours are used most often if sustainability is a requirement. This colour usage happens 45 and 30 times, respectively. Thus, that earth and dark colours are in the top 3 is not a surprise as pictures of the environment are often used in combination with talking about sustainability. However, the white colour is often used if sustainability is the main reason for existence. Seventy-two times in total, this combination is identified. A company use this colour to frame their productions and resources as clean and suitable for nature. Therefore, when discussing sustainability, a company needs to ensure that they are framed as a company that uses pure and safe production techniques and resources. An example is found on the website of Eton, where their resources are shown in a pristine white form ([appendix 20](#)).

In conclusion, multiple notions are found about how companies frame their sustainability position. As the position differs, the buzzwords used by companies vary as well. The same is for the photos used. All companies used an action approach. But, the focus differed as, for example, companies that do not consider sustainability focus on producing garments with high-quality resources. The same is for using descriptive text. Nevertheless, if the companies used an analytical approach, they saw sustainability as a requirement. Most companies used small text sizes unless sustainability was the main reason for existence. In that case, the companies use medium-sized text more often. Furthermore, the valence of the text is most often positive in all three framings. However, the focus on the positive aspects differs. Companies not considering sustainability do not focus on the gains for the environment, for example.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of the results

For this research, it was essential to identify the way how companies frame their sustainability position. The results indicate specific framing patterns when a company has chosen a different sustainability position (table 1). It is showed that these different approaches in framing show some similarities, especially the two positions if sustainability is taken into account. However, these approaches differ from each other. The differences are primarily in the visuals used, the buzzwords included, and the number of external references. These differences show that a company uses a different type of framing once it has a different perspective on sustainability. An overview of the dynamics of how a company can frame a position through messages and visuals is shown in [appendix 21](#).

	Framing : Text	Visuals
Positioning sustainability : Not incorporated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on quality & heritage • Focus on customer utility • Small text size • Descriptive approach • Hand-made, production, quality & innovation buzzwords • Focus on past & present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dominant colour identified • Most images contain the products, production & logo's • Visuals support text
As a requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive valence • Small text size • Descriptive approach • Action focus • Sustainability, production & the level of importance buzzwords • Focus on short-term & long-term future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images with dark & earth-tones • Visuals support text • Visuals contain the nature itself, clothing & people • Visuals used most often when text is referring to preventing adverse outcomes
Reason for existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive valence • Small & Medium text size • Descriptive & Analytical approach • Action focus • Organic, responsibility & innovation buzzwords • Focus on short-term & long-term future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most images with white colour • Visuals support text • Visuals contain positive things for the environment, happy people, clean resources & production sites • Visuals used most often when text is referring to preventing adverse outcomes

Table 1: Overview of the results

5.1.1 What do organizations understand by sustainability?

The results show much correlation about how companies perceive sustainability. Firstly, the results correlate with the three types of sustainability discussed in chapter 2 (Vos, 2007). The results exhibit compliance with this theory by showing that companies indeed discuss economic, environmental, and social sustainability through text on their websites. This result explains that the companies still stick to the accepted definition of sustainability with its triple

bottom line (Clune & Zehnder, 2018). Through the results, companies show compliance with the Brundtland definition, where the needs of future generations are kept intact. This compliance is accurate because of the more considerable emphasis that the results show on social and environmental sustainability. The emphasis shows how the companies try to keep the world and its resources intact as much as possible for future generations to fulfil their needs. This finding aligns with the notion from chapter 2, where the Millenium Poll shows that the customers expect the company to demonstrate their focus on social and environmental goals instead of on the economic ones (Environics International, 1999). McDermott & O'dell (2001) showed that the interpretations of the customers did play an essential role in deciding whether an organization was considered sustainable. Environmental sustainability is the most attractive one, considering that companies want to gain legitimacy by referring to ecological references like ISO-14001 codes when talking about sustainability. The results show that there is not one dominant definition identified of sustainability. This finding implies that the statement of Padin and Svensson (2013) is accurate as they state that business sustainability is open, adaptable, and iterative. The statement has a critical correlation because it shows that such social issues are not seen as the same by everybody. The difference in perspective is most likely why companies can have a different approach towards sustainability and why they differ in their communication.

Furthermore, that organizations can interpret sustainability differently is also noticed by Mitra and Buzzanell (2018). This finding supports the results found in this research, as other companies used different frames when talking about sustainability. That environmental and social sustainability are more often mentioned than economic sustainability aligns with the idea from chapter 2, where the Millenium Poll shows that the customers expect the company to demonstrate their focus on social and environmental goals instead of on the economic ones (Environics International, 1999). This finding shows further correlation with McDermott & O'dell (2001). This analysis showed that the interpretations of the customers did play an essential role in deciding whether an organization was considered sustainable. The results back this up as they take the customers' expectations into account and thus more often mention social and environmental sustainability in their text instead of the economic one. Adding to this finding, sustainability was also perceived differently as some saw it as their reason for existence while others saw it as a requirement. Others did not even consider sustainability. Based on these different interpretations, companies used different frames. The usage of different frames aligns with the study from Mitra and Buzzanell (2018).

5.1.2 How do organizations position themselves around sustainability?

If a company perceives sustainability as something they need to comply with, they use more external references in their text than the two other positions. According to Rodriguez et al. (2018), this is logical as they try to position themselves as companies with a legitimate approach towards sustainability. Based on Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) and their notion that companies champion sustainability, companies use external references a lot. The results correlate with this expectation as it shows that companies try to win over this legitimacy as they refer to third-party requirements about sustainability as much as possible.

Contrary to the expectations from the literature, this analysis found out that companies that use sustainability as the main reason for existence also use external references. Nevertheless, their focus is mainly on intrinsic motivation. The significance of this result is quite considerable as this means that a company does not comply with external rules as much if sustainability is core to them. These companies refer less to external references and base their action mostly on internal motivation.

Furthermore, the results contradict Rodriguez et al. (2018) that companies differ in their time focus if sustainability is based on internal or external motivation. This analysis can conclude that when companies talk about sustainability, they all use a similar time focus. Whether internal motivated or externally, they use short-term and long-term focus. However, the significance of this finding is limited by another study. This focus on the future aligns with Srinivasan et al. (2002), where they found that this focus helps companies set themselves around these future benefits. This study explained that because of this focus, the company becomes more attractive to customers. The results indicate that this is true as companies that position themselves around sustainability mainly focus on the future in their text.

5.1.3 How do organizations use framing?

This study showed how companies should not use text on their websites that are too long. This complies with the research from Cunningham et al. (2008). The usage of small text sizes is also found in this study. Most companies only make use of small-sized text. Nonetheless, companies that see sustainability as a primary reason for existence contrasts this study as it is identified that they are also likely to use medium-sized texts.

Furthermore, this study complies with the findings from Kauppinen-Räsänen and Jauffret (2018). This study showed that colours could have multiple meanings. The results comply with this exciting finding. It is revealed that if sustainability is the reason for existence, companies are more prone to use the colour white. The reason behind this is because white is

signalling cleanliness, purity and safety. Other companies are more likely to use dark and earth-tone colours as they want to put more emphasis on sustainability in their frame. No specific colour usage is identified in companies that do not bother about sustainability. This study supports the statement of Wang (2007), where framing can be seen as the meaning-making of a chosen position. The results support this by showing that when a different position is chosen, the framing differs. The companies offer other types of visuals, different buzzwords, and different usage of colours. These differences imply significant variations between the approach in the framing of their chosen positions. This study also shows the expected pattern where a relationship is identified in the visuals that are used. More specifically, there is also a correlation in the relationship between the text and visuals used. This overlaps with the notion of Höllner et al. (2018). These authors also identified that companies use both text and visuals to improve the effectiveness of their communication. Lastly, this analysis shows that Garcia and Greenwood (2015) did well in their study. The results show that companies indeed frame their statements on sustainability by using visuals. It is identified that companies may differ in their framing of whether sustainability is used for self-interest or societal benefits. The results clarify that companies emphasize the benefits for themselves if sustainability is seen as a requirement. In contrast, if sustainability is core, companies use it primarily for societal benefits. This result is somewhat contradicting with Bolton & Mattila (2015). That study showed that companies need to frame their messages as motivated by society-serving, rather than self-serving, interests, to be effective. That is thus somewhat true for companies that use sustainability based on internal motivation. Otherwise, the results show contradicting evidence. However, this study supports Aggerholm & Trapp (2014) by offering that positioning is realized through framed messages about sustainability. This study shows that if a company is considering sustainability, they are likely to project their judgements through framing.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The first implication is related to Wang (2007). There is much overlap between this study and Wang (2007) because of the similar approach towards positioning and framing. This study also identified positioning as a technique for creating a particular judgement or perspective upon a subject. Framing is in this study also seen as a way of meaning-making of a position. Through framing, a company shows its position around a subject, what it is doing, and why it performs such actions. The overlap in concepts and their meaning is a reasonable quality assurance. This quality assurance is proper as a similar approach has been used for this

analysis. This overlap approves the usage of these concepts in this research. Furthermore, it also increases the quality of the results as it is shown that past research used these concepts in such a fashion previously.

Another theoretical implication is the overlap with Olsen et al. (2014) about the amount of information companies should provide to the customers. This study showed that most companies make use of small text sizes. This usage of small text sizes aligns with Olsen et al. (2014). They showed that by producing fewer green claims, the framing of a position would be more effective. It appears from the results that this claim is supported. The companies try to be as short as possible to prevent information overload and decrease confusion.

Nonetheless, this study shows conflicting results using medium-sized texts by companies seeing sustainability as their reason for existence. This conflict can be most likely explained with the help of Creed et al. (2002). These authors claim that a company needs to be consistent and persistent with its claims to be remembered and believed by its customers. This claim is also supported by Rucker et al. (2008). This analysis extends these previous two mentioned studies by showing that a company delivers more information, and more often in an analytical approach if sustainability is considered core. A company expects its customers to want more information or transparency if sustainability is deemed crucial for them. Because of that, it is more likely that companies will share more information about their operations and approach to sustainability. Thus, this study shows that this approach towards how much information should be delivered is more nuanced than expected. Based on this study, the amount of information that companies should provide depends on the position on sustainability. If sustainability is not considered or seen as a requirement, the companies maintain short text sizes. However, if sustainability is seen as the main reason for existence, more information is likely to be shared with its customer base.

Another overlap is noted with Creed et al. (2002), which stated that the framing is context-dependent. Based on the results, this can be accepted as it is showed that the framing depends on the judgements on sustainability. The effect of this difference in perspective is that it focuses on different aspects that are considered necessary in the company's context. Because of this difference in focus, the context changes per company, so the type of framing implemented changes. But, the results in this study oppose Schneider et al. (2001) that claimed that an effective valence is more effective than a positive one. The results do not support this claim, as it is shown that a positive valence is more used than a negative one. Companies are more prone to focus on the positive outcomes to attract customers instead of

threatening them with what will happen if they do not buy their products. This finding also contradicts Ganzach and Karsahi (1995). They support the negative valence as this showed in their results that customers are less receptive to messages that stress gains versus the messages that emphasize the losses one could incur. The contribution of this finding is that there is no clarity yet in the field about what type of valence works best. This difference might be because of multiple reasons. It could be because of the difference in the years in which the studies have been done. It can also be because of the differences in industries. For example, clothes are something that people use to express themselves. Because of this, people are more prone to messages with a positive valence so that they feel good about their purchase. The effect of positive valence might differ in industries in which products are not used for self-expression. This finding can thus be quite significant if it helps to show that different industries use different dynamics in their valence usage.

Aggerholm and Trap (2014) and Garcia and Greenwood (2015) show how companies use framing and positioning in their corporate reports. This study extends these studies by introducing the analysis on websites instead of only reports. Furthermore, Garcia and Greenwood (2015) showed how companies in their framing indeed use visuals in reports. However, this study extends this notion by looking at visuals or text and their relationship on the company's websites. Through this extension, a company can gather more insights into how effective framing works and what type of relationship between visuals and text are expected to work well. The consequences of these findings are that the theory about how organizations use framing for their positioning is broadening. In addition, this research included a different communication platform than the previous studies in the field. Through this extension, a company can better understand how they should use framing and what probably works best for their position around sustainability.

This study is also an extension of the research from Höllerer et al. (2018). Höllerer et al. showed how the composition of verbal text with images constitutes an essential resource for sensemaking and sense giving in news coverage. A similar approach is used in this study, where the composition is analyzed between visuals and text used on the company's websites. The similarity with Höllerer et al. (2018) is mainly in the methodological approach. Both studies analyze text and visuals, and through this, they try to identify relationships that might explain the combination of text and visuals used. Another notion related to the visuals that comply with this research is from Kauppinen-Räsänen and Jauffret (2018). These authors showed how colours can have different meanings and that managers must take these meanings

into account with choosing visuals. The results align with this notion since companies, based on their position on sustainability, show consistency in their usage of colours. This alignment means that companies can increase their framing effectiveness by being consistent in their colour usage.

In some cases, this study might even claim that it also showed how companies use framing for sensemaking or sense giving. This claim is accurate as this study identified that companies claim a position. To give this position meaning to the customers, the company starts to implement specific framing techniques. Thus, this study shows the relevance of the Höllerer et al. (2018) research, but then applied in the fashion industry. Strategic management can benefit from these findings as it is showed that controlling your text and visuals impacts the target market.

What this study did not find in its result is the focus on competition. According to Hooley et al. (2001), companies choose a position to create a competitive advantage out of it. This study did not find any empirical data about companies directly discussing how their approach or products are better than their competitors. This mismatch can indicate that companies either neglect their competitors in their communication on websites or that these comparisons are made indirectly. An example of this indirect messaging is noticed on the website of Burberry, where they state that they are third in the industry based on the Dow Jones Index. This statement can be a frame used to imply that they are one of the best companies in the sector compared to their competitors. Nevertheless, the results show more emphasis on the judgements that companies have on sustainability. This finding can be an indication that companies try to prevent to make sustainability a competitive characteristic. This expectation might be because most companies are not willing to lead in such social causes. Companies might think it is better to understand what customers and institutions expect from them to comply with these expectations. This claim is backed up by Mitra and Buzzanell (2018), as they show that taking sides in such social issues can escalate conflict and delegitimize companies. This escalation indicates that the institutional theory is still relevant nowadays as companies try to comply with the expectations they are exposed to.

Another notion that is extended in this research is the legitimacy theory. This theory is supported by the results here as it shows that external references are essential for companies that consider sustainability as a requirement. The theory indicates that these companies try to perform their activities in consensus with stakeholders' interests and access resources (Lefsrud et al., 2020). This research extends this notion by showing that companies reflect this

behaviour in their communication on their websites. Even though this theory exists for quite some time now, it appears that it is still relevant nowadays as companies still try to be perceived as legitimate. The impact of this finding is that it shows that companies need this compliance with external rules and expectations to continue with their production. These findings demonstrate the importance for companies to take the industries rules and regulations into account to prevent problems in their perceived legitimacy by institutions and customers.

Lastly, this research added to the discussion about whether organizational size increases the emphasis on sustainability efforts. Schreck and Raither (2018) claimed that this was the matter, while Gallo and Christensen (2011) neglected this. During the analysis of the websites of both small and big companies, the data identified no specific differences in the number of sustainability claim based on the organizational size. The sample also included small-sized companies that did refer a lot to multiple sustainability claims. If the company did consider sustainability, whether the size was big or small, the approach was similar. Both used external references, visuals, and buzzwords in their framing. Thus, these results do not fit with Schreck and Raither (2018) but do show resemblance with Gallo and Christenensen (2011).

Companies do not show differences in approach to sustainability based on their size but based on their position on sustainability. If these positions differ, the results show that the number of claims differs per company.

5.3 Practical and managerial implications

This research already explained the general characteristics of the industry in the methods section. That the industry is a contributor to pollution and climate change is identified in how sustainability issues are discussed. Many use these issues in their communication and use framing techniques to explain their relationship with sustainability. The results show that this industry is experiencing a move towards sustainability becoming the norm as half of the sample is positioning on it. Moreover, these results imply that the composition of companies are likely going to change if companies do not consider sustainability. Companies that offer transparency about sustainability are most likely the ones to survive. It is difficult for companies to gather legitimacy from their stakeholders if they do not comply with the environmental regulations. This implication is backed up by the findings of the Environics study (1999). This research also showed that most customers perceive sustainability as an essential notion that companies should consider.

Furthermore, Turker and Altuntas (2014) back up that sustainability is becoming the norm by stating that sustainability is an essential factor for this industry. If a company wants to

increase its chances of surviving, it should critically reflect on how it performs this task and whether this is good enough. However, these results lack insights into why a significant amount of the sample is still not incorporating sustainability. The reason might be because the sample consists of many companies operating on a small scale.

These results should be taken into account when considering how to use positive valence in framing. The findings influence companies' strategic management through the result that positive valence is used more than negative valence. This implies that managers in the fashion industry should focus more on framing with a positive valence. Companies must do this as clothes are primarily used as a form of self-expression. Through this notion, managers and their companies can be assured that they implement an effective form of communication. Through this positive valence, customers are more aware of the positive outcomes when they buy products from a company. The practical implication of using positive valence in messages is that it can help increase its sales. This notion implies that companies can become competitors in who frames their messages better. If one company frames their positive outcomes better than its competitors, this can convert more customers to leave the competition. Furthermore, by staying consistent in this positive framing, managers can increase the customer loyalty it is experiencing. This increase in loyalty is achieved through positive valence as customers can nowhere get such a good feeling from any other competitor.

Furthermore, based on Wang (2007), a company should be proactive in choosing a position around sustainability or another subject. Based on this position, a company can focus on its specific target market, which the messages focus on. Through this choice of a position, a company can begin to implement effective frames. The results from this analysis already showed which frames are most likely to work for a specific position on sustainability. Through the institutional theory, it is known that copying behaviour from competitors can work to make a company's framing at least as effective as their competitors. Based on the notions of Creed et al. (2002), with the impact of context on framing a position, a company can then start to implement nuances in their framing to comply with the expectations from the local government or specific target group.

As previously mentioned, the results show that companies that do not consider sustainability or see it as a requirement try to be as short as possible to prevent information overload and confusion. These results comply with Park et al. (1986). The practical implication for managers is that they must be sure that they do not use too much information in their communication. When producing such messages, the managers should ask themselves what

customers want to know and how they want to talk about these issues. The results show that how a company wants to talk about these issues depends on its position. The results show that companies must carefully approach their messaging as they do not want to create confusion, leading to customers not buying their products anymore. This relationship is also supported by Cunningham et al. (2008), who showed that too much information leads to customer confusion. Because of this finding, a manager must be sure that the implemented framing is short, simple, and easy to understand for the customers.

Nevertheless, the manager of a company that uses sustainability as its core for existence should use a more profound approach. For these managers, it is better to include more extended text sizes and to include more information. The results support this by providing insights that companies that consider sustainability as their core are more likely to provide analytical data. Creed et al. (2001) previously explained this difference, demonstrating that companies use different frames through the changing contexts. This notion implies that companies can provide more transparency in their communication to attract people with similar sustainability perspectives. Another notion that is likely to stem from this alignment is customer loyalty since the company and its customers share many norms and values that they both consider essential.

The notions from Garcia and Greenwood (2015) and Höllerer et al. (2018) comply with the results of this study. Managers must be aware of including visuals in their framing. The results demonstrate that most visuals used are related to the text. As supported by Höllerer et al. (2018), this relationship can increase the effectiveness of framing. While previous research has focused on reports, these results demonstrate that a company can also use visuals and text on websites. A manager should use this notion if it wants to prevent confusion by their customers about its position. Through those visuals, a manager can assure that its framing is more precise and effective in explaining its position on sustainability. The practical implications of using this combination are that the company can create transparency about its position and provide better customer service as the customer knows better what to expect from the company. Furthermore, sales will increase as this improved framing provides transparency which is likely to attract customers based on Rucker et al. (2008).

Furthermore, the data contributes a clearer understanding of how companies need to ensure that their composition of visuals and text is good. Through this, a company can frame their approach to sustainability consistently and reliably. The results show that managers can do this by being consistent in their approach towards framing and providing enough information

about their position on sustainability. According to Rucker et al. (2008), this is the right approach since customers are more likely to purchase one's products if they possess more excellent knowledge about those products and their production. Furthermore, managers must align the colours used with their message. Based on this relationship in the results, managers must include white, dark, and earth-tone colours when discussing sustainability. This notion aligns with Kauppinen-Räsänen and Jauffret (2018), as they show that the usage of colours has different meanings. Finally, a manager should consider if he wants to improve the effectiveness in its framing of a sustainability position. This study provides new insights into the relationship between framing and positioning on websites. Through the increased effectiveness of its framing, a company can be sure that the customers understand their messages on websites well and that it is clear what the company's position is on sustainability.

Lastly, the implications from the results, in combination with Mitra and Buzzanell (2018), show that managers must indeed be aware of the external requirements that are being opposed on the company. Managers must be sure that they comply with these rules and regulations. Otherwise, their legitimacy becomes threatened, and this can lead to decreased competitive position and sales. This research illustrates that companies must show that they have some external references to gather their legitimacy in their frames. Every company that is considering sustainability has at least one reference. This referencing is thus something that managers must do to maintain legitimacy. If managers prove to their customers that they have environmental-related references in their frame, this can increase the trustworthiness of the company. This action can improve the stability of the company's competitive position and increase product sales.

5.3 Limitations and research ethics

The limitation of using a qualitative approach is the difficulty of generalizing to a broader population (Morse, 1999). Therefore, these results only provide insights into the analyzed population. Additionally, only the fashion industry is analyzed. Therefore, this thesis does not take the dynamics of other industries and their issues around sustainability into account. Moreover, this research made a choice not to include any reports. Because of this choice, the focus maintained on the visuals and text used on the websites. This choice is made because no time was available to dig deeper into whether the dynamics are similar between websites and reports. For the sake of simplicity and time restrictions, the focus remained on websites. As a result, the data is not as extensive as possible if reports were used in the analysis.

Additionally, using websites makes it difficult to measure the internal motivation of companies. This difficulty means that the motivation that is measured is limited to external references. The ethics of the participants are addressed using stratified random samples of companies as a database (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013). A limitation identified with these participants is that only three countries are included. This limitation limits the overall reach of the company for the compatibility of the results in other countries.

Furthermore, only websites are used that use the Dutch and English language. Since the researchers do not understand Swedish, these websites are excluded. By having only Dutch and English websites, the question remains how well the different linguistic meanings of the words are considered. This notion can impact the reliability of the results as meanings of words may differ across languages. Another limitation is that this analysis may over present some companies in the sample by choosing companies randomly. If the included companies are mostly small shops with 1 or 2 employees, this can limit the generalizability of the results to the population. Out of the 144 companies, only 17 were Swedish. This number is enough to say something about these companies. However, it is somewhat limiting to use these results for the whole market concerning the local producers communicating in their native language.

Another limitation is related to the data. Websites are something that companies keep working on continuously. This notion means that the websites captured in this research are a snapshot. Some of the websites, if searched up after this research, can be changed. This dynamic means that the results in this research can be less relevant as those websites do not exist anymore in that specific form. Furthermore, because of the changed layout or changed text and visuals, the data can show different conclusions as companies might have included better techniques in framing their sustainability position. This dynamic development of websites limits the generalizability of the results and the conclusions drawn upon in this research. This development means that the results can appear to not be up to date. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this study to check the change of these websites over time.

Due to the lack of data from more countries, the results cannot confirm that these dynamics also occur in other countries. Therefore, it can be questioned how much these results will be representable for the whole industry. Moreover, these countries are not the leading ones in revenue of the fashion industry. The sample does not have companies from the leading countries based on yearly revenues, for example, LVMH from France and C&A from Germany. This exclusion can mean that the results do not entirely represent the fashion industry as these leading countries are not included.

5.4 Further recommendations

It is advised to extend the analysis to other forms of communication such as social media. Social media is experiencing increasing importance and impact on society. It is interesting to see whether the communication dynamics are similar with websites and, if not, what the differences exactly are.

Secondly, it would be practical to use researchers from multiple countries so that future research could incorporate more languages. Through this inclusion, future research can include more companies operating in domestic markets. In addition, this inclusion prevents the limitation that only companies that speak English or Dutch are included. Adding to this recommendation is to extend future research to more countries characterized by different cultures. These last two extensions would make the results more generalizable to the whole fashion industry.

Thirdly, it is interesting to extend the research to look at how sustainability is framed and its actions after that. Future research can check whether there is an alignment in communications and activities or whether the communication is preceding the actions or the other way around. This extension aligns with the known notion of ‘window dressing’ where companies say they will do one thing but end up doing something else. It is interesting to check whether this same notion exist based on the communication on websites.

Fourth, Wang (2007) showed that a company could choose a position in different social issues. Nevertheless, it is interesting for future research to check how these positions are taken in other industries or by other institutions like governments. For example, future research can extend this notion to the political area to check how governments differ in their position on sustainability and how they frame their messages consecutively. This can help to show whether the dynamics of framing a position are similar and what the differences might be. Furthermore, it is interesting to check how much industries differ in their positive and negative valence usage in customer communication. This study identified that most companies use positive valence. Future research could take this notion and check to what extent industries differ in this messaging.

As noted in the limitations, future research can check the dynamics of how companies change their websites over time. It would be interesting to see whether patterns are identified in the way how companies change their websites. Is there a dominant focus identified here? Is this change always an improvement, or do they make mistakes in this process? And if so, why do they make these mistakes and what is their impact?

Lastly, it is fascinating to check why some companies in the fashion industry do not consider

sustainability. This study identified this position. But, it remains unclear what their motivation for this exactly is. This finding does conflict with the dominant thought that the fashion industry is facing strong environmental regulations.

5.5 Reflection

When reflecting upon the process, I can mention several notions. Firstly, there was a struggle with keeping the academic writing on a quality level. Striving towards good academic writing hampered the thesis development. The writing lab, several feedback moments from the supervisor and second examiner, and students solved the problem. Another struggle from the beginning was the introduction. This chapter is changed completely a couple of times which took a significant portion of the time. It was not easy to align the introduction with the literature chapter since both were not finished. The difficulty here was that it was more important to develop the literature chapter before completing the opening. Once I did this, the problem was finding an excellent way to funnel the context towards the subject of this research. After all, the introduction was one of the most challenging chapters to write, reflecting the amount of time worked on it. In the future, I could reduce the time spent on the introduction by using more help from books such as Vennix (2016) and other literature sources.

Furthermore, Atlas's usage was problematic since I used such a program the first time. The problems encountered were related to merging the projects, setting up codes, and applying them efficiently over all the companies' websites. Sometimes the alignment in combining the work of the different researchers was difficult due to the lack of experience. I could not have done much differently here; this was mostly a case of time and trying the program.

Eventually, the group joined an Atlas workshop to become more profound in how it works. For the future, this can be done quickly now as more experience has been gathered with this program. Adding to Atlas.ti, the time used for the analysis was too long. The group used three weeks to encode all the websites. Afterwards, this could be done in 1 or 2 weeks max. This extra week is precious time lost that might have limited this research. Furthermore, that extra week could have helped make this research more extensive by including an additional SPSS analysis. The codes were finished on the 18th of May, which means two weeks were left to complete the concept results before presenting them on the 1st of June. Two weeks is a short time to provide the best quality possible. In the future, we can prevent this by having more faith in ourselves and being more sure that we can do the analysis quicker.

At last, a positive point in this process is that I can look back and be sure that I always gave maximum effort. Even though my work sometimes lacked quality, I was always focused on

the positive outcomes and took my motivation out of it. My motivation helped me to improve my capabilities and knowledge in writing a thesis. This motivation also helped me never to be late for a deadline and to include as much work as possible. Based on all this feedback received, I can be sure that my work improved a lot in quality.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to identify how organizations in the fashion industry frame their sustainability position. Sustainability is seen as a characteristic that companies can incorporate in their operations to experience positive outcomes for the environment, involved society, and in the end, the company themselves. Based on a qualitative analysis of the company's websites, it can be concluded that there are multiple ways of how these sustainability positions are framed. The sustainability positions identified are where sustainability is not incorporated, where sustainability is a requirement, and where sustainability is the reason for existence. These positions differ based on the judgements of the companies on sustainability. For example, if the company used sustainability as the main reason for existence, sustainability is crucial for the world and the environment. However, if sustainability is seen as a requirement, the companies framed this position by emphasizing compliance with the environmental rules. Lastly, the position where sustainability is seen as not necessary for the company is also identified. This answer is based on companies' reasoning when neglecting sustainability and discussing only their heritage and products.

Furthermore, the way these positions are framed is done in multiple ways. When looking at companies that do not matter about sustainability, it is shown that they focus on aspects such as quality and their heritage. These companies also focus more on the utility that customers gain when buying their products with delivering their messages. The difference in framing between companies that do consider sustainability is based on multiple notions. Both mostly use a positive valence in their text. Nonetheless, this text differs in size most often. If sustainability is the main reason for existence, it is more likely that the text size will increase and that the company will use an analytical approach. The buzzwords used in the framing also differs between these two positions. As a requirement, the sustainability position is framed through buzzwords relating to sustainability and production. At the same time, if it is the reason for existence, more focus is on buzzwords such as organic, responsibility, and innovations. Lastly, the photos used differ between the framing of these two positions. As sustainability is a requirement, more pictures are used where the images are dark and earth tone dominant. If it is the reason for existence, it uses primarily white colours.

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8. Appendix:
























Appendix 1: Main characteristics sample

Total companies included	144
Operating on a global scale	60
Operating on a local scale	84
Originating from Sweden	17
Originating from the UK	48
Originating from the Netherlands	79
Average Revenue per company (in thousands USD)	9,025
Average number of employees	17
Average age of the companies	28.3
Number of companies part of a group	50
Sole proprietorship	58
Partnership	32
Limited-liability company	41
Corporations	23
Private companies	62
Public companies	19
B2B companies	27

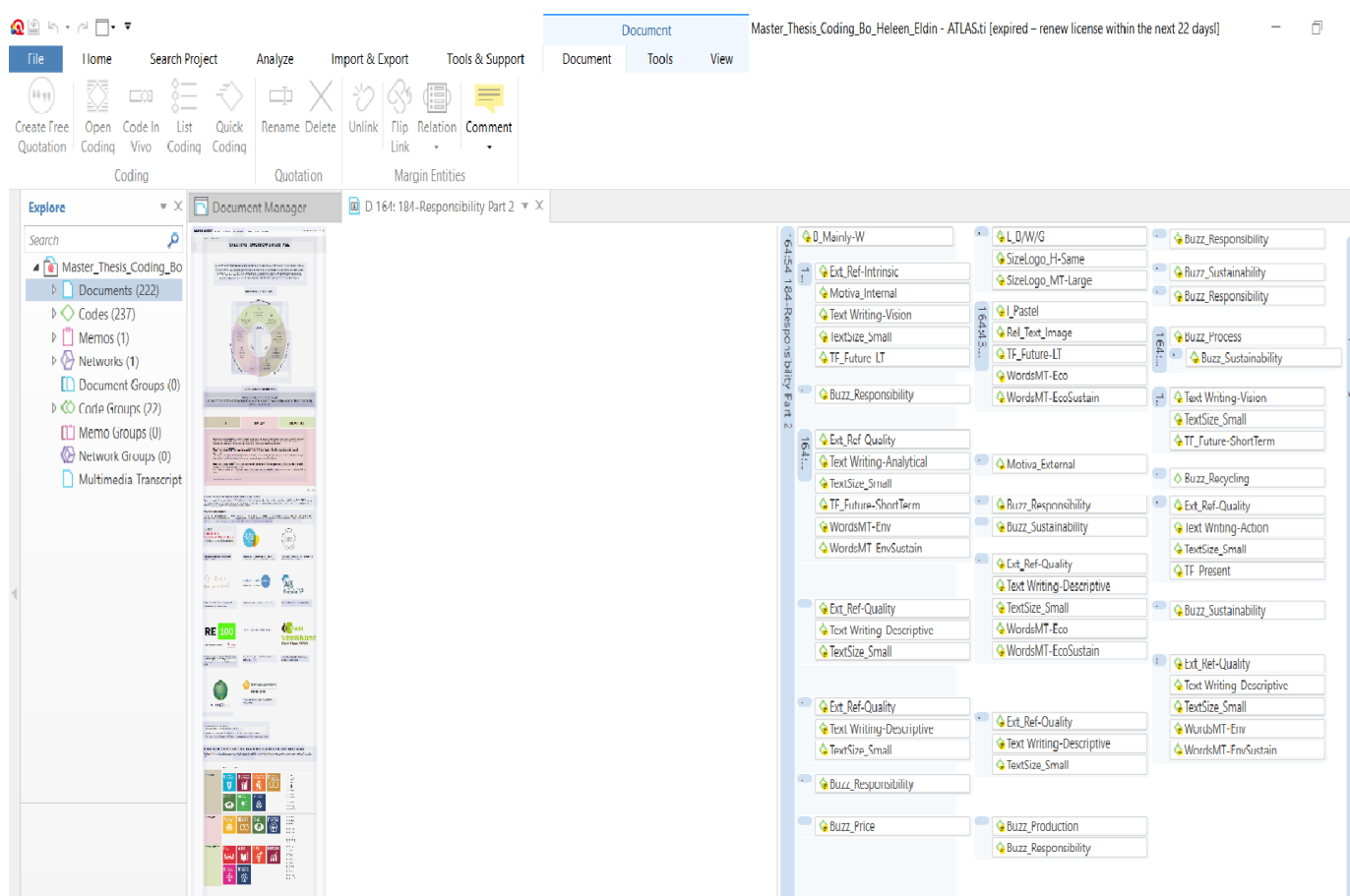
Appendix 2: Example Co-Occurrence option

Document Manager D 164: 184-Responsibility Part 2 Code Co-Occurrence ▾ ✕

Search

- ▲  Codes (237)
 -  ● Amount of External References {0-0} ~
 - ▶  ● Amount_Ref-High {58-0} ~
 - ▲  ● Amount_Ref-Limited {134-0} ~
 - ▶  ● B_B/W/G <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Bright <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Dark <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Earth <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Image <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Mainly-W <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● B_Pastel <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Buzz_Heritage <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Buzz_Process <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Buzz_Responsibility <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● I_B/W/G <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● I_Bright <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● I_Dark <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● I_Warm <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Image_Centre <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Image_Clothing <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Image_Environment <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Image_NatEnv <o> Amount_Ref-Limited
 - ▶  ● Image_People <o> Amount_Ref-Limited

Appendix 3: Overview Burberry webpage and its codes in Atlas.ti



Appendix 4: Screenshot of part of the researchers' shared document

Bo 1-134:

- De relatie tussen "eco", "env", "social" en sustainability.
 - Hieruit blijkt dat "environment" bijna alleen aanwezig is als het wordt genoemd in relatie tot sustainability. Environment is namelijk 167 gecodeerd, en 160 keer in relatie tot sustainability.
 - Social" is 223 gecodeerd en 111 keer in relatie tot sustainability. Dit wordt dus ook vaak genoemd zonder sustainability erbij te betrekken. Dus bedrijven laten vaak wel sociale bezigheden zien (werkomstandigheden, wie er werkt, sociale normen), waarbij ze sustainability niet altijd betrekken.
 - "Economic" is 307 keer gecodeerd, waarvan slechts 81 keer in relatie tot economische sustainability. Economische omstandigheden worden dus heel vaak genoemd zonder sustainability erbij te betrekken. Bedrijven benoemen namelijk vaak hun resources, maar niet altijd dat ze die efficiently, responsibly of in een sustainable manner gebruiken om profit te krijgen.
- Als een logo vaak voorkomt op een website (>1), is dit vooral bij grote bedrijven. Dit, terwijl er meer bedrijven in ons sample zitten die klein zijn (Organiz_Size-Small). Ook komt (Logo-1) in relatie tot SizelmagetoText_Smaller vaker voor dan SizelmagetoText_Larger, terwijl laatsgenoemde vaker voorkomt in totaal.
- Je hebt bedrijven die wel aan sustainability practices doen, maar zij benoemen de term "sustainability" (Buzz_Sustainability) of "responsibility" (Buzz_Responsibility) niet expliciet (27 - La Poesie, 100 – Doubletwo).
- Bedrijven die geen sustainability benoemen, benoemen vaak het productieproces en maken daarbij gebruik van buzz-words als "hand-made" en betrekken daar ook innovatieve termen bij (4 – Het Bruidsmesje, 16- BabyWear UK). Zijn vaak de bedrijven die zich ook niet met de lange termijn bezighouden. Zij focussen zich meer op het nu en op het verleden. Er kan onderscheid gemaakt worden tussen:
 - Bedrijven die zich meer op het productieproces en innovatie focussen, ook op de kwaliteit van producten (61)
 - Bedrijven die ook kleding ontwerpen of vermaken, zij gebruiken dan vaak het woord "hand-made". Vaak gaat dit samen met het benoemen van de medewerkers wie er werken en wie het doen (social bedriif 123 66 60

Appendix 5.1: The codebook pt.1

Code Name	Code Description	Code Group	Code Group
WordsMT	Hele tekst inclusief kopjes	Text	
WordsMT-Social	The words in the main text refer to social aspects	Text	
WordsMT-Env	The words in the main text refer to environmental aspects	Text	
WordsMT-Eco	The words in the main text refer to economic aspects	Text	
WordsMT-Ethic	The words in the main text refer to ethic aspects		
WordsMT - Sustainability (maintext)		Sustainability	Text
WordsMT-SocialSustain	The words in the main text refer to sustainable social aspects	Sustainability	Text
WordsMT-EnvSustain	The words in the main text refer to sustainable environmental aspects	Sustainability	Text
WordsMT-EcoSustain	The words in the main text refer to sustainable economic aspects	Sustainability	Text
WordsMT-EthicSustain	The words in the main text refer to ethical sustainability		
SizeLogo_MT - compared to main text (logo)		Logo	
SizeLogo_MT-Small	The logo has a smaller size than the main text	Logo	
SizeLogo_MT-Same	The logo has a similar size to the main text	Logo	
SizeLogo_MT-Large	The logo has a larger size than the main text	Logo	
SizeLogo_H - compared to headings (logo)		Logo	
SizeLogo_H-Smaller	The logo has a smaller size than the headings	Logo	
SizeLogo_H-Same	The logo has a similar size than the headings	Logo	
SizeLogo_H-Larger	The logo has a larger size than the headings	Logo	
Text Writing - Descriptive or Analytical		Text	
Text Writing-Descriptive	Describes a situation as it is; plain and simple	Text	
Text Writing-Analytical	The impact or consequence of a given situation	Text	
Text Writing-Vision	The actions that the company aims to do to reach their goals	Text	
Text Writing-Action	The actions that the company does to reach their goals	Text	
TextSize	The amount of text used on a webpage	Text	
TextSize_Small	0 - 200 words	Text	
TextSize_Medium	200 - 400 words	Text	
TextSize_Large	larger than 400 words	Text	
TextValence-Overall	Valence with regard to sustainability	Text	
TextValence_Neutral	Neutral description	Text	

Appendix 5.2: The codebook pt.2

TextValence_Negative	Negative description: focus on preventing negative outcomes	Text	
TextValence_Positive	Positive description: focus on positive outcomes	Text	
SizeImagetoText		Image	
SizeImagetoText_Smaller	Text smaller than images	Image	
SizeImagetoText_Similar	Text similar to images	Image	
SizeImagetoText_Larger	Text larger than images	Image	
Rel_Image_Text		Text	Image
Rel_Image_Text	Photo supports the text (text is more important)	Text	Image
Rel_Text_Image	Text supports the photo (photo is more important)	Text	Image
Rel_Image_NS	Text and photo unrelated	Text	Image
Logo-Amount		Logo	
Logo-not	Logo is not used	Logo	
Logo-1	Logo is used once	Logo	
Logo>1	Logo is used more than once	Logo	
T_Color-Scheme (text)		Color-scheme	Text
T_B/W/G	Black/white/Greytones	Color-scheme	Text
T_Pastel	Pastel colors	Color-scheme	Text
T_Bright	Bright Colors	Color-scheme	Text
T_Dark	Dark Colors	Color-scheme	Text
T_Earth	Earth-tones	Color-scheme	Text
T_Mainly-W	Mainly white	Color-scheme	Text
T_Warm	Warm Colors	Color-scheme	Text
T_Cool	Cool colors	Color-scheme	Text
L_Color-Scheme (logo)		Color-scheme	Logo
L_B/W/G	Black/white/Greytones	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Pastel	Pastel colors	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Bright	Bright Colors	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Dark	Dark Colors	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Earth	Earth-tones	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Mainly-W	Mainly white	Color-scheme	Logo

Appendix 5.3: The codebook pt.3

L_Warm	Warm Colors	Color-scheme	Logo
L_Cool	Cool colors	Color-scheme	Logo
I_Color-Scheme (image)		Color-scheme	Image
I_B/W/G	Black/white/Greytones	Color-scheme	Image
I_Pastel	Pastel colors	Color-scheme	Image
I_Bright	Bright Colors	Color-scheme	Image
I_Dark	Dark Colors	Color-scheme	Image
I_Earth	Earth-tones	Color-scheme	Image
I_Mainly_W	Mainly white	Color-scheme	Image
I_Warm	Warm Colors	Color-scheme	Image
I_Cool	Cool colors	Color-scheme	Image
B_Background used on Website		Color-scheme	Background
B_B/W/G	Black/white/Greytones	Color-scheme	Background
B_Pastel	Pastel colors	Color-scheme	Background
B_Bright	Bright Colors	Color-scheme	Background
B_Dark	Dark Colors	Color-scheme	Background
B_Earth	Earth-tones	Color-scheme	Background
B_Mainly-W	Mainly white	Color-scheme	Background
B_Warm	Warm Colors	Color-scheme	Background
B_Cool	Cool colors	Color-scheme	Background
B_Image	Image	Color-scheme	Background
Buzz-words		Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Organic		Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Hand-made		Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Heritage	Since ... years, long history, tradition, origin of production, location	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Distinctive/characteristic	Unique, fashionable, extensive collection, level of quality, colorful	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Price	Price, payment	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Innov/techno	Innovation, technology, nieuwe technieken, "change"	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Sustainability	Term "sustainability"/"sustainable" (= duurzaam) explicitly mention	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_LOI	Level of importance (of sustainability)	Buzz-words	Text

Appendix 5.4: The codebook pt.4

Buzz_Production	Making of the garments; the action of making/manufacturing; small	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Responsibility	Responsibility is explicitly mentioned	Buzz-words	Text
Buzz_Customer	Explicitly mentioned		
Buzz_Process	Set of activities from beginning to end (HR, sales, marketing, etc)	Buzz-words	Text
Images		Image	
Image_Social	armoede, lachende kinderen etc.	Image	
Image_Economic	productie processen etc.	Image	
Image_Environment	natuur, dieren etc.	Image	
Images		Image	
Image_NatEnv	Natural Environment	Image	
Image_People	People	Image	
Image_Machines	Machines	Image	
Image_Resources	Components/inputs of the end product (textiles, ribbons)	Image	
Image_Clothing	Clothing	Image	
Image alignment on page	Placement of image on page	Image	
Image_Top	Image located at the top of the page	Image	
Image_Bottom	Image located at the bottom of the page	Image	
Image_Side	Image located at the side of the page	Image	
Image_Centre	Image centered on page	Image	
Origin	Language used on webpage	Origin	
Origin_SE	Sweden	Origin	
Origin_UK	United-Kingdom	Origin	
Origin_NL	The Netherlands	Origin	
Motivation for sustainability		Text	
Motiva_External	External - Compliance to certifications, regulations and laws. Sust	Text	
Motiva_Internal	Internal - Sustainability isolated for the public and org. actions	Text	
Time Focus		Time Focus	
TF_Past	Past; data die al verstreken zijn	Time Focus	
TF_Present	Present	Time Focus	
TF_Future-ShortTerm	Future - Short Term	Time Focus	

Appendix 5.5: The codebook pt.5

TF_Future-LT	Future - Long Term	Time Focus	
Mismatch	Words used not connected to the subject of the paragraph	Mismatch	
MM_Challenging	Mismatch between sustainability and economic goals; kan niet alle	Mismatch	
MM_Tradeoff	Making a choice between sustainability and economic goals	Mismatch	
OperationScale	Are sales locally or globally oriented	Operations Scale	
Operation-Local		Operation Scale	
Operation-Global/International		Operation Scale	
Sustainability profit	Helps with identifying the type of framing	Text	Framing
SP_Self-Serving	Sustainability used for self-serving interests (dead stock; kosten v	Text	Framing
SP_Societal	Sustainability used for societal interests (= pollution tegengaan, kv	Text	Framing
External Legitimacy		Text	Legitimacy
Ext_Ref-Quality	Focus mainly on quality certifications	Text	Legitimacy
Ext_Ref-Intrinsic	Focus mainly on internal reasons	Text	Legitimacy
Ext_Ref-Economic	Focus mainly on economic resources required for actions	Text	Legitimacy
Amount of External Reference	ISO-certifications, (UN) reports, Laws	Text	
Amount_Ref-Limited	Amount of external references are low. 0 to 1 references.	Text	
Amount_Ref-Medium	Amount of external references are medium. 2 to 3 references.	Text	
Amount_Ref-High	Amount of external references are high. 3 or more references.	Text	
Organizational size		Organizational size	
Organiz_Size-One	One employee	Organizational size	
Organiz_Size-Small	Between 2-20 employees	Organizational size	
Organiz_Size-Large	21 or more employees	Organizational size	
Date	Datum van schrijven van de website	Text	
Date_Past	Specifieke datum die genoemd is op de website	Text	

Appendix 6: Code division per concept

Concept:	Code:
Sustainability	<u>WordsMT-Sustainability</u>
	Text Valence
	Motivation for sustainability
Positioning	Time Focus
	Motivation for sustainability
	Sustainability profit
	External Legitimacy
	Amount of External References
Framing	Text Writing
	<u>TextSize</u>
	<u>TextValence-Overall</u>
	Buzz-words
	Images
	<u>I_Color-Scheme (image)</u>
	<u>Rel_Image_Text</u>

Appendix 7: The three types of sustainability in a text by Environ-Design

ENVIRON-DESIGN

THAT IS WHY WE ARE HAPPY TO INTRODUCE YOU TO WASTE2WEAR!

WASTE2WEAR IS A TEXTILE ENGINEERING COMPANY, WHO FOCUS THEIR SKILLS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE TEXTILES MADE FROM POST-CONSUMER PLASTIC WASTE IN A RESPONSIBLE AND FULLY TRANSPARENT VALUE CHAIN. WHILE DOING SO, THEY AIM TO INSPIRE AND CHALLENGE OTHERS TO MAKE FASHION AND TEXTILES A FORCE FOR GOOD. WASTE2WEAR OPERATES WITH THE STRONG CONVICTION THAT PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY AND VALUE-BASED BUSINESS IS THE FUTURE. READ MORE ABOUT [WASTE2WEAR](#) AND WHERE THEY STAND FOR.

FOR ENVIRON DESIGN PRODUCTS WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR INNOVATIVE MATERIALS THAT ARE LESS HARMFUL TO OUR PLANET. USING WASTE2WEAR® FABRICS MADE FROM RECYCLED PLASTIC BOTTLES, WE USE 75% LESS CO2 / 86% LESS WATER AND 70% LESS ENERGY.

LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR PLANET TOGETHER BY PAYING ATTENTION AND BUYING RECYCLED POLYESTER FABRICS MADE FROM POST-CONSUMER PLASTIC WASTE. SEE OUR CLOTHING PIECES. THIS WAY YOU DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE TO A CLEANER WORLD.



Source: <https://www.environ-design.com/clean-the-world>.

Appendix 8: Example connecting sustainability with company benefits by Serolo

Improve. In a world where we now have overexploited the earth's resources, there's only one way to go forward and we must talk together to get what's required. In cooperation based on relevant knowledge we can both innovate and improve.

Source: <https://www.serolo.se/>

Appendix 9: Example by Barbour

From the beginning and throughout our history, we have always been committed to the welfare, health and safety of all our employees and suppliers and to delivering socially and environmentally responsible products to our customers. We are committed to ethical sourcing and respect for human rights and we work hard to reduce our impact on the environment. As the market leader in manufacturing waxed cotton garments, we are proud to offer a unique global customer service whereby our customers can maintain their waxed cotton jackets by sending them to us to be rewaxed or repaired in order to sustain and extend the life of their jacket.

Source: <https://www.barbour.com/our-csr-statement>.

Appendix 10: Example external motivation by I Just Saw It

Our suppliers have also been advised that when preparing to re-open, failure to undertake a risk assessment can result in an enforcement notice being issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or your local council.

We have also taken the opportunity to re-iterate our zero-tolerance approach to the following.

- Unsafe working environment
- Work which is not voluntary e.g. bonded, trafficked or forced
- Use of prison labour
- Child labour (under country legal minimum age but over 15)
- Falsification of wages and hours records
- Non-payment of national minimum wage
- Sexual, physical abuse, harassment, or discrimination

Source: <https://www.isawitfirst.com/pages/faqs#responsibility>.

Appendix 11: Example external reference by Burberry

MEMBER OF

**Dow Jones
Sustainability Indices**

In Collaboration with RobecoSAM 

Leading luxury brand in the 2018 Dow Jones
Sustainability Index.

Source: <https://www.burberryplc.com/en/responsibility/approach-to-responsibility.html>.

Appendix 12: Example inherent reasoning instead of economic references if sustainability is core by Ayten Gassion + Clothing used in visuals



Competing with the high street - and their mass produced items – is difficult due to the higher prices paid for sourcing ethical materials and trims. But we believe this is a very important issue on an environmental and social level and will always attempt to produce our lingerie as sustainable as possible.

Source: <https://www.aytengasson.com/blogs/news/ethical-production-at-ayten-gasson>.

Appendix 13: Example future and past focus by O'Neills and Focus on the past as sustainability is not considered by O'Neills:



S I N C E 1 9 1 8

Our Story

The first O'Neills size 5 footballs were produced in 1918 by Charles O'Neill & Co., a company founded from Charles' family home on Dublin's Capel Street. During the next 50 years, O'Neills became renowned as the manufacturer of footballs and hurling balls for Gaelic games.

In 1955, following the passing of his father, Paul O'Neill took stewardship of the company. His bold ambition saw the company venture into the textile industry and the manufacture of sporting apparel.

Through the expansion of facilities in Walkinstown and Strabane, acquisition of dye houses and investment in state-of-the-art knitting technologies, Paul's vision of an entirely vertically integrated manufacturing operation has been realised. Today, each stage of the production process is overseen from the knitting of yarn through dyeing, cutting, sewing, printing and embroidery to produce high quality sport and leisurewear garments.

Over 100 years later, O'Neills is still producing the famous size 5 footballs and is still a 100% Irish owned company. From a staff of 3 in 1918, O'Neills has established itself as Ireland's largest sportswear manufacturer, employing more than 900 people across Ireland, the UK, France, Australia and beyond. Our production experience, innovation and design, has been extended from Gaelic games to include Soccer, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Boxing, Cricket and Athletics among a range of other sports.

We appreciate your custom, thank you for shopping at O'Neills.

Source: https://www.oneills.com/int_en/our-story.

Focus on the future as sustainability is considered by Cars Jeans:

Cars Jeans Cares

Cars Jeans maakt al bijna 40 jaar jeans. Wij investeren in het verduurzamen van het produceren van onze kleding. Duurzaamheid is een erg belangrijk speerpunt voor ons.

Duurzaamheid is voor ons als organisatie terug te vinden in duurzaam ondernemen, het steeds meer maken van duurzame collecties, het onderhouden van lange termijn relaties met klanten en leveranciers en proberen steeds duurzamer te zijn in onze bedrijfsprocessen.

Kernwaarden op gebied duurzaamheid voor Cars Jeans

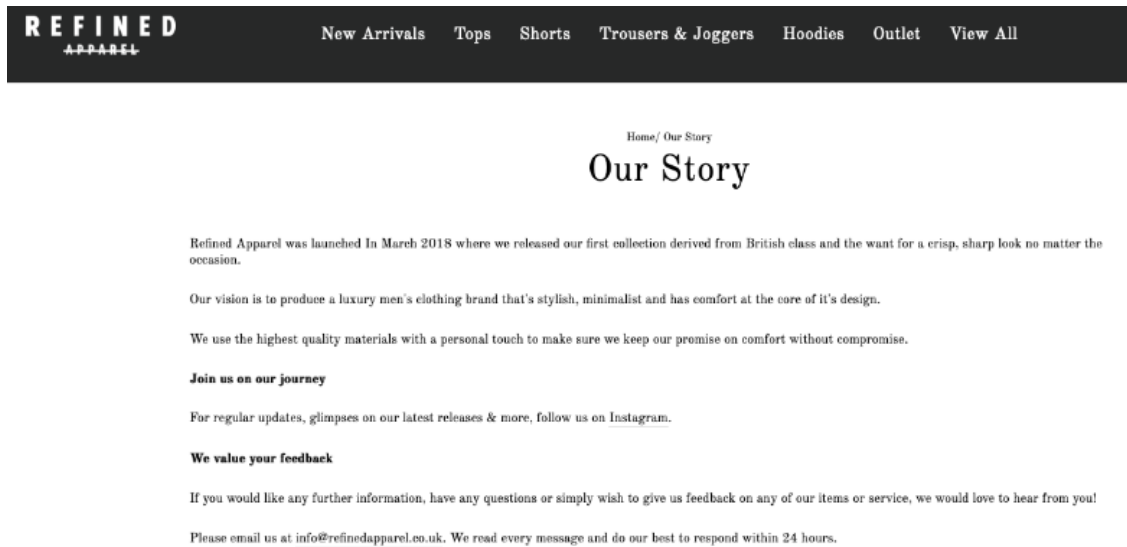
- We staan voor lange termijn relaties met leveranciers
- April komt onze 1e organic cotton jeans
- Deze jeans is gemaakt van organic cotton. Dit houdt in dat de jeans is gemaakt van katoen dat is geteeld zonder het gebruik van landbouwgif.
- Ook wordt voor het maken van jeans minder water gebruikt.
- De verzending van onze pakketten wordt gedaan van gerecycled karton
- Ons nieuwe kantoor wordt energie neutraal
- Onze bedrijfsauto's worden allemaal elektrisch
- Wij zijn een bontvrij merk

We willen onze klanten inspireren in het maken van duurzamere keuzes. Duurzaam gemaakte kleding dat is geproduceerd doormiddel van verantwoorde productie en duurzame materialen zal daarom ook steeds belangrijker worden in de keuzes die wij maken als organisatie. In 2025 streven wij erna dat al onze kleding op deze manier wordt geproduceerd.

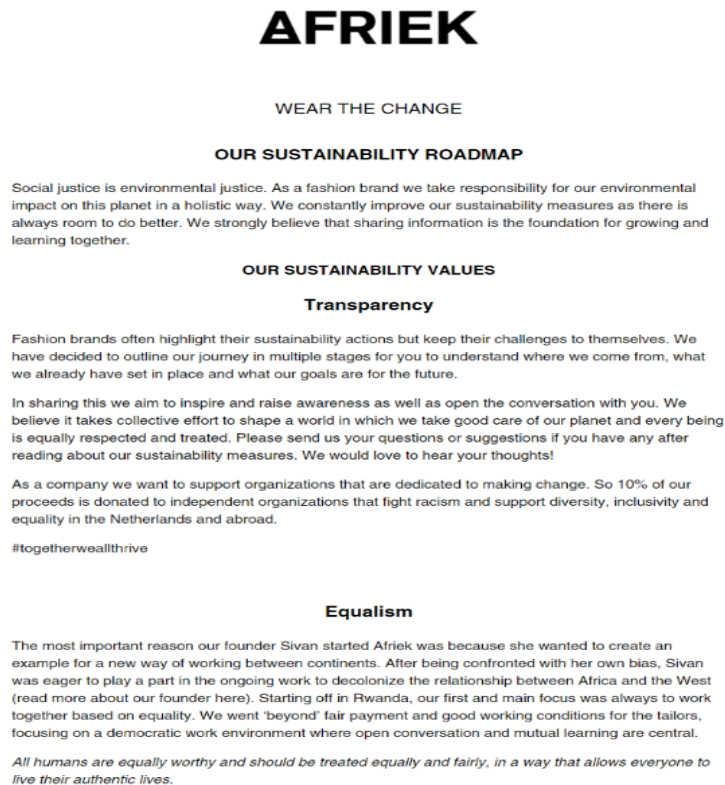
Source: <https://www.carsjeans.nl/nl/sustainable>.

Appendix 14: Example three companies positioning themselves on sustainability

1. Refined Apparel. Source: <https://refinedapparel.co.uk/pages/about-us>. Example of not considering sustainability:



2. Afriek. Source: <https://afriek.com/pages/faq>. Example of sustainability as core for existence:



3. Burberry. Source: <https://www.burberryplc.com/en/responsibility/approach-to-responsibility.html>. Example of sustainability as a requirement:

MATERIALITY

Our 2022 goals were developed with the help of key stakeholders, to address the most material issues for our business, as well as the most pressing social and environmental needs along our value chain.

They have been informed by the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, resulting in, for example: the development of our Manufacturing Excellence programme focused on going beyond compliance and driving worker wellbeing in our supply chain (in support of SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth); or our commitment to 100% renewable energy (in support of SDG 13 – Climate Action); or our funding, through the Burberry Foundation, of a community programme in Afghanistan to promote both economic and gender equality (SDGs 5 and 10 – Gender Equality and Reduced Inequalities).

Our product, energy and waste goals have been informed by science and by over ten years of experience in developing and implementing social and environmental programmes. Our targets have also been influenced by a multi-stakeholder event we convened in July 2015. This included experts from academia, NGOs and businesses from a variety of industries, with whom we shared our early plans and whose input and comments we used to shape our journey ahead.

When developing our community focused programmes, we first worked with our Product Development, Sourcing and Business Strategy teams to identify key locations along our value chain where we have the biggest impacts and where we are uniquely placed to make a difference. We then liaised with external expert organisations, to identify local community needs and effective ways to address these.

Our 2022 goals and commitments were assessed for materiality and signed off by our senior leadership team and company Board. Progress is reported publicly in our [Annual Report](#) and on this website.

In 2013, we set up the Burberry Impact Advisory Committee, comprising external experts. They play the role of 'critical friends', joining the Burberry Responsibility team four times a year to hear progress updates, comment on draft strategies and generally challenge and support the team. Please see the latest BRAC statement [here](#).

Appendix 15: Example buzzwords usage if sustainability is core by Afriek



Organic Cotton

Since 2019 we shifted our focus to organic cotton as we prefer local production, we collaborate with a local and organic cotton company in North-East Tanzania, as well as a local mill in Rwanda for the production of our fabrics.

Cotton Production

Our founder has personally visited both cotton cooperatives [BioRe](#) and [BioSustain](#) and met with the CEO's and the farmers. Knowing that both companies were set up with the intention to support the farmers in growing organic cotton in a holistic way that benefits the planet - through crop rotation and no use of toxic pesticides - and the people, meaning education on sustainability and guaranteed buying of the cotton. Additionally, the organizations are certified with OEKO-TEX ensuring us that these are the best organizations to collaborate with.

Cotton manufacturing

For the small collection we are producing, it is hard to find a factory that has low minimum order quantities. We work with the only local mill in Rwanda, where the cotton is spun, woven, treated and printed. This is the first time in a long while that they work with organic cotton, but we hope to expand this together in the future. Our manufacturer is [UTEXRWA](#) (Rwanda).

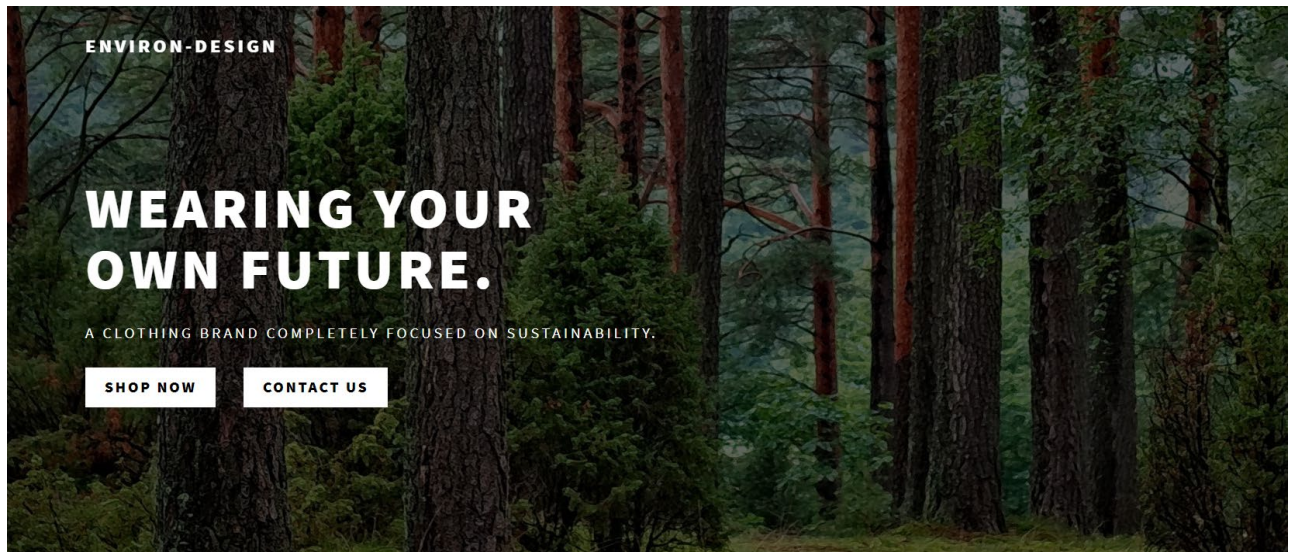
Source: <https://afriek.com/pages/faq>.

Appendix 16: Example short text size by Burberry

Burberry's commitment to sustainability is long-standing, grounded in the belief that for our future growth, we need to actively address the challenges facing our industry and the world in which we live. We are dedicated to reducing our environmental footprint and enabling social progress as we help transform our industry through powerful collaborations.

Source: <https://www.burberryplc.com/en/responsibility/approach-to-responsibility.html>.

Appendix 17: Example relation visuals with text by Environ-Design



Source: <https://www.environ-design.com/>.

Appendix 18: Example visuals supporting the text by Janna Drakeed

Fabrics

Starting from 2016 we use Eco friendly fabrics in our production. They are made of recycled plastics such as fishing nets recovered by the Healthy Seas initiative, pre- and post-consumer waste. These are then 100% regenerated to a new ECONYL® fiber which our swimsuit fabrics are made of. This helps decrease the plastic waste piles as well as not using any new fossils to produce material. Sustainable fashion is something we think is extremely important when fashion is seen as a trend that can be thrown out. Our swimwear are made to last from high quality fabrics and timeless designs.



Fishing nets left in the oceans cause harm to all sea life. Part of the nylon used in our fabrics come from recovered fishing nets, harvested to be recycled.

All our fabrics are OEKO-TEX Standard type II approved. Meaning they are made without harmful chemicals and are safe to be worn in direct contact to the skin.

Prints

Our prints are our own, you will not find them anywhere else. We produce a limited amount each year meaning they might run out and not be re-printed next year. Pre-orders are advised around April to be sure to get the color/print you crave for.

Production

It started with a limited production sewn entirely by Janna in her studio. Janna still does some of the sewing and all of the sampling and designs herself, but with time the brand outgrew the studio and is now partly sewn with the help of a small scale factory in Estonia. The workers of the factory work by good conditions, sweatshop free and with a good salary.

Source: http://www.jannadrakeed.com/blog/?page_id=624.

Appendix 19: Example using visuals of resources by Björn Bjorg

BIOLOGISCHE HENNEP



Hennep is een gewas dat geen meststoffen nodig heeft en aanzienlijk minder water gebruikt dan katoen. Het voelt een beetje aan als linnen en is zeer duurzaam. Hennep heeft ook antistatische eigenschappen, reflecteert tot 95% van al het uv-licht en is volledig biologisch afbreekbaar en recyclebaar, waardoor een gesloten kringloopproces mogelijk is.

Source: <https://www.bjornborg.com/nl/sustainability/sustainable-materials>.

Appendix 20: Example usage white visuals by Eton



Source: <https://www.etonshirts.com/en>.

Appendix 21: Overview dynamics between framing, sustainability, and positioning

