

Consumer perceptions of CSR in the apparel industry:

Studying the relationship between CSR communication and consumer perception of legitimacy.

Student name: Fleur Mosterdijk

Student number: 349579

Supervisor: Dr. Vidhi Chaudhri

Master Media Studies – Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture & Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CSR IN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY

ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been argued to form a new criterion for consumers to judge companies. In other words, CSR has become an important factor in the consumer perception of organizations. Social issues have been gaining a lot of attention in the apparel industry in the past couple of years, so the CSR policies of clothing brands have been under scrutiny. This study investigates how CSR communication can help constructing a consumer perception of legitimacy. An online survey was used to assess consumer perceptions of 127 respondents. A quantitative analysis using, among others, ANOVA tests, showed the importance of transparency, non-controllable channels and moralistic justifications in CSR communication in the apparel industry. These conclusions can assist clothing brands in making decisions based on consumer preferences for their CSR communication and serve as an exploratory basis for future academic research.

KEYWORDS: Apparel industry, Consumer Perceptions, Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR Communication, Legitimacy, the Netherlands

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1. Introduction

The topic of this research is the consumer perspective on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication in the apparel industry. Previous research on this topic has shown that CSR has become an additional criterion for stakeholders to judge organizations (Lewis, 2003). In other words, CSR has become more important for the consumer perception of an organization. This is not the only argument in favor of business' paying attention to CSR as there may also be other benefits for firms that engage in CSR activities, such as cost and risk reduction, gaining a competitive advantage, developing reputation and legitimacy and seeking win-win outcomes through value creation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

Even though there are many perspectives on CSR and the effect it has on consumers, there is a gap in literature on the consumer perspective on CSR in the apparel industry. The apparel industry has changed in the past decades from a localized production and distribution to an enormous global industry, of which production and distribution is now spread out over different regions with variations in regulation, employment, environment protection and wage levels (Laudal, 2010). This provides organizations within the clothing industry with dilemmas regarding legal and moral standards. In the last couple of years, these standards have been discussed in the media more often as well, ever since some large international brands received negative publicity because of the use of sweatshops in their production chains (Arrigo, 2013; Chi, 2011; Goworek, 2011). Because of this increasing media attention and negative publicity, clothing brands may start to question whether they need to align business with certain moral expectations from society.

Organizations in general are critiqued more often regarding CSR subjects (Lewis, 2003) and this is not different for the apparel industry. For example when a textile factory in Bangladesh collapsed where multiple huge clothing brands had their products produced (Motlagh, 2014; O'Connor, 2014; Yardley, 2013). Also, the large clothing brand G-Star put out a collection of clothes that are produced using waste from the sea, which shows their increased interest in CSR initiatives and a more sustainable way of producing clothes (<http://rawfortheoceans.g-star.com/>). In the Netherlands (the country of focus for this thesis) there has been increasing attention for these and more CSR subjects in the textile industry. Brands are being criticized in the media for bad labor conditions in textile factories ("Nog veel mis," 2014; De Weerd, 2014; Huiskamp, 2013; Van der Hee, 2014), but also CSR initiatives and actions receive attention ("Primark: berichten in kledinglabels," 2014; "Bewuste Modeliefhebber," 2014).

Not only can CSR initiatives of clothing brands be important to avoid criticism from the media or other pressure groups, but it can also provide business benefits. Among other benefits, CSR has been argued to increase reputation (Worcester, 2009) and enhance consumer trust and loyalty. A positive consumer evaluation of CSR practices is critical to these business benefits. In order to achieve these positive outcomes, communication plays an important role (Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011). The question remains if consumers find it important to know about the CSR initiatives of clothing companies and if so, what exactly they want to know. Consumer perception is a broad concept including many different dimensions. As this is too broad for this thesis, the choice was made to focus on one specific dimension of consumer perception: the perception of legitimacy.

Legitimacy is defined as follows: “Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). A consumer perception of legitimacy is important to organizations, as it is a long-term general positive perception that does not easily change. It constructs an understanding of organizations as it provides consumers unconsciously with logical reasons for organizational actions. Legitimate organizations stand strong when for example a crisis occurs (Suchman, 1995). Furthermore, being legitimate is necessary to exert influence over others (Tyler, 2006). The link between CSR and legitimacy has been made in previous research, as organizations have been argued to search for moral legitimacy through their CSR activities (Castelló & Lozano, 2011). CSR communication specifically has been argued to be important for organizations to respond to public pressures and create/maintain legitimacy in the eyes of society (Farache & Perks, 2010). A constitutive view on communication is adopted in this thesis, as other views neglect the formative role communication can have for organizations (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). Consequently, there is a need to investigate what kind of CSR communication constitutes a consumer perception of legitimacy. Previous research on CSR in the apparel industry has mostly focused on perceptions of specific CSR dimensions and CSR in general (Armstrong et al., 2014; Gupta & Hodges, 2012; Hiller Connell, 2011; Jensen, 2012). The communication aspect has been neglected, while CSR communication plays an important role in constituting organizational meaning and understanding.

Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the question: *How can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry?* The sub-questions that follow from this question are:

- What are consumer’s CSR communication preferences?

- What kind of justification is perceived as the most legitimate in CSR communication?

The answers to these questions can start filling the gap of knowledge about consumer perceptions of CSR communication for the apparel industry. Furthermore, regarding practical relevance, the outcome of this thesis will show how organizations can optimize their CSR communication to position themselves as legitimate entities. This knowledge can be used by clothing brands to adapt their CSR communication strategies to fit with consumer expectations. This may enhance their reputation and increase their chance of a long-term general positive consumer perception that flows from the perception of a legitimate organization.

There has been some research on consumer perceptions of CSR in the apparel industry, but this is often focused on only one subject of CSR, for example, sustainability. The perceptions can differ per industry and also per country. Consumers in the Netherlands have not often been researched on this topic before, especially in relation to the apparel industry, while research on consumer perceptions has been proved important to achieve positive outcomes of a CSR communication strategy (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). CSR communication makes sure third parties know about the initiatives of clothing brands regarding social responsibility. Communication is used by organizations to transfer information, but at the same time it is interpreted by the audience, who use it to give sense to concepts, organizations, initiatives etc. In that way, CSR communication has a constitutive function and can construct consumer perceptions, including a consumer perception of legitimacy (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). A positive consumer evaluation of the ethical statements of clothing brands are important to achieve a positive evaluation of CSR and eventually an outcome of enhanced consumer perceptions of the brand (Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011). This thesis shows how clothing brands can use CSR communication in a way to help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. First, a theoretical framework will outline theories and previous research related to the concepts in the research questions. Theories on CSR in general will be outlined, previous research on consumer perceptions of CSR, CSR communication theories and theories on legitimacy. Then, these concepts will be linked to the apparel industry specifically. The theoretical framework will tease out the gaps in academic literature, to argue the academic relevance of this research. Second, the method will be discussed in detail. To answer the research questions, data is needed on the perceptions of apparel consumers. The focus of this thesis is on getting a broad overview of different

perceptions and opinions of apparel consumers, which is why a quantitative survey is the chosen method. A quantitative approach makes it easier for the researcher to analyze a large amount of variables on patterns and relationships (Sapsford, 2007). As the relation between CSR communication and a perception of legitimacy is the basis for the research question, this research will benefit from this approach. The process of the analysis will be described in the method section. Third, the findings of the analysis will be described in detail to lay the groundwork for the answer to the research question. In the discussion section the findings will be related to the theoretical framework and possibly other theories and researches. Fourth, the conclusion will argue the limitations of this research and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter theories and previous scholarship related to the research question will be outlined. Important topics that are discussed are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), CSR communication, legitimacy and CSR in the apparel industry. The theoretical framework serves as a basis for this research, as it shows the ready available knowledge related to the research question and gaps in current academic knowledge. Furthermore the used research method, a survey, includes questions that are grounded in these theories.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

There are many different theories on Corporate Social Responsibility and in these theories not always the same definition is used. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a meaning, but this meaning is not always the same for everybody (Garriga & Melé, 2004). According to Garriga and Melé (2004), it is possible to divide the views on CSR in four different types of theories: instrumental, political, integrative and ethical. The instrumental theories view CSR as a strategic tool to achieve economic goals and create more profit. Political theories focus on interactions and connections between business and society and often find that the power of business is the reason for their necessary responsible behavior. Integrative theories view CSR as a way to integrate demands of the society in the business' behavior. These theories often argue that business needs society to exist. The last group of theories is the group of ethical theories, which state that the relationship between business and society is based on ethical requirements (Garriga & Melé, 2004).

According to Dahlsrud (2006), the reason for the many different definitions of CSR is that CSR is a social construct and therefore it is impossible to develop an unbiased definition (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). However, it is possible to study similarities between the available definitions. Dahlsrud (2006) analyzed 37 definitions and found that five dimensions are included within these definitions, some more often than others. The five dimensions are: environmental dimension, social dimension, economic dimension, stakeholder dimension and voluntariness dimension. The environmental dimension is mentioned less frequently than the others, the stakeholder and social dimension the most (Dahlsrud, 2006). Important to note is that not all definitions are equally significant to understand how CSR is defined: the ones that are used the most frequently are more important than definitions that are rarely used (Dahlsrud, 2006).

There is one definition of CSR that has been used for research for over 25 years (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). It says: “The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). It implies that society has expectations of businesses to act not only according to economic and legal obligations, but also according current ethical values of society. This definition is based on Carroll’s (1991) CSR pyramid, which implies that four types of social responsibility constitute total CSR: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic. The economic responsibility encompasses the historically established goal for economic entities to provide goods and services to societal members, with making profit as the incentive. This is the basis of all responsibilities, as it is the main reason for entrepreneurship. At the same time businesses are expected to comply with laws and regulations enforced by governments. This legal responsibility is part of the ‘social contract’ between business and society. The ethical responsibility of business includes those practices that are expected by society, but not enforced by law. This responsibility includes the expected obligation for companies to do what is right, just and fair. It can be seen as the next layer of the CSR pyramid that embraces new emerging values and norms. This layer is interplaying with both the economic and legal layers, as it can push legal responsibilities to expand. Last, the philanthropic responsibilities include activities in response to society’s expectations of businesses to be a good ‘corporate citizen’, for example financial contributions to the arts, education or community. The difference between the ethical and philanthropic responsibility layer is that firms that do not execute any philanthropic activities or initiatives are not regarded as unethical. Philanthropy is more voluntary. The four layers of the pyramid are presented in the image below (Carroll, 1991).



Figure 1: A re-created pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991, p. 42).

Dahlsrud's (2006) research showed that the definition of the Commission of the European Communities (2001) is used most often according to a frequency count using Google: "A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (European Communities, 2001, p. 6). This definition is more recent than the one from Carroll (1979) and shows some development in the interpretation of CSR. In comparison to Carroll's (1979) definition, this one is less focused on society's expectations and more on types of 'concerns'. While Carroll (1979) focused on different levels of responsibility, the more recent definition focuses on specific types of concerns: social and environmental. It seems like the definition of the Commission of European Communities (2001) makes the assumption that companies have ethical responsibilities without question, while Carroll (1979) leaves more room for different societal opinions regarding the responsibilities of companies.

Carroll's (1979) definition is used for this master thesis, because it incorporates most of the dimensions: the social, economic, stakeholder and voluntariness dimension. It is a broad definition, therefore the environmental dimension is not specifically mentioned. However, the environmental dimension could be a part of the ethical expectations, since environmental expectations can be considered a type of ethical responsibilities society could expect. Also, the definition of Carroll (1979) leaves more room for different consumer interpretations and does not make the assumption that companies have ethical responsibilities. The interpretations of company's responsibilities may differ per consumer, which is interesting for this thesis to research as well.

This previous research shows the definition of CSR is not the same for all parties, since it depends on perception and social constructs. Even in previous scholarship, opinions differ on the responsibilities of corporations and the relationship between business and society (Garrige & Melé, 2004). However, it is possible to conclude from the literature that CSR is often seen as a tool to align society's expectations and an organization's activities. The dimensions of these expectations can vary according to the scholars described above. There are variations that occur when looking at the definition of CSR from country to country and even within countries themselves (Matten & Moon, 2008). When looking at industries, there are big differences in interpreting CSR from industry to industry as well. Even though most organizations claim that their definition and description of CSR is in reference to their responsibility to a variety of stakeholders, the question remains what exactly the different expectations per industry are (Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008). This is what still needs to be researched for all industries: this thesis can be the starting point of researching the perspective on CSR of consumers of the apparel industry.

2.2 Consumer perspective on Corporate Social Responsibility

2.2.1 Previous research on consumers and CSR

The expectations of society have been researched by for example O'Connor, Shumate and Meister (2008) who asked the consumer group of "active moms" (women between 25-49 years old, with two kids) how they define CSR and what attributes they perceive as important for socially responsible corporations to exhibit. Via focus groups they found that the participants indeed expected corporations to do more than only provide economic justifications for their existence. Social and cultural values should be important to corporations as much as they are to society. It was also important to participants that there is consistency between what a corporation says it will do and what it actually does. Honesty, integrity and character were described as important attributes of corporations. In the relationship between business and society compatibility, longevity and accountability were described as important: there has to be a clear link between what a corporation produces and its CSR activities (O'Connor et al., 2008).

The importance of CSR in consumer behavior and consumer decisions has been researched for other groups of consumers as well. These previous researches have pointed out that CSR is considered (increasingly) important by consumers. The argued reason for this perceived importance differs from consumers finding companies engaged in CSR more trustworthy (Lewis, 2003; Pivato, Misani, & Tencati, 2008; Tian, Wang & Yang, 2011) to the

value that companies should help society (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2005; Mohr, Webb & Harris, 2001; Webb & Mohr, 1998) to a simple preference for companies engaged in CSR in comparison to other companies (Lewis, 2003; Nan & Heo; 2013). Green and Peloza (2011) divide the different values CSR creates for consumers in three categories: emotional values, functional values and social values. They find that often the functional value is the most important: for example that CSR initiatives preserve the environment and in the long term save money.

2.2.2 Reputation as an outcome

Only giving attention to CSR is not enough to create a positive consumer evaluation. Different perceptions need to be taken into account, for example what the relationship is between the consumers and the organization, what kind of CSR initiatives the consumer supports and how consumers think CSR initiatives will affect the product or service (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). The consumer evaluation of a firm's CSR has been argued to influence consumer trust, loyalty and the perceived reputation of the firm (Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011). Corporate responsibility has even been argued to be one of the most important factors in determining corporate reputation (Worcester, 2009). A strong reputation is important to businesses because it can provide a competitive advantage and in relation to CSR it can even influence market value (Balmer, 2009; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Consumer responses to CSR often differ from believing CSR to be altruistic to believing it to be just another marketing tool (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). A more positive reputation among stakeholders can be an outcome of CSR initiatives and communication, but there are mediating factors that need to be taken into account (Arendt & Brettel, 2010; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). For example firm size, industry, organizational setting can influence the credibility perception of CSR and in effect the reputation of the company (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). In that way, CSR can be a threat as well as an opportunity for a company's reputation, depending on other factors, such as trust and credibility (Lewis, 2003).

Also perceived financial performance and perceived quality of ethics statements have been found to be antecedents of the perceived CSR of a company. They are positively related to the evaluation of a firm's CSR, which is necessary to enhance consumer trust, loyalty and the business' reputation (Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011). The importance of the evaluation of ethical statements from consumers shows that communication is a mediating factor influencing the evaluation of CSR. In order to enhance consumer trust, loyalty and business reputation via CSR, communication needs to be taken into account.

2.3 CSR Communication

To make sure positive outcomes of CSR initiatives are generated, taking into account the different consumer perceptions, CSR communication is critical. There are three prominent approaches used in CSR communication scholarship: instrumental, relational and constitutive. The instrumental approach views CSR communication as a strategic tool, an instrument to achieve certain CSR outcomes. The relational approach is more focused on dialogue, instead of only viewing the audience as passive recipients of CSR messages. The focus on dialogue with stakeholders would lead to an increase in trust, development of mutually agreeable solutions and greater stakeholder participation (Chaudhri, 2014). The constitutive approach argues that organizations are constituted in and through communication (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). Regarding CSR, it implies that CSR is a communicative phenomenon constructed by organizations and stakeholder groups (Chaudhri, 2014). As Schultz and Wehmeier (2010) put it: CSR is an empty concept based on moral communications and filled with different meanings and interpretations. This is based on sensemaking theory that views human beings as symbol processing entities, which means institutions do not have fixed meanings and do not determine the sensemaking processes automatically in a sensegiving way. The recipients translates or interprets concepts, institutions etc. and therefore meanings can be altered by them.

In the same way, CSR is not a fixed script that produces fixed outcomes (such as legitimacy), but it represents a concept filled with competing meanings. The sensegiving and sensemaking of CSR remain dynamic concepts: on a micro-level organizational actors translate and interpret the institution internally according to their own values, roles and constructions of reality. On a macro level, several actors play a role in the process which is triggered by external expectations and conditions (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). The constitutive view regarding CSR communication is plausible, as it has already been argued that there is not one right definition for CSR and the definition changes over time, per industry and per person. Interpretation and sensegiving define what CSR means and this meaning dynamic and continuously changing. Furthermore, in this era of the internet and social media, it is too simplistic to view the audience as a passive recipient of messages. Instead of a sender-based model, the model of communication should be more oriented at knowledge sharing (Capriotti, 2011).

Morsing and Schultz (2006) argue that there are three types of CSR communication strategies: informing, responding and involving. The stakeholder information strategy

includes a one-way communication, which refers to organizations only telling, not listening. The stakeholder response strategy means that communication is two-way, but asymmetrical. The organization tries to influence the stakeholders and uses communication for this influence. This approach includes for example market surveys to find out what the audience tolerates and if understanding of the organization is correct. The last strategy is the stakeholder involvement strategy, which is two-way and symmetric. Stakeholders are involved and the CSR focused is negotiated in interaction with stakeholders. So, in the first two strategies the organization will not change upon communication from stakeholders, but in the last strategy change may occur when necessary (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

A more specific CSR communication framework is formed by Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) in which the focus is on message content and message channel. For the message content, the focus is often on a company's involvement in different issues, rather than the issues or social causes themselves. Companies can emphasize their commitment to the cause, the impact their commitment has on the cause, the motives for choosing this particular one and the fit between the cause the company itself. The channels of communication can differ from corporate communication to independent communication. Corporate communication can consist of CSR reports, a website, PR, advertising or a point of purchase. Independent channels are media coverage and word-of-mouth. For this thesis, the focus will be on the channels organizations can control themselves, which are the corporate communication channels. However, there is a trade-off between controllability of CSR communication and the credibility: the less controllable the channel of communication is, the more likely stakeholders are to find the information credible (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010).

One of the key challenges in CSR communication argued in previous research is to minimize stakeholder skepticism and to make them aware of the CSR activities. Even though recent surveys have shown that stakeholders claim they are interested in CSR initiatives or organizations, they are often suspicious about the motives for the CSR initiatives when these are promoted (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). The CSR communication challenge may also differ per consumer group, since Schmeltz (2012) found that young consumers are not so much skeptical, but favor a direct and open communication approach in contrast to the subtle and indirect approach that is often used.

These researches show the importance of CSR communication strategies in order to achieve a positive outcome. A positive outcome to achieve could be the enhancement of a company's reputation. As Lewis (2003) argues CSR can be used by stakeholders to judge companies. In this way, it can both be a threat and an opportunity to an organization's

reputation. If the communication is done right, an improved perception of the organization can occur. However, it is complicated to integrate CSR strategically into a global brand. Three types of complexities have to be taken into account: social issue complexity, organizational complexity and communication complexity (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). Social issue complexity is related to the meaning of the issue. These issues are not understood in the same way by everybody. Organizational complexity relates to the characteristics of the organization that may lead to problems in implementing CSR strategies. For example a global brand that operates from multiple countries makes it harder to control all operations as being conducted in the same responsible manner. Also the supply chain is very hard to control and it is unclear if organizations are expected to control the CSR related actions of the supplier.

Communication complexity is related to how organizations communicate their CSR activities. Several factors need to be considered for this complexity: (1) intensity of positioning: how strongly is CSR integrated into the brand?; (2) communicating actions to stakeholders; (3) types of programs utilized in communication and (4) integration issues (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). The type of communication utilized in communicating CSR activities also affects the effectiveness of CSR in enhancing a company's reputation. For example Rim and Song (2013) show that the responsiveness of a corporate blog influences the consumer's perception of the company and their CSR initiatives. Even though the communication strategy of CSR has been found to be very important, there has not much research done on the different strategies that are appropriate for particular industries.

While previous scholarship shows the importance of communication strategy for consumer interpretation of CSR, there has not been much research on the CSR communication strategies in the apparel industry to construct this consumer perception of legitimacy. Consequently, there is a need to investigate what kind of CSR communication constitutes a legitimate organization. The following section will go deeper into the definition and importance of legitimacy for organizations in general and the link between CSR communication and a consumer perception of legitimacy.

2.4 Legitimacy

2.4.1 What is legitimacy?

Legitimacy is a part of consumer perception. It is defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). The perception is generalized because it represents a public opinion that does not

change because of one specific event, but is dependent on a history of events. Also, a perception of legitimacy refers to the perception of a collective audience, but is dependent on particular observers. A history of events has constructed a perception of legitimacy that lingers in the minds of consumers and does not easily change. So, the perception of legitimacy constructs an understanding of organization as it provides consumer unconsciously with logical reasons for current organizational actions. Of course, the perception needs to be maintained and can change over a longer period of time, but is not likely to change overnight. This is important for organizations to stand strong when for example a crisis occurs (Suchman, 1995). Furthermore, being legitimate is necessary for organizations that need to exert influence over others. Because of legitimacy, people feel that decisions or rules are just and will follow them voluntarily. Influence does not simply come from the possession and use of power, legitimacy is needed as well (Tyler, 2006).

Legitimacy is a perception that is socially constructed. It reflects the relationship between the actions of the legitimized entity and the beliefs of a social group. Legitimate organizations are perceived as worthy, meaningful, predictable and trustworthy. Suchman (1995) states there are three types of legitimacy: pragmatic, cognitive and moral. Pragmatic legitimacy refers to the interest the organization has for its stakeholders. This interest can be manifest as direct exchanges between the organization and the stakeholders or involve a broader issue, for example political economic or social interests (Castelló & Lozano, 2011). In other words, pragmatic legitimacy means that stakeholders are convinced something is useful in terms of decisions, products or services. For the CSR domain this could mean firms showing achievements that link to societal expectations (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). Cognitive legitimacy is the result of assumptions available through cultural models. Focusing on CSR initiatives, this means organizations align their processes to the cultural values of the environment (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). Moral legitimacy means an organization is evaluated positively according to moral norms. It refers to 'doing the right thing' (Suchman, 1995). This type of legitimacy is important, because it is the most stable: even if the pragmatic legitimacy of an organization changes, the perception of moral legitimacy can remain the same. Achieving this type of legitimacy may lie in co-creating these moral norms proactively by the organization, for example by engaging in explicit public consultations (Basu & Palazzo, 2008).

2.4.2 Acquiring legitimacy through CSR

As stated before, a constitutive view on communication is adopted in this thesis, as other approaches neglect the formative role of CSR communication (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). Consequently, there is a need to investigate what kind of CSR communication constitutes a legitimate organization. How to acquire legitimacy has been the subject of research for several years, especially in relation to communication and discourse. The process towards legitimacy is called legitimation, which refers to creating a sense of positive, beneficial or otherwise acceptable picture (Joutsenvirta, 2011). Castelló and Galang (2014) introduce a three-approach model of legitimation: strategic rhetoric used to achieve pragmatic legitimacy, institutional rhetoric to gain cognitive legitimacy and a political approach to obtain moral legitimacy. For the strategic approach, legitimacy is managed through CSR by providing concrete accounts of benefits of organization's actions. The message within this approach is that CSR is used to earn additional profits. For the institutional rhetoric approach, legitimacy is managed through CSR by using normative structures that are recognized by the public. The message here is that the organization belongs to the CSR community. In the political approach, legitimacy is managed through CSR by aiming to improve the discursive quality with stakeholders. The message here is that the organization wants to engage with stakeholders in an equal dialogue (Castelló & Galang, 2014).

A consumer perception of legitimacy is very much dependent on social norms, values, beliefs and definitions. As these social values and norms can change over time, new expectations among stakeholders need to be taken into account in order to achieve legitimacy. Castelló and Lozano (2011) argue that organizations search for moral legitimacy through their CSR activities, as stakeholders now have high expectations regarding social responsibilities of corporations. Organizations use CSR and CSR communication to respond to these 'new' societal expectations. For example organizations have been found to use advertisements that address CSR issues to respond to public pressures. In that way, these advertisements help to create/maintain legitimacy in the eyes of society (Farache & Perks, 2010). Next to public pressure, organizations in the oil industry have been argued to use CSR to maintain a strong relationship with employees and gain their support. CSR has been found to enhance employees' organizational identification and trust (De Roeck & Delobbe, 2012). Also, a history in CSR may help constitute a perception of legitimacy on the long term, which helps defending legitimacy on the short term when for example a crisis occurs (Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

Improving the discursive quality has been the focus of legitimation strategy for Shell in the past, according to Livesey (2002). The company's new commitment to (even if superficially) open communication and exchange via social reporting and dialogue has had an effect on Shell's business and perception of its business (Livesey, 2002). While these previous articles already provide us with a more structured overview on the different legitimation strategies, Joutsenvirta (2011) goes more into depth and focuses on the micro-level. She identifies different discursive strategies used to legitimize issues between firms and NGOs: scientific rationalization (referencing to scientific/technological knowledge), commercial rationalization (referencing to commercial and competitive benefits), moralization (referencing to ethical values), nationalistic rationalization (referencing to national economic benefits) and normalization (referencing to natural behavior). These findings are in line with Basu and Palazzo's (2008) statements on four types of language games for justifications: legal, scientific, economic and ethical.

In addition to rhetorical strategies to legitimize, transparency can serve as a strategy for legitimation. Choices can be made in what is communicated: only the favorable actions/parts of the organization or a more balanced way of communication both favorable and unfavorable aspects/outcomes (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). Transparency has been proven important in the case of Shell, who found that "a strictly economic version of the metanarrative of progress and the expert competence and knowledge that it had traditionally privileged could no longer ground businesses' license to operate" (Livesey, 2001, p. 81). This case specifically shows the emergence of new discursive forms to support transparency: websites, stakeholder dialogue, stakeholder engagement and social reports.

In sum, it has been argued that legitimate organizations are viewed as proper, just, worthy, meaningful, predictable, trustworthy and/or desirable (Suchman, 1995). Legitimation is argued to take place via discourse and communication strategies, such as strategic, institutional and political rhetorics (Castello & Galang, 2014); improving discursive quality via open communication and exchange, transparency (Livesey, 2002) and different rationalizations/justifications (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Joutsenvirta, 2011). These findings can be used to form questions on different communication strategies to become legitimate and different aspects of legitimacy in general. Survey research on consumer perceptions of legitimation communication strategies is hard to find, especially in relation to CSR. This thesis can start exploring the consumer perceptions of the communication strategies and fill in this gap in research. The outcome will show what kind of strategy works for the apparel industry.

2.5 Corporate Social Responsibility in the apparel industry

Legitimacy perceptions of apparel brands have been under scrutiny ever since some international brands received negative publicity because of the use of sweatshops in their production chains (Arrigo, 2013; Chi, 2011; Goworek, 2011). The collapse of a clothing factory (Rana Plaza) in Bangladesh in 2013 led to more media attention and an increased interest in ethical issues in the fashion industry.

In previous scholarship, the question has been researched why this industry includes so many CSR risks (Jones, 2002; Laudal, 2010). Ever since the Western fashion firms outsourced their production to developing countries, they have adopted a new business model of fast fashion. This new business model was designed to reduce inventory and the time spent between design and arrival in the retail outlets (Jones, 2002). This means clothes are only in the stores for 2-3 weeks, instead of one complete season. Not only does this decrease inventory for the fashion firms, the consumer's demand of fast fashion is met as well. According to the fashion firms, their consumers only wear clothes a few times and want to buy new fashion very quickly. However, for suppliers in developing countries this means strict deadlines and strong cost mandates, which in turn results in wage suppression strategies (Esbenshade, 2004; Rosen, 2002).

Furthermore, the social and environmental conditions in developing countries are often not as good as in the developed countries, which bring a lot of risks in these two categories. For the fashion retailers the risks do not outweigh the advantage of low input costs (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). Because of the increased interest from both consumers and other external stakeholders codes of conduct were formed and a lot of retail suppliers now report on the risky CSR issues (Jones, Comfort, & Hillier, 2005). The reports have been argued to focus most on supplier compliance with the codes of conduct and employing further monitoring and auditing activities to prevent problems. Next to this, improvements in monitoring and auditing can set the sustainability criteria for suppliers (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). Still, there are some problems in the social reporting of many fashion retailers: (1) environmental issues are often neglected, while consumers have been argued to find these issues important, (2) precautionary principles are not addressed, (3) the information in clauses and codes of conduct is still vague and not specific and (4) the auditing and monitoring practices are not credible to all groups, since the focus is only on workplace violations, while safety and/or environmental rules are neglected (Emmelhainz & Adams, 1999; Mann et al., 2014). On a more macro level, codes of conduct can be seen as an integrative CSR strategy as it is a response to society's demands.

So, in this approach the motivation for CSR comes from external factors, rather than from internal values. In the long run, this can lead to an illegitimate view of CSR (Andersen & Skjoett-Larsen, 2009; Ellen et al, 2006). A stronger approach would be for corporations to internalize social values next to economic values (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

The textile industry has been argued to have CSR potential (Laudal, 2010). Six features indicate high CSR potential within this industry, which are influenced by features of the global economy in general. High CSR potential means that the risk of violating CSR standards is high for a specific company or industry. The six features are based on previous empirical research on the clothing business. They are as follows: (1) labor intensive production and traditional technology, (2) large differences in general cost levels between source region and recipient region, (3) a buyers' market, (4) short deadline and low predictability in ordering procedures, (5) low transparency and (6) communication barriers. He finds that these features are influenced by general features of the global economy. Next to this, Laudal (2010) forms a table of "requirements and risks related to global CSR standards" (Laudal, 2010, p. 66). It includes different CSR areas: human rights, labor standards, environmental standards, anti corruption and management systems (Laudal, 2010).

Next to research on CSR potential and possibilities for the textile industry, there has been some research done on consumer perceptions of CSR in the textile industry. For example Gupta and Hodges (2012) found that Indian consumers are supportive of CSR and think that the fashion industry has responsibilities towards society. Fair treatment of workers was one of the most important CSR factors for these participants and they feel that consumers need to hear more about CSR initiatives of clothing brands. The best way to be made aware according to these participants is through advertisements, print media, TV and the internet (Gupta & Hodges, 2012). Research on American consumers found that participants engaged in several eco-conscious acquisition behaviors: (1) basing the decision to buy apparel products on need; (2) buy apparel made from fibers that are perceived as environmentally preferable and (3) buy apparel through sources that are environmentally preferable (for example second-hand sources or eco-friendly companies) (Hiller Connell, 2011). On the other hand, Jorgensen and Jensen (2012) found that in Denmark the concerns about environmental impact of the clothing industry have had limited impact on women's practices. In Finland, the responses to more environmentally friendly clothing initiatives were perceived differently by different consumer groups (Armstrong et al., 2014). The limitation for all of these studies is that the number of participants researched is very small, because of which findings cannot be generalized to consumers of one nationality in general. Also, the focus is often on one specific dimension of

CSR initiatives, for example sustainability or environmental impact, instead of the complete CSR concept. Furthermore, the role of CSR communication is neglected in previous research, as these articles are focused perceptions around CSR topics and initiatives. As communication constitutes meanings and understandings, it plays a very important role in achieving certain outcomes of CSR initiatives. This research starts filling the gap of knowledge about consumer perceptions of CSR communication for the apparel industry.

In sum, this theoretical framework has outlined the importance of CSR and CSR communication in order to align social expectations and corporate operations. This alignment is important to achieve positive consumer evaluations, which can specifically result in a consumer perception of legitimacy. A perception of legitimacy constructs an unconscious understanding of the organization that is likely to remain the same over time. It helps organizations to maintain reputation when for example a crisis occurs and is necessary for entities that need to exert influence over others. CSR communication can help constructing this perception of legitimacy by responding to public expectations and possible pressures. It shows transparency and justifications for organization's actions that consumers nowadays find important. Perceptions of legitimacy in the apparel industry in particular, have been under scrutiny due to negative publicity and crises. This industry has been argued to have CSR potential, but previous research on consumer perceptions of CSR communication of apparel brands is limited, just like research on perceptions of legitimacy in this industry. So, for this industry, how can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry? This thesis will focus on that question, by researching consumer's CSR communication preferences and their perceptions of different justifications in CSR communication. The results of the study will fill in the gaps in previous scholarship and serve as an exploratory basis for future research on consumer's CSR communication perceptions and preferences in order to construct a perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry.

3. Method

This chapter outlines the used method to answer the research question for this thesis. It explains why a quantitative survey is the most appropriate method to do so and how the concepts included in the research question were operationalized to measure the perceptions of the research sample. The goal of the chapter is to justify the chosen method and provide a clear and detailed explanation of how the study was conducted.

3.1 Chosen method

This thesis aims to answer the question: *How can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry?* The sub-questions that followed from this question are:

1. *What are consumer's CSR communication preferences*
2. *What kind of justification is perceived as most legitimate in CSR communication?*

To answer the questions, data was needed on the perceptions of apparel consumers. The focus of this thesis was to get a broad overview of the different perceptions and opinions of apparel consumers, which is why a quantitative survey was the chosen method. The choice for a quantitative method was made, because there are many theories on the effects of CSR on consumers, but their perception has not often been studied. Effects have been studied in previous research that focused on consumer behavior and what CSR could mean for organizations for example in terms of sales. Perceptions on CSR have been studied before, but not often as an effect of CSR communication and not specifically the perception of legitimacy.

There is sufficient knowledge from previous research to formulate meaningful questions for a questionnaire (Rowley, 2014). In quantitative research it is possible to operationalize theoretical concepts into measurable variables that can be tested using the survey. Previous research on CSR communication and legitimacy helped in this operationalization. In the case of this thesis, a relationship between two variables was researched: CSR communication and a consumer perception of legitimacy. The goal was to study how these concepts are perceived and interpreted by apparel consumers. Furthermore it was studied how different justifications in CSR communication can create different outcomes regarding a legitimacy perception. Analyzing quantitative (or: numerical) data on these variables, makes it easier to study different correlations, differences and relationships between variables (Punch, 2003). Survey research can provide a collection of quantified data from a

population to describe this population or identify relationships between variables that may point to causality or predictive patterns of influence (Sapsford, 2007).

The research questions of this thesis benefit from a quantitative research, because a large number of variables can be analyzed for patterns and relationships. This method answers the questions in a very detailed and unbiased way, which would not have been possible in qualitative research, since all patterns and relationships would have to be interpreted only by the researcher him or herself (Sapsford, 2007). These research questions were in fact focusing on a possible causality between two variables, which makes it even more important that relationships between these variables were interpreted in an unbiased manner.

A potential threat to research on attitudes, opinions and beliefs is that responses may not be sincere. The choice for a survey as method was suitable, because participants were less likely feeling pressure to fill in socially desirable answers. When the question would have been assessed doing interviews or focus groups, participants may feel obliged to answer what they feel the other person(s) wants to hear. The participant may not have expressed his or her own perception, because of other people in the room. A survey ensured anonymity, so respondents can feel free to answer according to their own opinions. Also, it ensured a broader overview of perceptions, since it is possible to include more participants than would be the case in interview or focus groups.

The goal was to include as many respondents as possible without only surveying one particular group with the same background or of the same age, so it was not possible to approach respondents physically in particular places, for example in shopping malls or at the university. Those places may be attractive to certain groups of apparel consumers, leaving other groups neglected. Therefore a snowball method was chosen to distribute the online survey. The survey was distributed using Qualtrics: an online tool that ensures anonymity for every participant (Schmidt, 1997). The link to the survey was shared on social networking accounts of me and some of my acquaintances. By doing so, a large group of people was addressed, who were not only from my own social network, but mostly from others' social network and who did not know me. The snowball method leaves a bias, since it may leave out possible respondents that are not included in any of the social networks. Also, it is still possible that a large population knew me and answered socially acceptable answers because they did not feel completely anonymous (Krosnick, 1990). That is why the anonymity was emphasized in the introduction of the survey. It was stated that "*You can fill in this survey completely anonymous and your responses will be handled with great care*". Unfortunately, the use of an online survey excluded the people that do not use internet and in this case social

networks (Fowler, 2009). Even though the results are limited to the sample, it can still be useful to learn about this specific group and their perceptions, especially because there was no information about these participants' perceptions regarding CSR communication in the apparel industry at all (Punch, 2003). Also, Krosnick (1990) has argued that a low response rate and small research sample can still provide accurate findings. Surveys with very low response rates have even been found to sometimes be more accurate than surveys with higher response rates. The accuracy of the findings has more to do with the data collection process than only the amount of responses. For example, aggressively pursuing high response rate can lead to a less representative sample as respondents who were difficult to convince to be interviewed or surveyed did not provide accurate answers (Krosnick, 1990). So, rather than only pursuing a large amount of responses or the size of the sample, the focus for this thesis was more on quality data gathering to ensure high quality of the findings and conclusions as well.

3.2 Operationalization

The survey is used to measure the variables provided in the research question (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004; Punch, 2003). These variables are: CSR, CSR Communication and legitimacy. Definitions at a conceptual level have been provided in the theoretical framework, but for measurement a more operational definition is necessary. The questions in the survey represent the operational definition of the variable (Punch, 2003).

Since there have already been surveys on consumers regarding CSR, some of these survey questions served as examples for this thesis' survey. Previous research on underlying consumer's perceptions of CSR and CSR communication of Danish students used a survey to gain insights in consumer perceptions on these topics (Schmeltz, 2012). Even though this research was not related to the apparel industry, some of the questions in the questionnaire could still be used to investigate the general perceptions of the participants regarding CSR. For example questions on different types of CSR initiatives were specified to relate to the apparel industry, instead of any industry. In similar manners studies from the theoretical framework served as examples to form questions for the survey of this thesis.

Furthermore, it was important that questions were phrased appropriately for the target audience. Quality explanations and design not only improve the quality of data, but also the response rates of the survey (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2014). In designing the questionnaire, it was at all times made sure that the questions were understandable to respondents and that completion of the survey was as easy as possible. Questions should be short, without

assumption, include only one question, only exceptionally invite yes/no answers, as clear as possible (not vague or general), never use double negative, never be invasive or invite respondents to breach confidentiality (Rowley, 2014). Therefore, the questions in the survey were as brief, objective, simple and specific (BOSS) as possible, to make sure participants were not led to a particular answer (knowingly or unknowingly) (Iarossi, 2006).

Corporate Social Responsibility was operationalized for the apparel industry specifically, so that all different CSR subjects that can be thought of by consumers regarding this specific industry were covered. The broad definition of Carroll (1979) implies that corporate social responsibility is a response to society’s expectations on economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic levels. So, how can this be applicable to the apparel industry? Laudal (2010) showed different CSR potentials for this industry specifically, that can be translated into different issues. Consumers can have different expectations regarding these issues. The five dimensions of CSR (environmental, social, economic, stakeholder and voluntariness) helped structuring the different CSR issues in the clothing industry (Dahlsrud, 2006). Furthermore, the websites and CSR reports of some apparel brands were analyzed, to see if any issues were missing that are communicated by the clothing brands: H&M, Inditex Group (Zara, Pull & Bear), G-star, Only, Nike and Adidas. This resulted in the following list of issues:

Table 1: An overview created to show the different issues (Laudal, 2010) per CSR dimension (Dahlsrud, 2006) in the apparel industry.

CSR dimensions:	CSR issues in the apparel industry:
Environmental dimension	Fashion waste Pollution of the environment Treatment of animals Treatment of local communities Sustainability
Social dimension	Sweatshops (excessive working hours) Unsafe and unhealthy factories Wage suppression Child labor Suppression of independent unions Discrimination at the workplace
Economic dimension	Strict deadlines Highly competitive market
Stakeholder dimension	External pressures (NGO’s, consumers, governments)
Voluntariness dimension	Voluntary CSR vs. involuntary CSR engagement Collaborations with charities

This overview shows the different dimensions of CSR in general and specifically the (possible) issues in the apparel industry related to CSR. In that way, all aspects of CSR in the apparel industry are included in the questions of the survey. Not all issues were included in the questions literally, but as examples to clarify questions on perceptions of the dimensions.

CSR communication was operationalized using the theoretical framework as well. As stated before, there are three prominent approaches in CSR communication scholarship: instrumental, relational and constitutional. Regarding the first two, there is a huge difference in how the audience is approached: as a passive recipient or an active participant in dialogue with the organization. Which of the approaches do the consumers prefer? This was studied by asking questions on which kinds of channels consumers find appropriate (channels that enable dialogue or channels that only display information) and on their preferences in communication strategies. This is also related to the three types of CSR communication Morsing and Schultz (2006) argued: informing, responding or involving. Message content and message channels were questioned in relation to controllability and reliability, following the findings of Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010). As they found a trade-off between the controllability of CSR communication channels and the consumer perception of reliability for of this same channel, it was interesting to see what the respondents for this study think. Do they also feel like very controllable corporate communication channels are less reliable in CSR communication than less controllable channels? In sum, both general communication strategies and more specific ones such as message content and channels were included in the survey. This ensured a broad overview of perceptions on different levels of CSR communication.

Furthermore, the rhetorical strategies of legitimation were taken into account. Following Suchman (1995), questions about legitimacy involve consumer perceptions of trust, meaning, usefulness, doing the right thing and continuity/stability. To assess how CSR communication influences the perception of legitimacy, five scenarios were outlined that all included a different rationalizations of legitimation: scientific, commercial, moralization, nationalistic and normalization (Joutsenvirta, 2011). Five clothing brands (A, B, C, D, E) used a different rationalization in their communication, to justify the same CSR action. Respondents chose which of these brands seemed the most legitimate to them. The following question asked their opinions about the chosen brand regarding legitimacy: transparency, honesty, fairness, credibility, aligned with social norms and values, usefulness, doing the right thing and example for others. This showed which of the legitimation's rationalization the

respondents prefer and if there are differences in the perceptions of the dimensions of legitimacy between the different rationalization strategies.

The use of previous scholarship in the operationalization of the concepts and the forming of survey questions increases the validity of this study: it is made sure that the questions in the survey measure what is intended to measure for the research question. Even though there is not a standardized scale for example to measure legitimacy, theories and previous research help in the transition from a theoretical definition to a more practical, measurable definition of the different concepts. Since the concept of legitimacy includes different dimensions that are questioned separately in the survey, it is important that the measurement is consistent. This increases the reliability of the study. Therefore, a reliability analysis was conducted on the dimensions of legitimacy, to make sure the scale is internally consistent and the dimensions are measuring the same concept (Pallant, 2005).

3.3 Distribution & sample

To ensure the questions were understandable and not pushing respondents in certain directions or towards certain answers, a pilot test was done (Punch, 2003; Rowley, 2014). The survey was distributed among five test participants, who answered the questions and afterwards provided feedback on the survey. The outcome of the pilot test was that some of the questions were too complicated, so these were simplified. Furthermore some minor errors were noticed, which were corrected after the pilot test. Then, the survey was improved and distributed online to gather the data using the Qualtrics online software. The survey was available in English and Dutch, as apparel consumers currently living in the Netherlands can also include non-Dutch speaking residents.

The sample was selected through an online snowball method. The snowball method, or snowball sampling, means that for example one respondent is found by the researcher, that respondent provides the name of another respondent, who in turn provides the name of a third etc (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). In the case of this thesis, it is more about acquaintances in the network of the researcher, spreading it to their own network, who in turn spread the survey to the third network etc. To be more specific: acquaintances in my social network were asked to share the link on their social media pages or via e-mail. Secondary networks were used to make sure not all respondents know the researcher behind the research and the sample moves outside of the scope of my own social network. This type of sampling is often used to target audiences that are hard to reach or identify. This is not the case for this study, since consumers of clothes is a very large and general population and not that hard to reach or

identify. However, this sampling method provides several benefits. The selection is more random than would have been the case if for example the survey was handed out on specific locations on the street. As has been stated before, specific locations attract specific audiences and that would make the sample less diverse. Even though the acquaintances who were asked to share the link to the survey were not randomly selected, other respondents were. Furthermore, the distribution of the survey had to be cost and time efficient due to the limits of the research. Spreading it online via social networking sites was free and did not take that much time (in comparison to for example asking the survey questions via the telephone).

Furthermore the link to the survey was posted on different forums that cater to people of all kinds of ages, gender, interests etc. The following forums were used: ConsumentenBond Forum, FOK forum, Radar Forum, Scholieren forum, Girlscene Forum. The ConsumentenBond Forum is a forum for and by consumers. They discuss products, organizations and other consumer-related subjects ([www.http://www.consumentenbond.nl/community/forum/](http://www.consumentenbond.nl/community/forum/)). FOK Forum is a forum on a news website. It is not restricted to one specific theme; the community on this forum discusses any kind of topic (<http://forum.fok.nl/>). The Radar Forum is related to the Dutch TV program Radar. In this program consumers can report complaints about products or services. The forum is similar to the ConsumentenBond Forum (<https://forum.www.radartv.nl/>). Scholieren forum is a part of a website for students in secondary school and higher. It caters to people from the age of 12 and older (<http://forum.scholieren.com/>). The Girlscene forum is mostly visited by girls who discuss different kind of topics. It caters to girls from the age of 12 to 25 (<http://forum.girlscene.nl/forum/>).

The Qualtrics software used in the distribution of the survey was compatible to the IBM SPSS software that was used to analyze the complete dataset. Therefore, the dataset could be imported from Qualtrics straight into IBM SPSS. The first step in the analysis of data was to clean the dataset. For example if a participant skipped a question or filled in the survey always choosing the first answer, this survey is probably not representative of his or her real perception. Therefore this data was deleted. According to Punch (2003) the following steps are: summarizing and reducing data (creating variables), descriptive level analysis (distribution of the variables across the sample) and relationship analysis (relationship between the variables, first bivariately, then if appropriate jointly). The summarizing and reducing of the data was done automatically when uploading it into SPSS. A data overview was provided in the program. First, a descriptive level analysis was done, using frequency tables to show general answers to the questions. Then, a more in-depth analysis was done,

using independent sample T-tests and ANOVA tests regarding the variables that are important to the research question. The tests will be explained and justified in depth in the findings chapter of this thesis.

In total 185 respondents started the survey and of these, 154 completed the questionnaire. Data from the 154 respondents was uploaded into IBM SPSS Statistics, which showed that still some people skipped too many questions. Therefore, respondents that skipped more than 25% of the questions were removed from the dataset. This left a dataset of 127 respondents. The largest part of the respondents is female (70.1%), a smaller part male (25.2%) and six of the respondents did not fill in their gender. The sample consists of relatively highly educated people; the largest part of the sample completed a study at university level or university of applied sciences. Only 29.3% of the sample completed their education at a lower level. The majority of the respondents is Dutch (89.9%). Other nationalities included in the sample are: Bulgarian (2.4%), Lithuanian (0.8%), Luxembourgish (0.8%), Belgian (0.8%), Romanian (0,8%), US (0.8%) and German & Dutch (0.8%). 3.1% of the respondents did not indicate their nationality. The largest age group is the one from 21-30 years old (56.9%), followed by 51-60 years old (12.2%). No one was younger than 11 years old, and only 2 respondents (1.6%) are older than 71 years old. Even though 127 respondents is a small sample compared to the complete population and probably not representative, this is the most feasible sample given the (time) limits of this research (Fowler, 2009).

In sum, the method chapter has explained that a quantitative approach is chosen to provide a broad overview of the perceptions of apparel consumers. The possibility to quantitatively assess relations between the concepts included in the research question is beneficial for this study. It will provide unbiased and detailed findings to ensure high quality conclusions. Previous scholarship was used to operationalize the theoretical concepts and form questions for the survey. The survey was tested on five test participants first, to ensure the questions were as brief, objective, simple and specific as possible (Iarossi, 2006). Then, the survey was distributed using an online snowball method. This method has resulted in a sample of 127 respondents. The following section will discuss the results of the survey.

4. Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the survey, which can be found in the appendix (e.g. Appendix 1). It shows how the planned method was executed, provides information on the sample and shows the test results. This chapter includes all information needed to answer the research question and forms the basis for the discussion chapter and conclusion. This thesis aims to answer the question: *How can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry?* Two sub-questions were formed to support the main research question: (1) *what are consumer's CSR communication preferences?* and (2) *what kind of justification is perceived as the most legitimate in CSR communication?* A survey was distributed online and provided a dataset of 127 respondents. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the participants are Dutch and relatively highly educated. More than half of the respondents are between the age of 21 and 30 years old. The findings of the survey are structured in findings regarding CSR communication preferences and findings regarding perceived legitimacy.

4.1 CSR communication

4.1.1 Perceptions of CSR and the apparel industry

To gain insights in communication preferences regarding CSR, it is helpful to know more about CSR perceptions of the participants in general. These insights show how participants view CSR in the apparel industry: what do they consider important and what unimportant? For organizations, these insights enable them to make reasoned decisions regarding what to communicate: the perceived important issues or responsibility may need more attention than others.

Therefore, participants were asked about the factors they consider important in their purchase decisions. Price, quality, style, previous experience with the brand and sales/discounts/promotions were considered the most important by the respondents. Opinions were differentiated on the importance of brand image and recommendations from others. Media reports and communication from the brand (for example advertisements) were considered unimportant by the majority of the respondents. Sixteen respondents added their own factor: "sustainability" was mentioned twice, "personnel", "service", "celebrity endorsement", "safe factories", "presentation in the story", "only buy clothes when necessary", "brand exposure on the clothing", "comfort", "CSR", "outlook of the store",

“identity”, “price-quality ratio”, “secondhand/vintage clothes”, “ease of purchase” were all mentioned once.

To test the perceptions of social responsibility in the clothing industry, a question was asked based on the CSR pyramid of Carroll (1991). The answers to this question show how much responsibility the respondents ascribe to clothing brands. It showed that the majority of respondents believe clothing companies have more responsibilities than only economic, but most only go as far as legal responsibilities. Still, 51.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that clothing brands should make sure society benefits from their practices as much as possible (ethical responsibilities) and only 17.3% disagrees with this statement. Philanthropic responsibilities were divided in philanthropic activities related to the clothing industry versus any philanthropic activity. The results show that the majority of respondents agree that clothing brands have philanthropic responsibilities related to their own industry and 28.4% thinks that clothing brands have extended philanthropic responsibilities (should support philanthropic initiatives not related to the industry). An overview of the results is shown in the table below.

Table 2: Percentages of answer choices to the question “To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?”

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe clothing brands only have economic responsibilities: making profit.	18.1%	45.7%	23.6%	10.2%	2.4%
I believe clothing brands have legal and economic responsibilities: making profit according to the law.	0%	9.4%	11%	61.4%	18.1%
I believe clothing brands should make sure society benefits from their own practices as much as possible.	3.1%	14.2%	31.5%	44.1%	7.1%
I believe clothing brands should play a large role in helping the society and use their economic profits to help charities that try to enhance the clothing industry.	2.4%	16.5%	29.1%	43.3%	8.7%
I believe clothing brands should play a large role in helping society and use their economic profits to help any charity.	10.2%	30.7%	30.7%	26%	2.4%

In the theoretical framework it was argued that CSR becomes more important to consumers and they use CSR as an additional criterion to judge companies (Lewis, 2003). To test to what extent that applies to the apparel industry, the participants were asked to indicate how important the following aspects were to them when evaluating clothing brands: high quality of clothes, treatment of employees, level of customer service, taking care of the environment, social responsibility, competent management, transparency and profitability. The results showed that high quality of the clothes is the most important, followed by high level of customer service and that employees are treated well. Other (CSR related) aspects, such as how a company takes care of the environment and if it assumes social responsibility, were most often ranked in the middle section.

4.1.2 Perceived importance CSR issues

As stated before, for organizations to make right decisions on what to communicate, insights on what consumers find important regarding CSR in the apparel industry can come in handy. To gain insight into which CSR topics are believed to be important by respondents, two questions were asked. First, respondents ranked different CSR issues from most supported by the industry to least supported by the industry. Then, they ranked them again according to their perceptions of which issues should be supported by the industry the most to the least. The purpose of these two questions was to see if there was a gap between issues respondents perceive should be supported by the industry versus what is actually supported. A difference between the two could indicate a perceived gap between expectations of the respondents and reality. This perceived gap would indicate the lack of a legitimacy perception, as legitimacy cannot exist when corporation's actions are seen as inconsistent or incongruent with societal expectations (Suchman, 1995). The table below lists the issues mentioned in both survey questions.

Table 3: Amount of times respondents ranked different CSR issues in their top 5 of ‘most supported by the industry’ and ‘should be most supported by the industry’.

CSR issue	How often placed in top 5 of ‘most supported by the apparel industry’?	How often placed in top 5 of ‘should be most supported by the apparel industry’?
Avoiding child-labor	73	107
Equal treatment of all employees	70	98
Safe working conditions for all employees	66	103
Fair wages for all employees	65	112
Avoiding toxic chemicals in fabrics	60	45
Non-excessive working hours for all employees	59	71
Sustainable ways of producing clothes (for example the use of organic cotton)	45	12
Treatment of animals (if used) in production chain of clothes	43	22
Avoid pollution of the environment while producing clothes	33	26
Help in reducing the waste of (worn) clothes	32	10
Collaborations with charities related to the clothing industry	29	3
Showing responsibility in relation to local communities around the brand’s locations	25	6
Efforts in relation to (natural) disasters in other parts of the world	11	0

It was found that avoiding child labor, equal treatment of employees, safe working conditions for all employees and fair wages for all employees were believed to be supported the most by the apparel industry. The table shows how many times the issues were placed in the top 5 of ‘most supported’ or ‘should be most supported’. It shows that largely the same issues were placed in the top five, but the respondents were more divided around is currently most supported by the industry. There is more consensus about which issues should be supported, as the numbers are a lot higher in that column. For example ‘avoiding child labor’ is considered the most supported by the largest number of respondents, which is 73. ‘Avoiding child labor’ is the second most necessary to be supported by the industry, but the number of respondents ranking this issue in the top five is a lot higher: 107. The most supported issue by the apparel industry is ‘avoiding child labor’, but the most necessary to be supported issue is ‘fair wages for all employees’. However, the relative difference between the issues per column is very small.

Not all of the CSR dimensions were included in this question, only the social dimension, environmental dimension and voluntariness dimension (Dahlsrud, 2006). Interestingly, four out of the five considered most important CSR issues are related to the social dimension of CSR.

In sum, the results so far show that participants consider CSR important in the apparel industry: they indicated that apparel brands have ethical responsibilities towards society. However, in evaluating clothing brands, quality and customer service are considered more important criteria compared to CSR related criteria. There is some agreement between which CSR issues are supported by the industry and which should be supported. But there is more consensus regarding the issues that should be supported the most than on what is currently supported by the industry.

4.2 CSR communication and legitimacy

4.2.1 Reliability & Credibility

Credibility and reliability are important dimensions of legitimacy. The importance of these dimensions specifically in relation to CSR communication has been argued by Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen (2010). They showed that one of the challenges in CSR communication is to minimize skepticism and suspicion. So, there is a need for CSR communication to be interpreted as reliable and credible, especially since these dimensions are important for a perception of legitimacy.

To assess how these dimensions are influenced by CSR communication, some questions were asked about how credible and reliable participants perceived CSR information. In general, 63.8% of the respondents (strongly) agreed that it is most credible when companies are socially responsible without expecting any business benefit in return. However, 57.5% of the respondents also indicates that their perception of a company's credibility is not affected by whether a company benefits from CSR or not. 83.5% of the respondents believe engaging in CSR increases the company's image. 76.4% believes the longer a company is engaged in CSR, the more credible it seems.

More specifically, previous scholarship has indicated that different communication channels may influence the perception of credibility of the information (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). In general, 79.5% of the respondents state they find it important that clothing brands are transparent about their practices and social responsibilities. Respondents also find it important that clothing brands are transparent about these topics even if they are not asked about these topics. The majority of the respondents (60.6%) indicate they would like to know

if their favorite clothing brands are socially responsible. However, most of the respondents never search for information on the CSR practices of clothing brands (48.8%), 30.7% rarely searches for information, 15.7% sometimes, 3.9% often and 0.8% always. These results already show some CSR communication preferences: consumers consider transparency about social responsibilities important and the majority of the respondents would like to know if their favorite clothing brands are socially responsible. But the respondents do not want to search for information on CSR themselves.

So, if consumers do not want to search for CSR information themselves, but do want to know about these responsibilities, how should organizations communicate CSR information? The majority of the respondents does not have very strong opinions on the appropriateness of different channels regarding CSR communication. The official website is regarded as the most appropriate, secondly CSR reports, and third clothing tags. Advertising is regarded as the least appropriate even when more than half (53.1%) of the respondents find this channel appropriate for CSR communication. When asked about the reliability of the information on these channels for CSR communication, all percentages are lower, except for the percentage of traditional media. While 57.4% finds traditional media an appropriate channel to communicate CSR information, 66.1% also finds this channel reliable.

Overall, CSR reports on the website are viewed as the most reliable. 65.4% of the respondents think that clothing brands should ask feedback from their stakeholders about CSR initiatives and be open to interact about CSR topics. However, only 29.9% would like to be asked for feedback themselves. Consumers were rated as the most important audience group to focus CSR communication on, secondly media and third the employees of the company. Competitors in the clothing industry were rated as the least important party to focus CSR communication on.

In sum, according to the participants it is important that organizations are transparent about their CSR activities and initiatives. However, only a very small percentage of the respondents search for the information him-/herself. Regarding appropriateness, there are not many differences between channels, but regarding reliability there is. Traditional media channels are considered the most reliable source of information.

4.2.2 Perceived motives

Respondents cite economic/commercial reasons as the most important motives for CSR. Over 80% agreed that differentiation from competitors and improvement of the company's image drive organizations to engage in CSR. Next to this, over 70% of the respondents agreed that

companies engage in CSR because of pressure from consumers, media, governments and/or NGOs. An overview of the percentages of respondents that agree to the statements is presented in the chart below.

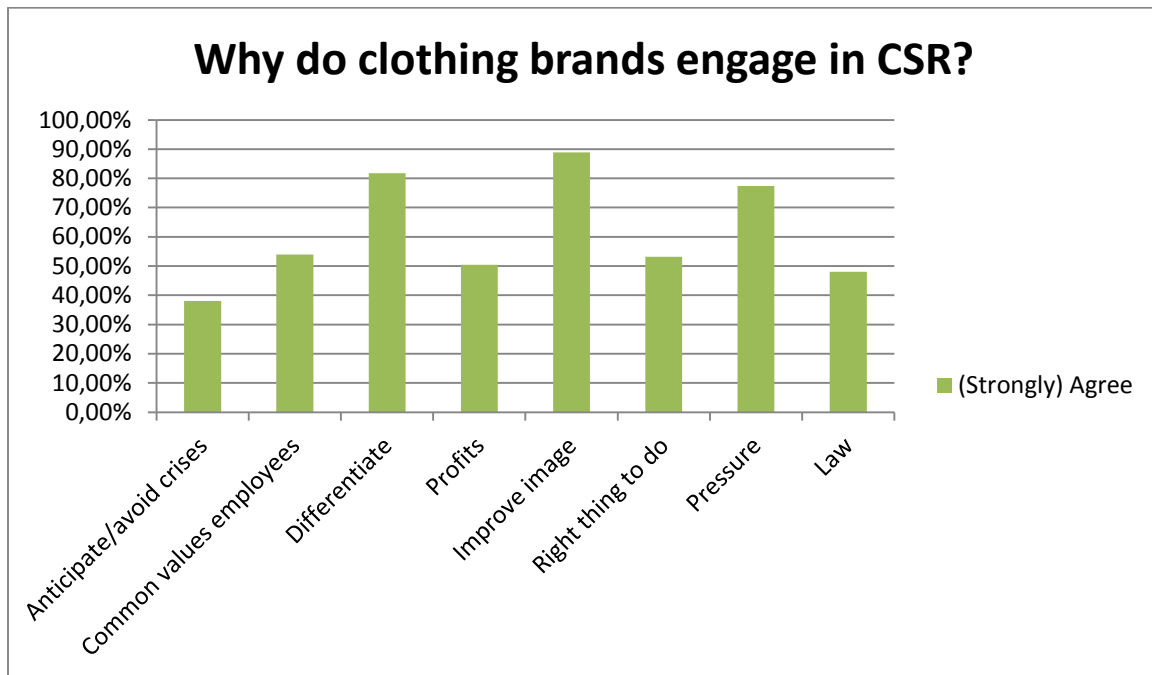


Figure 2: Chart of the percentages of respondents that indicated they agree with the statements regarding the question "Why do you think clothing brands engage in CSR?"

Unlike the business case, respondents don't regard CSR as a strategy for clothing brands to avoid times of crisis. The less strategic motivations for engaging in CSR, for example 'it's the morally right thing to do' and 'operating according to the law' were not as often indicated to be important in comparison to the strategic motivations.

Regarding the reason for clothing brands to communicate about CSR, the majority of the respondents thought the most important reason is that clothing brands want to enhance their reputation by doing so. In the table below the answers are presented to the question 'Why do you think it is important for clothing brands to communicate about CSR? Please drag the following statements in order from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).' In the second column it is stated how many times the reason was ranked in the top 3.

Table 4: Amount of times respondents ranked different reasons for CSR in their top 3 of most important reason for clothing brands to communicate about CSR.

<i>Why do you think it is important for clothing brands to communicate about CSR?</i>	How often mentioned in the top 3?
The company wants to enhance its reputation	108
The company wants to respond to the consumer demand of being ethical.	74
The company wants to be transparent about its practices, this makes them more credible.	71
The company wants to show it cares about more than only making profit	46
The company wants to justify that their practices are in line with the law.	44
The company wants to respond to NGOs demanding ethical practices	15
Other, namely..	2

According to the respondents, the most important reason for companies to communicate about CSR, is the enhancement of its reputation. Other reasons often placed in the top 3 most important reasons are to respond to the consumer demand of being ethical and to be more transparent. Responding to NGOs demanding ethical practices was the least often placed in the top three most important reasons to communicate about CSR, followed by justifying practices are in line with the law and to show the company cares about more than only making profit. Interestingly, pressure was seen as a key motivator for engaging in CSR but apparently it is perceived as less important for CSR communication.

To summarize, the results on the perceived motives for CSR in general and CSR communication specifically indicate that the respondents perceive strategic motives as the most important reasons for clothing brands to engage in CSR and CSR communication. They especially believe that the initiatives are important to companies because they want to enhance their reputation and/or image. Moralistic justifications are not as pronounced as business reasons. In other words, the majority of the respondents believe CSR is used by clothing brands for economic reasons compared to moral reasons.

4.2.3 Legitimacy of justifications

To test what kind of CSR communication is favored to construct a perception of legitimacy, the five justifications of Joutsenvirta (2011) were used as a basis for five scenarios (these are described in Appendix 1, before question 17). The following hypothetical situation was described including five different brands that all made the same decision: they were going to

save water. The five brands sent out a different message explaining why this decision was made. Each of the messages highlighted a different justification. The message of clothing brand A included a scientific justification, the message of clothing brand B included an economic justification, clothing brand C a nationalistic justification, clothing brand D a normalization and clothing brand E a moralistic justification. For example, brand B justified the action of reducing water use by stating it provided them with a competitive advantage, while brand C argued the same action was necessary to support the brand’s compatriots (the complete justifications can be found in Appendix 1, right before question 17). These justifications have been argued to be discursive strategies for legitimation (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Joutsenvirta, 2011).

The purpose of this question was to test if there is a difference in the perceived legitimacy of the justifications. Firstly the respondents chose which of the clothing brands seemed most legitimate to them. The table below shows the percentages of the choices.

Table 5: Percentages of the answers to the question “Which clothing brand seems the most legitimate to you?”.

Options	How many times was the option chosen? (In percentages)
Clothing brand A	25.2%
Clothing brand B	10.2%
Clothing brand C	8.7%
Clothing brand D	17.3%
Clothing brand E	35.4%

Clothing brand E, which sent the message including a moralistic justification, was chosen the most often as the most legitimate. It was followed by clothing brand A (scientific justification) and D (normalization). The preference for moralistic justification is not that surprising, given previous research that found the importance of intrinsic/moral motives for companies to justify their CSR initiatives (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). The next step was for respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed with statements about the brand, based on the CSR practice of reducing water and the message of the chosen brand. They indicated to what extent they agreed that the brand was: transparent, credible, honest, fair, truthful, aligned with social values, useful, an example for others, good and ethical. All of these descriptive words are the dimensions of legitimacy, as it was found in the theoretical framework. The majority of the respondents (strongly) agreed that these words described the organizations

they chose as the most legitimate, which shows that their perception of legitimacy is aligned with the definition in the theoretical framework.

An ANOVA test is used to compare the mean scores for more than two different groups of respondents. This can be used to analyze these questions, as respondents who chose clothing brand A as the most legitimate brand can be regarded as a different group than those who chose clothing brand B, or C etc. This specific test was chosen to test whether there are differences between the groups' perceptions on the specific dimensions of legitimacy. For example, maybe the respondents that chose the economic justification as the most legitimate perceive the justification as less transparent than the respondents who chose the moral justification. This would mean that even though for example the economic justification is viewed as most legitimate by a certain percentage of the respondents, the average score on the perception of the brand being transparent is lower than for other justifications. To see whether the scores on the dimensions of legitimacy are different between the groups, two types of variables are tested: the chosen legitimate brand and the dimensions of legitimacy. The variable 'chosen legitimate brand' is measured on a nominal level. The variables of the different dimensions of legitimacy are measured using a Likert five point scale, 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. Strictly speaking, variables including the Likert scale are measured on an ordinal level. This means the measurement level violates the assumption of the measurement level needed for parametric tests. However, it has been argued that variables measured by a Likert scale can be treated as an interval measurement level because (1) taking into account the 'robustness' of the test it will still give the right answer and (2) the computer does not know where the numbers come from and can still draw conclusions about the numbers themselves (Norman, 2010). Therefore, the variables of the dimensions of legitimacy can be used in parametric statistic tests without the fear of coming to the wrong conclusion. An overview of the variables tested with the ANOVA analysis is shown in the table below.

Table 6: Overview of the variables tested using the ANOVA analysis

Groups to be compared are the respondents that chose..:	Dependent variables = dimensions of legitimacy:
Clothing brand A (scientific justification)	Transparency
Clothing brand B (economic justification)	Credibility
Clothing brand C (nationalistic justification)	Honesty
Clothing brand D (normalization)	Fairness
Clothing brand E (moral justification)	Truthfulness
	Alignment with social norms and values
	Usefulness
	Good
	Ethical

The ANOVA analysis “compares the variance (variability in scores) between the different groups with the variability within each of the groups” (Pallant, 2005, p. 214). Next to the measurement levels of the dependent and independent variables, there are other assumptions for the ANOVA analysis. The technique assumes that the scores are obtained using a random sample from the population. As stated before, the survey was distributed using a snowball method and the scores are obtained via a random sample. Because of the use of an online survey, the scores are independent to the extent that as far as is known, the participants filled in the survey by themselves. So, this assumption is fulfilled as well as possible. The following assumption is that the populations from which the samples are taken are normally distributed. This is not the case in the data set, but the tests are reasonably robust for violation of this assumption, as long as the sample is large enough. Since the sample is larger than 30 respondents, the violation of this assumption will not influence the results. Then there is the assumption of homogeneity of variance, which will be tested for every variable independently. If this assumption is violated, this does not mean the test cannot be interpreted at all, but the Robust Test of Equality Means needs to be used instead of the ANOVA table. If the assumption of homogeneity of variance is violated, it will be mentioned in the results. If the homogeneity of variance is not mentioned, it is not violated (Pallant, 2005).

First, perceived transparency was tested. An overview of the means per message and the standard deviation is shown in the table below.

Table 7: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘transparency’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for variable ‘transparency’	<i>SD</i> for variable ‘transparency’
A (scientific)	3.63	0.71
B (economic)	3.93	0.86
C (nationalistic)	3.45	1.04
D (normalization)	3.55	0.80
E (moral justification)	3.71	0.55
Total	3.66	0.72

Even though the means per message differed slightly, no significant difference was found in the perceived transparency for the different justification messages of the brands [$F(4, 119) = .863, p = .488$]. The same goes for the credibility of the message, the means for this variable are shown in the table below.

Table 8: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘credibility’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘credibility’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘credibility’
A (scientific)	3.78	0.55
B (economic)	3.77	0.93
C (nationalistic)	3.73	0.90
D (normalization)	3.73	0.94
E (moral justification)	3.69	0.70
Total	3.73	0.75

No significant difference was found in the perceived credibility of the different justification messages [$F(4, 118) = .078, p = .989$]. The means and standard deviations for the variable perceived ‘honesty’ are shown in the table below.

Table 9: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘honesty’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘honesty’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘honesty’
A (scientific)	3.66	0.55
B (economic)	3.85	0.80
C (nationalistic)	3.73	0.65
D (normalization)	3.68	0.89
E (moral justification)	3.56	0.63
Total	3.65	0.68

For ‘honesty’ no significant difference was found as well [$F(4, 118) = .53, p = .713$]. The same goes for ‘fairness’, for which the table below shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 10: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘fairness’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘fairness’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘fairness’
A (scientific)	3.81	0.64
B (economic)	3.23	0.73
C (nationalistic)	3.91	0.83
D (normalization)	3.77	0.81
E (moral justification)	3.58	0.75
Total	3.67	0.75

No significant difference was found for the perceived fairness per message [$F(4, 118) = 1.99, p = .099$]. The variable ‘truthfulness’ also showed no significant difference [$F(4, 118) = .72, p = .577$]. See the table including the means and standard deviations for this variable below.

Table 11: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘truthfulness’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘truthfulness’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘truthfulness’
A (scientific)	3.56	0.67
B (economic)	3.62	0.77
C (nationalistic)	3.82	0.60
D (normalization)	3.36	0.90
E (moral justification)	3.58	0.75
Total	3.56	0.75

For the variable ‘alignment with social norms and values’ the homogeneity of variance assumptions was violated. In that case, the Robust Test of Equality Means had to be interpreted instead of the ANOVA table. Two other tests were shown in SPSS: Welch and Brown-Forsythe, which are preferable when the homogeneity of variance is violated. The outcome of the Welch test shows that there is a significant difference [$F(4, 35.8) = 3.92, p = .010$], just like the Brown-Forsythe test [$F(4, 60.76) = 4.5, p = .003$]. An overview of the means is given in the table below.

Table 12: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘alignment with social norms and values’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘alignment with social norms and values’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘alignment with social norms and values’
A (scientific)	3.81	0.64
B (economic)	2.85	0.90
C (nationalistic)	3.64	0.81
D (normalization)	3.64	0.95
E (moral justification)	3.89	0.57
Total	3.69	0.78

The multiple comparison’s table shows that the mean of to what extent respondents agree that the clothing brand’s practices are aligned with their social norms is a lot lower for clothing brand B, which included the economic justification, compared to clothing brands A (scientific justification) ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.05, p < .001$), D (normalization) ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.19, p < .001$) and E (moral justification) ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.04, p < .001$). The difference also shows in graph of the means below.

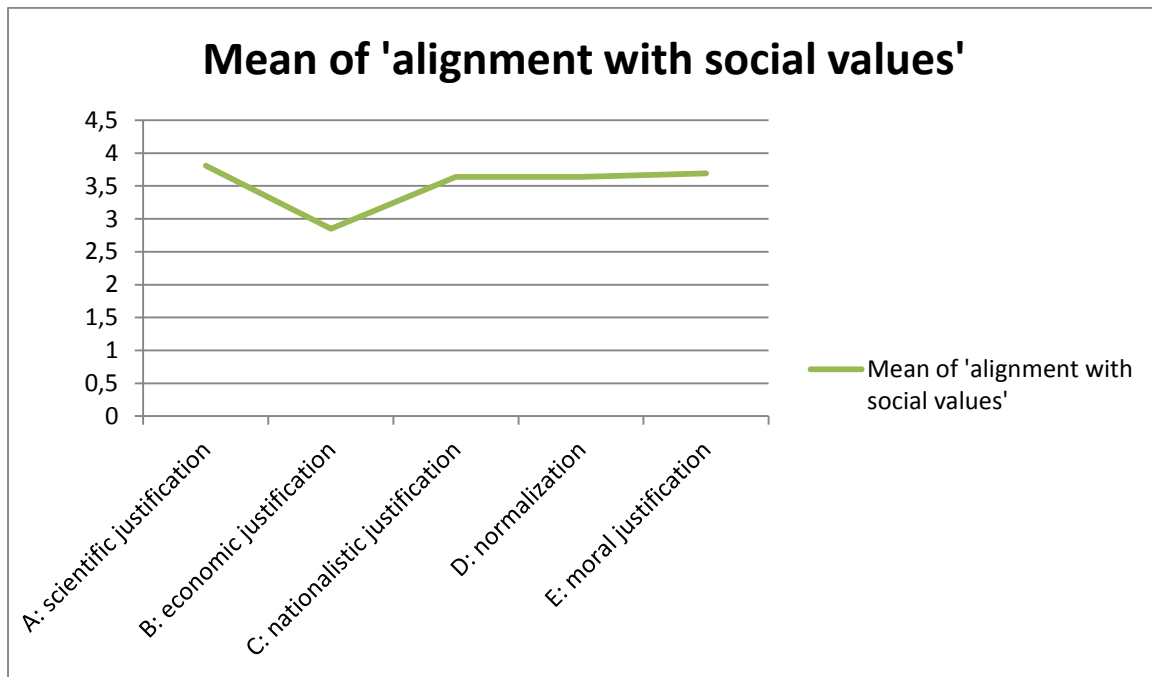


Figure 3: graph of the mean of 'alignment with social values'.

To determine the effect size for this result, eta squared (η^2) was calculated and turned out to be .15, which in Cohen's (1998) terms is considered a large effect. In sum, the mean of clothing brand B for this question is lower than for clothing brands A, D and E and this was statistically proven by the ANOVA test. This indicates that an economic justification leads to a lower score regarding 'alignment with social norms and values' in comparison to scientific justification, normalization and a moral justification.

Next, 'usefulness for environment/economy/society' was tested. The means and standard deviations are shown in the table below.

Table 13: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable 'usefulness'.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable 'usefulness'	<i>SD</i> for the variable 'usefulness'
A (scientific)	3.88	0.66
B (economic)	3.46	0.97
C (nationalistic)	3.64	0.81
D (normalization)	3.91	0.81
E (moral justification)	3.80	0.66
Total	3.79	0.74

The ANOVA test showed no significant difference for the variable 'usefulness for environment/economy/society' [$F(4, 118) = 1.01, p = .403$]. The next statement was that the chosen clothing brand should serve as an example for other brands. Again, the homogeneity

of variance assumption is violated for this variable, so Welch and Brown-Forsythe needs to be used, instead of the ANOVA table. Both the Welch test [$F(4, 37.27) = 1.64, p = .186$] and the Brown-Forsythe test [$F(4, 61.15) = 2.16, p = .085$] show that there is no significant difference in the means between the different chosen brands. An overview of the means and standard deviations for this variable are presented in the table below.

Table 14: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘serve as an example’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘serve as an example’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘serve as an example’
A (scientific)	3.88	0.55
B (economic)	3.15	0.99
C (nationalistic)	3.73	0.65
D (normalization)	3.64	0.95
E (moral justification)	3.82	0.75
Total	3.72	0.78

Similarly, for how ‘good’ the company was perceived, no significant difference in means was found [$F(4, 118) = 1.90, p = .115$]. The means and standard deviations for the variable ‘ethical’ are presented in the table below.

Table 15: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘good’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘good’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘good’
A (scientific)	3.69	0.59
B (economic)	3.23	0.73
C (nationalistic)	3.91	0.70
D (normalization)	3.50	0.60
E (moral justification)	3.67	0.74
Total	3.62	0.68

At last, the variable ‘ethical’ was tested using the ANOVA test. Again, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is violated, so the Welch and Brown-Forsythe needs to be used instead of the ANOVA table. Both the Welch [$F(4, 36.73) = 6.84, p < .001$] and Brown-Forsythe [$F(4, 64.64) = 8.39, p < .001$] show a significant difference between the means. The means and standard deviations for this variable are shown in the table below.

Table 16: Created overview of the means and standard deviations for the variable ‘ethical’.

Brand (justification)	<i>M</i> for the variable ‘ethical’	<i>SD</i> for the variable ‘ethical’
A (scientific)	3.91	0.64
B (economic)	2.62	0.87
C (nationalistic)	4.00	0.63
D (normalization)	3.64	1.00
E (moral justification)	3.93	0.58
Total	3.74	0.82

The multiple comparisons table in SPSS shows that clothing brand B differs from clothing brand A ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.29, p < .001$), brand C ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.38, p < .001$), brand D ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.02, p < .001$) and brand E ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.31, p < .001$). In other words, the mean of the variable 'ethical' for the economic justification differs from all other justifications. The mean for clothing brand B is a lot lower, and the effect size is large according to the calculation of eta squared ($\eta^2 = .24, p < .001$).

In sum, the ANOVA test was used to analyze if there were differences between the mean scores on the dimensions of legitimacy. It showed that the clothing brand using the economic justification is perceived as less aligned with social norms and values and less ethical in comparison to the other justifications.

4.2.4 Reliability

Since the legitimacy of the justifications is measured via the different dimensions found in the theoretical framework, it is important to make sure this scale is reliable. Therefore, a reliability analysis of scale was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Pallant, 2005). By doing this analysis, it is made sure that the scale is internally consistent and all dimensions are measuring the same underlying concept: legitimacy. The reliability analysis was done using IBM SPSS. In order to be considered reliable, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient should be above .7. The variables included in this analysis were all the dimensions of legitimacy: transparent, credible, honest, fair, truthful, aligned with social values, useful, an example for others, good and ethical. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .880. Deleting any of the variables would only lower the value of the Cronbach's alpha, which means the scale is internally consistent and the dimensions together measure the same underlying concept.

In sum, the results of the survey show that the majority of the respondents expect clothing brands to be socially responsible: they have more responsibilities than only economic and/or legal. The respondents do not perceive a gap between the CSR issues currently supported by the apparel industry and what should be supported according to them. Transparency about social responsibility is viewed as important and not all communication channels are perceived equally reliable. Furthermore, economic reasons were often named as reasons for clothing brands to engage in and communicate about CSR, while respondents also find moral justifications to be the most legitimate. In the next chapter, the most interesting findings will be discussed in more detail and explained in relation to theory and previous scholarship.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to find how CSR communication can help in the construction of a consumer perception of legitimacy, by assessing consumer's CSR communication preferences. Furthermore, different justifications in CSR communications were researched to see which consumers regard as the most legitimate. In this chapter the findings are interpreted and related to theory and previous scholarship. In that way, an overview is given of the (new) insights provided by this study. Theories and previous research may be able to explain some of the results and strengthen the arguments to answer the research questions in the best way. After the results in relation to theory and previous research have been discussed, the research questions will be answered in a concise manner. A short reflection on the used theories and methodology will show how the previous chapters were logical steps towards the answer of the research question.

5.1 Consumer perceptions and preferences of CSR communication

The concept of corporate social responsibility implies that society has expectations of businesses. These expectations have been argued to be economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (Carroll, 1979, 1991). The findings of this study support the claim as far as consumers go: the respondents recognize economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic obligations to society for clothing brands. In other words, the respondents expect clothing brands to be socially responsible next to their economic and legal obligations. They indicate importance to CSR issues in their judgments of clothing brands. When ranking the importance of different types of CSR issues, four out of the five most important issues were related to the social dimension of CSR. In other words, the majority of the respondents consider CSR issues that have to do with the relationship between business and society the most important. Other dimensions included in the question were the environmental dimension and voluntariness dimension.

Even though this study confirms the found perception of consumer expectations of CSR in the apparel industry, respondents also indicate that CSR issues are not the most important criteria in their purchase decisions. So, it advances previous insights in the way that while CSR is important, it is not the main criterion for consumers to base purchase decisions on: quality and price remain the most important factors in making purchase decisions. This indicates a hierarchy in purchasing criterions, as has previously been found by Öberseder, Schlegelmilch and Gruber (2011): if consumers have relevant information on CSR, they will

still first evaluate whether they have the financial resources to spend on the products (Öberseder, Schlegelmilch & Gruber, 2011). Price remains the central factor in purchase decisions. The arguments of Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) have shown that while CSR can positively affect purchase intentions, this influence is not straightforward: there are other factors mediating in the purchase decisions of consumers. Even if consumers are willing to pay a higher price for socially responsible companies, the price should not exceed the extra premium they are willing to pay (Creyer, 1997). Similar conclusions in previous research stated that there is an unwillingness to trade off CSR against quality of other traditional benefits (Carrigan et al., 2004; Young et al., 2010).

These are important conclusions relating to the business case for CSR. As has been stated in the theoretical framework, the instrumental view thinks of CSR as a strategic tool to achieve economic goals and create more profit. According to this view, CSR can be used to create an increase in buying behavior (Garriga & Melé, 2004). This study supports previous research in concluding there are mediating factors that need to be taken into account before reaching an increase in buying behavior from consumers. Mediating factors found in this study are price and quality.

5.2 CSR communication & legitimacy

5.2.2 Communication channels

There are many communication channels to choose from to disseminate CSR communication. Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) distinguish two types of channels: company-controlled vs. non-company-controlled. They argue a trade-off between controllability and credibility of CSR communication based on previous research that showed that individuals are more critical of messages they perceive to be for self-interest. Seemingly contradicting, this study finds the respondents to be rather neutral on the appropriateness of different channels to disseminate CSR information from. They indicated all channels to be considered appropriate to use for CSR communication. However, not only appropriateness, but also reliability was questioned for the different channels. Comparing the scores of appropriateness and reliability per channels showed that all channels but media reports score lower on reliability in comparison to appropriateness. Furthermore, media reports were the only channel to choose from that was non-company-controlled. This strengthens the argument of a trade-off between controllability and reliability of the channels. It also shows that, even though getting media attention and/or co-operation is often difficult with regards to their CSR information, it can be worth the

effort. Information from seemingly neutral sources will enhance the credibility of the CSR information and the associations made by consumers (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010).

Next to this trade-off, Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) highlight the possibilities of internet platforms such as blogs, chat rooms and social media to engage consumers and create online word-of-mouth for CSR information. Since these online platforms are not completely controllable by the clothing brands, it would be expected that this information is considered more reliable in comparison to for example information displayed on the company's website. However, for this research, the possibility of online interaction has not been found to lead to a higher rating of reliability for the communication channel.

Furthermore, in previous research interactive communication strategies were found to be important for the perceptions of consumers (Rim & Song, 2013). In previous cases, consumers have stated to value the interaction between the business and its stakeholders and to perceive new discursive communication channels to be more transparent (Livesey, 2001). The findings of this study seem to contradict these previous theories. Even though the respondents consider transparency very important, they do not want to be asked for their feedback by their favorite clothing brands. Moral legitimacy has been argued to be co-created by moral norms pro-actively, for example by engaging in public consultations. The finding that the respondents are not open for this co-creation could either indicate a bump in the road towards the creation of moral legitimacy or that co-creation is less important to create moral legitimacy than previously perceived by Basu and Palazzo (2008). This contradicting finding could be attributed to the sample, as the respondents were of different nationality in comparison to earlier scholarship. It could indicate a difference in preference per nationality or per industry, as the industry of focus also differed from previous research. The named research of Livesey (2001) for example was focused on the oil industry, which may not be comparable to the apparel industry. This study's finding could indicate that there is a difference between consumer preferences regarding CSR communication strategies between different industries.

5.2.1 Motives and justifications

Two seemingly contradicting findings are that on the one hand the majority of the respondents indicate it is most credible when companies are socially responsible without expecting any business benefits in return. On the other hand they also state that their perception of credibility is not affected by whether a company benefits from their CSR practices or not. It seems like it is important to consumers to feel like the company does not (only) have

economic motives for their CSR practices, but rather wants to do the right thing. While this intrinsic motive is important, the perceived credibility of the company is not in danger if CSR practices provide them with business benefits, as long as they are still practicing it from an ethical perspective. This is consistent with findings of Ellen et al. (2006), who stated that stakeholders are fine with extrinsic (business) motivations as long as the practices are attributed to intrinsic motives as well. Forehand and Grier (2003) similarly argue that business attributions only lower the consumer evaluation of the firm when the motivations seem inconsistent with the firm's expressed motive. One of their findings shows that the consumer evaluation is positively influenced by acknowledgment of business motivations for CSR initiatives in contrast to keeping these motivations salient. Consumers are aware of the business motivations for firms and therefore imply these motivations are present as well. The results of this study confirm these consumer implications, as it was found that the majority of the respondents rated 'enhancement of reputation' as the most important reason to communicate about and engage in CSR. Being honest about these motives in CSR messages will actually enhance the credibility. Therefore, companies in the clothing industry (as well as other industries) should acknowledge commercial benefits as well as social benefits of CSR initiatives in their communication to reduce customer skepticism and enhance credibility (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Taking into consideration the previous findings regarding the importance of the communication of moral motivations for CSR, the expectation could be formed for a moral justification to be the most important in CSR communication as well. There have been argued to be five different types of justifications used in CSR communication: scientific justifications, economic justifications, nationalistic justifications, normalizations and moralistic justifications (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Joutsenvirta, 2011). These were used to test which justification made clothing brands be perceived as most legitimate. The findings were in line with the expectations, since the brand communicating moralistic justification was perceived as the most legitimate clothing brand by the largest amount of respondents. So, even though consumers do not feel like the credibility is affected by the communication of commercial motives for CSR engagement of clothing brands, they do think it is very important the moralistic justification is present. Merely an economic justification is therefore not recommended in order to achieve legitimacy.

Next to this, the dimensions of legitimacy found in theory were confirmed by the statements respondents agreed with: the chosen legitimate brand was perceived to be transparent, honest, fair, credible, aligned with society's social norms and values, useful,

doing the right thing and an example for other companies. However, there was a difference in to what extent the brand using the economic justification was perceived as aligned with social norms and doing the right thing. The perceptions of these two dimensions were both lower compared to the other justification methods. In other words: the communication of an economic justification for a CSR initiative seems to have a negative influence on the perception of ‘alignment with social norms’ and ‘doing the right thing’.

As Suchman (1995) distinguished three types of legitimacy: pragmatic, cognitive and moral, it can be argued that the economic justification negatively influences this last type. The dimensions ‘alignment with social norms’ and ‘doing the right thing’ are both moral dimensions, contrary to for example ‘usefulness’ which is related to pragmatic legitimacy. Achieving moral legitimacy is one of the most important types, because it is the most related to society’s expectations. As the overall perception of legitimacy is completely dependent on the beliefs of a social group, achieving moral legitimacy is most related to achieving legitimacy in general. This study shows that the economic justification is relatively less in line with the moral norms of the respondents. Therefore, it will be a lot harder for organizations to achieve moral legitimacy if economic justifications are used.

One of the conclusions of Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) was that consumers seem to distinguish between companies that adopt a proactive stance versus those who adopt a defensive, competitive mechanism. In their focus groups it was mentioned by one consumer that “It makes a differences if their founding principles are based on social responsibility or if they are trying to do it as a sort of add-on after the fact” (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004, p. 15). The ‘moralistic justification’ message described the norms and values from which the clothing brand was operating, while the ‘economic justification’ message only explained how the company benefits from the CSR initiative. It seems like even the consumers who chose the economic justification as the most legitimate indicate this justification produces less of a moral legitimacy perception in comparison to the other justifications: it is less likely to make consumers feel like the values of the brand are aligned with their own values and like this clothing brand is doing the right thing. The moralistic justification should be favored by companies in comparison to the economic justification, as consumers are less likely to be skeptical if they feel like the social responsibility values form a basis for the company to operate from.

Next to this, it can be argued that the moralistic justification is one of the least specific of all messages. It only states relatively vague norms and values that the company claims to operate from, while for example the scientific justification really shows the impact of the CSR

initiative in numbers. Ambiguity has been defined as indirectness, vagueness and lack of clarity (Eisenberg, 1984). Strategic ambiguity means that an individual or an organization uses ambiguity to accomplish a goal. One of the characteristics of strategic ambiguity is that it promotes unified diversity: it can create agreement without limiting this agreement to people/institutions with specific interpretations. A society will always include many different interpretations and ambiguity allows agreement in spite of these different viewpoints (Eisenberg, 1984). As the moralistic justification has been argued to be one of the more vague messages, this ambiguous communication strategy could be the explanation for its popularity. It leaves room for different interpretations which the most respondents can identify with, whereas the non-ambiguous messages leave less room for different interpretations.

So, as argued moral justifications would be the best choice for clothing brands to use in their CSR communication to help create a consumer perception of legitimacy. Interestingly, the largest majority of the respondents indicate that currently clothing brands engage in CSR and communication about CSR for economic reasons. So, there seems to be a gap between the preferences of respondents (moral motives and justifications) and the perceived reality (economic motives). This indicates a need for clothing brands to communicate better about their CSR initiatives if they want them to be aligned with the expectations of society. Both this study and previous scholarship indicate the importance of moral/intrinsic motivations for the perceptions of consumers. Currently, respondents seem less likely to believe clothing brands engage in CSR for moral reasons in contrast to economic reasons. In order to obtain a less skeptical, more legitimate consumer perception of CSR activities, clothing brands should change their CSR communication (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Castello & Galang, 2014; Livesey, 2002; Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011).

5.3 Constructing legitimacy

A constitutive view on CSR communication was adopted in this thesis. This view argues that the perceptions of organizations are constituted in and through communication. Instead of a passive audience, human entities are seen as active recipients that make sense of communication and use communication to give sense to empty concepts (Chaudhri, 2014; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). An example of such an empty concept is legitimacy, as this concept refers to a perception that is socially constructed and dependent on the beliefs of a social group (Suchman, 1995).

One of the counterarguments to the constitutive view on communication is that the view is too simplistic: organizations cannot be reduced to social interaction, language or

discourse. In that view, the relationship between human agency and the enduring nature of an organization is too simplistic to be able to constitute organizations. This counterargument to the constitutive view implies that specifically CSR communication is only transmitting information and meaning from the sender to the receiver (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). The receiver needs to be a passive audience in order to receive the right meaning from the organization. However, the constitutive view is not trying to reduce an organization to interaction, but rather addresses how complex communication processes constitute organizing and organization. Theorists from this perspective show how ontological shifts in the communication-organization relationship change assumptions and the framing of relationships in organizational communication theory (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). Instead of viewing audiences as passive, the meaning given by the audience as a response to the communication is taken into account. The relationship between human interactions and organizations is more complex than reflected in the sender-receiver relation and the constitutive role of communication should not be neglected (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). This study supports this argument by showing the consumer interpretations of for example the justifications. Even though clothing brands may try to 'transfer' a well-willing message on their CSR initiatives, this is not always interpreted as 'well-willing' by consumers. It advances the constitutive view by teasing out how different justifications in communication can lead to different constituted meanings.

More specifically, in different views it has been argued that the constitutive view on communication is incapable of addressing hierarchical relations and dynamics of power (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). This means it would be impossible for communication to construct legitimacy, as legitimacy is necessary for organizations that need to exert influence over others (Suchman, 1995). In this thesis it has been shown specifically that the constitutive view is capable of addressing legitimacy, as the findings show that differences in justifications have consequences for the construction of a consumer perception of legitimacy. For example, the argued importance of a moral justification in comparison to or next to strategic justifications has been indicated to have a major impact on the perception of legitimacy. It advances the constitutive communication arguments by giving a more detailed overview of important dimensions of communication to take into account when constructing legitimacy.

The constitutive view tries to make the assumptions explicit and unpack how communication empowers corporate actors with the authority to control over others (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). This study supports this 'unpacking' goal of constitutive communication

theorists, by exploring how CSR communication can empower clothing brands with the consumer perception of legitimacy. Legitimacy reflects the relationship between the actions of the legitimized entity and society's beliefs: are these actions in line with the beliefs of the group (Suchman, 1995)? The focus in this study is on the group of apparel consumers. What are their beliefs and how do they construct a perception of legitimacy by interpreting CSR communication? This thesis explores some of the beliefs of the respondents. They have indicated to expect companies to be socially responsible. Also, transparency has been found to be very important for organizations to be considered legitimate. These two findings already show that CSR communication is important in the construction of a legitimacy perception, as organizations can only become more transparent through communication. More specifically moral motives and justifications are considered the most legitimate and also help constructing a perception of legitimacy more in comparison to economic motives and justifications. This study has shown that an economic justification in CSR communication has an influence on the perception of (moral) legitimacy for the respondents. This finding confirms the constitutive ability of CSR communication with the argument that a difference between messages in CSR communication influences the perceptions of the respondents.

5.4 Summary

The aim of this thesis was to answer the main research question: *How can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry?* The theoretical framework included theories and previous research on the concepts included in this research question: CSR, CSR communication, legitimacy and the apparel industry. These previous findings provided direction to the study and presented the gaps in academic knowledge that need to be filled. Next to this, it provided insights in which questions were important to ask consumers and which questions may have never been asked. The research was executed in a quantitative manner, using an online survey as the research method. This provided a large number of participants that could be used in the analysis. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis provided the possibility of a large dataset used in the tests for differences. These statistical differences would have been impossible to find using qualitative research methods.

The first sub-research question was: *What are consumer's CSR communication preferences?* The results of the survey showed that respondents are neutral regarding the appropriateness of different communication channels, but not every channel is equally reliable. In comparison to the other channels, advertising is perceived as least appropriate and

the official website of the clothing brand as the most appropriate. Traditional media channels that are not controlled by the clothing brands are considered the most reliable by the majority of the respondents. Therefore, to ensure CSR information is perceived as reliable, the choice of the right communication channel is important. The findings of this study are aligned with the found trade-off between channel controllability and reliability by Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010). Next to this, transparency is very much valued by the respondents. Clothing brands should be open to communication with stakeholders, even though there is only a small percentage of respondents that would actually like to be asked for feedback themselves. This means that an interactive communication strategy is highly valued by consumers in terms of transparency, but will probably only be actively used by a niche group.

The second sub-question was: *What kind of justification is perceived as most legitimate in CSR communication?* Five types of justifications, based on previous research of Joutsenvirta (2011) were tested: scientific, economic, nationalistic, normalization and moralistic. The moralistic justification was the most often chosen as legitimate. Furthermore moral motivations have been found to be important for a consumer perception of credibility in this study as well as in previous research (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Forehand & Grier, 2003). Still, the respondents do not feel like their perception of credible CSR is influenced by the communication of economic motivations. Previous research shows that consumers are fine with extrinsic motivations, as long as it is in line with their intrinsic motivations and values (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Ellen et al., 2006). Furthermore it was tested if there were any differences in the rating of legitimacy dimensions for the different chosen justifications. The results indicate that there is a difference in the perceived alignment with social norms and values and ethics for the economic justification. The respondents that chose this justification as the most legitimate rated these dimensions lower for the brand in comparison to the others. Similarly to previous research this stresses the importance of the communication of intrinsic motivations, next to possible extrinsic/business motivations.

The main research question was: *How can CSR communication help construct a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry?* This thesis has shown that transparency is very important for the perceived reliability of the clothing brand. Reliability is an important dimension of legitimacy and therefore, indirectly, transparency can influence the perceived legitimacy of clothing brands. Next to this, it is important to consumers that intrinsic/moral motivations for CSR initiatives are communicated. Credibility is not in jeopardy if a company experiences economic benefits from their CSR initiatives as well, as long as the intrinsic motivations and values are present in the organization. This is

emphasized again by the choice for the moralistic justification as the most legitimate. In sum, a transparent communication strategy including the communication of moral justifications and/or motivations for CSR initiatives can help constructing a consumer perception of legitimacy in the apparel industry.

Related to this main research question is the discussion of theorists around the constitutive view of communication. It has been argued in this chapter that legitimacy is an empty concept that is dependent on the beliefs of a social group. The constitutive view on communication tries to unpack how human entities use communication to such empty concepts. This thesis is in line with this view, as it explores CSR communication strategies of clothing brands and the influence on the consumer perception of legitimacy. The found importance of transparency and moral motives show that differences in CSR communication can have consequences for the perception of legitimacy. This strengthens the argument that communication indeed has a constitutive role for the consumer perception of legitimacy of organizations.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to study how CSR communication can construct a consumer perception of legitimacy. After a thorough literature review of theories on the concepts of CSR, CSR communication, legitimacy and CSR in the apparel industry an overview was given of the current academic knowledge on this subject. It showed where there are still gaps in academic research and what could be expected of consumers regarding certain perceptions on CSR communication and legitimacy. Furthermore, previous consumer research on CSR communication was used as inspiration for survey questions, to ensure understandable and high quality questions in the survey. The method chapter provided the reader with a detailed overview of why this method was chosen as the best option to research the consumers. Both this chapter and the findings chapter, which gave a detailed overview of all findings, are necessary for the reader to assess how the researcher had come to this conclusion. The discussion chapter provided more depth and explanations for some of the findings, which support the forming of comprehensive and profound answers to the research questions.

6.1 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that the findings are not generalizable to the complete population of apparel consumers, because of the small sample size. The sample consisted of 127 respondents, of which the most were female, highly educated and between the age of 21 and 30 years old. This is a specific demographic and to form more comprehensive conclusions about apparel consumers, a larger sample should be researched. Nonetheless, this study can serve as an exploratory research and a basis for future, richer studies.

A quantitative survey was used as a method to answer the research question. This provided a considerably broad overview, but lacks depth in some areas and possible explanations for some of the results. This depth and the explanations were found in previous researches and theory, but a more profound conclusion would have been formed if the respondents themselves could have been asked for explanations for their answers. Furthermore, the online survey method lacks controllability for the researcher. It is not possible to know if respondents for example filled it in seriously, discussed questions with others and were biased because of this etc. However, this method did ensure anonymity for the respondents, which would have been compromised using other methods. CSR is a topic that can lead to socially favorable answers from respondents. The high level of anonymity of

the online survey therefore ensured less biased answers from the respondents than other research methods.

6.2 Implications and recommendations for future research

This study can serve as a basis for new insights on apparel consumers' perceptions of legitimacy. Future research could expand by surveying a larger sample and/or go more into depth by doing a qualitative analysis. It would also be interesting to go more into depth on the justifications with regards to legitimacy and for example do an experiment using a larger amount of messages including more specific content and smaller differences.

Next to this, there is still a lot unclear about the perceived reliability of channels and the usefulness of interactive communication strategies regarding CSR. It would be extremely useful for clothing companies to know more about why some of the channels are regarded as appropriate to disseminate CSR information, but not necessarily reliable. More specific research using qualitative or mixed methods could provide more detailed insights in this field. Related to this subject, it would be interesting to do more in-depth research on consumer preferences regarding co-creation and interaction strategies. Since the findings from this study seem to contradict conclusions in previous scholarship, a mixed method research including a large sample and an in-depth method on why respondents do or do not like to interact with clothing brands regarding CSR could clarify this study's results.

Also, since legitimacy can be perceived as a social construct that is shaped by meaning and values of societies, it could be interesting to see how consumers define legitimacy for the apparel industry. Especially since legitimacy is shaped by more than only CSR communication, in future research more aspects of the apparel industry could be included. .

7. References

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey (English)

Introduction

This survey is for my master thesis project at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The purpose of the research is to examine communication and business practices of clothing/apparel brands. You can fill in this survey completely anonymous and your responses will be handled with great care. Filling in the survey will take around 15 minutes. I appreciate your help, thank you for taking the time to fill in the survey.

1. Please name some of your favorite clothing brands:
2. How important are the following factors to you when you buy clothes?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Price					
Quality					
Brand image					
Style					
Recommendations from others					
Previous experience with the brand					
Media reports/News about the brand					
Communication from the brand (for example advertisements)					
Sales, discounts and/or promotions					
Other, namely...					

3. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe clothing brands only have					

economic responsibilities: making profit.					
I believe clothing brands have legal and economic responsibilities: making profit according to the law.					
I believe clothing brands should make sure society benefits from their own practices as much as possible.					
I believe clothing brands should play a large role in helping the society and use their economic profits to help charities that try to enhance the clothing industry.					
I believe clothing brands should play a large role in helping society and use their economic profits to help any charity.					

The following questions will go deeper into the Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) of clothing brands. Corporate Social Responsibility implies that society has expectations of businesses to act according to ethical values of the society. For example some societies may value a certain minimum wage (that is not legally required) for employees and therefore expect companies to provide these minimum wages for their own employees.

Keeping your favorite clothing brands in mind, please indicate if the following statements apply to you:

4. It is important that clothing brands are transparent about their practices and social responsibilities. Yes/No/I don't know
5. I would like to know if my favorite clothing brands are socially responsible. Yes/No/I don't know
6. Which communication channel would you find appropriate for clothing companies to communicate CSR information? Please indicate how appropriate you think the following channels are:

	1 = very inappropriate	2 = inappropriate	3 = neutral	4 = appropriate	5 = very appropriate
Official website of the clothing brand					
CSR report					
Social media channels of the brand (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.)					
Traditional media (newspaper, magazines, TV news broadcast)					
Advertising					
Clothing tags and/or clothing labels					
Corporate blog					
In the stores					
Other, namely...					

7. I search for information on CSR practices of clothing brands:

- Never

- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

8. When evaluating whether a clothing brand is bad or good, how do you rate the importance of the following aspects? Please drag the aspects in order from 1 (=most important) to 8 (= least important).

- That the quality of the clothes is high
- That the company treats the employees well
- That the level of customer service is high
- That the company takes good care of the environment
- That the company assumes social responsibility
- That the management is competent
- That the company is open and communicates about its products and activities
- That the company generates profit

9. Please indicate how reliable you would perceive CSR information of the clothing brands if they appeared on the following channels:

	Very unreliable	Unreliable	Neutral	Reliable	Very reliable
Information on CSR activities/initiatives via the official website of the clothing brand.					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives via social media channels of the clothing brand.					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives via traditional media that is not owned by the clothing brand (for example newspapers, magazines or on TV)					

Information on CSR activities/initiatives via advertising					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives in clothing tags and/or labels.					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives in CSR reports available on the website					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives via a CSR blog of the clothing brand.					
Information on CSR activities/initiatives told by friends/acquaintances.					

10. Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Clothing brands should inform their stakeholders about CSR activities and initiatives.					
Clothing brands should ask feedback from their stakeholders about CSR initiatives and be open to interact about CSR topics.					
I would like to be asked for feedback about CSR initiatives of my favorite clothing brand(s).					
Clothing brands do not need to be transparent about their CSR initiatives as long as they are not					

asked about these topics.					
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11. Which of the following topics/issues do you believe the clothing industry is supporting the most? Please drag the issues in order from 1 (supported the most) to 13 (supported the least).

- Fair wages for all employees
- Equal treatment of all employees
- Non-excessive working hours for all employees
- Safe working conditions for all employees
- Avoiding child-labor
- Avoiding toxic chemicals in fabrics
- Avoid pollution of the environment while producing clothes
- Treatment of animals (if used) in production chain of clothes
- Collaborations with charities related to the clothing industry
- Showing responsibility in relation to the local communities around the brand's locations
- Efforts in relation to (natural) disasters in other parts of the world
- Sustainable ways of producing clothes (for example the use of organic cotton)
- Help in reducing the waste of (worn) clothes

12. Which issues do you believe the industry SHOULD support? Please drag the issues in order from 1 (most necessary to be supported) to 13 (least necessary to be supported):

- Fair wages for all employees
- Equal treatment of all employees
- Non-excessive working hours for all employees
- Safe working conditions for all employees
- Avoiding child-labor
- Avoiding toxic chemicals in fabrics
- Avoid pollution of the environment while producing clothes
- Treatment of animals (if used) in production chain of clothes
- Collaborations with charities related to the clothing industry

- Showing responsibility in relation to the local communities around the brand's locations
- Efforts in relation to (natural) disasters in other parts of the world
- Sustainable ways of producing clothes (for example the use of organic cotton)
- Help in reducing the waste of (worn) clothes

13. Why do you think clothing brands engage in CSR? Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements regarding the motives for CSR:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It is a way for clothing brands to anticipate and thus avoid crises.					
It can provide common values for the employees of the company, which can be used to create a strong company.					
To differentiate from competitors.					
It is a way to generate profits.					
It can improve the company's image.					
It is the morally right thing to do.					
Because of pressure from consumers, media,					

governments and NGOs					
Because they are required to do so by law.					
Other, namely...					

14. Which audience group do you believe is the most important for clothing brands to focus their CSR communication at? Rate the audience groups using the stars (1 star = very unimportant, 2 stars = unimportant, 3 stars = neutral, 4 stars = important, 5 stars = very important)

- Consumers
- NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations, for example Unicef, Green Peace etc.)
- Governments
- Shareholders of the company
- Competitors in the clothing industry
- Employees of the company
- Media

15. Clothing brands can exercise and engage in CSR in various ways. Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it most credible when a company is socially responsible without expecting any business benefit in return					
To me, the most important thing is that the company exercises CSR. My perception of					

the company's credibility is not affected by whether the company benefits from it or not.					
I think it increases a company's image when a company exercises CSR.					
The longer time a company has been engaged in CSR, the more credible it seems.					
I find it credible when a company communicates about its CSR initiatives.					

16. Why do you think it is important for clothing brands to communicate about CSR?

Please drag the following statements in order from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).

- The company wants to be transparent about its practices, this makes them more credible
- The company wants to enhance its reputation
- The company wants to justify that their practices are in line with the law.
- The company wants to respond to the consumer demand of being ethical
- The company wants to respond NGOs demanding ethical practices
- The company wants to show it cares about more than only making profit.
- Other, namely...

In order to answer the last questions, please read the following hypothetical situation carefully. Five different clothing brands have made the decision to reduce the use of natural

resources in the production of their clothes. The production of great fashion can use a lot of resources, for example water. Cotton needs it to grow and the clothing brands use it to wash clothes. The five clothing brands changed the way they wash denim jeans in the production process, which has resulted in a reduction of 340 million liters of water used per year. The following messages state why they have chosen for this new approach to reduce the use of water.

- Clothing brand A: “The reason for our decision to reduce the use of water was that research has shown that 750 million people lack accessibility to drinking water and over a third of the population depends on water sources that are under severe stress. Also, this research has shown us the possibility to reduce water use when washing denim products, which is why the decision was made to change the production process.”
- Clothing brand B: “The reduction in use of water provides us with a competitive benefit, as we are able to produce great fashion using less water. If, in the future, water may become scarcer, we already have the knowledge and resources to be able to still produce clothes, while our competitors are behind in knowledge and resources. This will stabilize our sales and increase our profits.”
- Clothing brand C: “As we come from countries that depend on water, we feel obliged to make sure our practices help our compatriots.”
- Clothing brand D: “As it is usual for us to not waste any resources and be as economic as we can, it is no more than normal for use to make sure we do not waste water as well.”
- Clothing brand E: “To create a sustainable fashion future, we need to consider future generations today and make fashion using a lot less of our planet’s resources. It is our duty to take care of vulnerable communities and make sure the next generations can still benefit from water and other natural resources.”

17. Based on these messages, which clothing brand seems the most legitimate to you?

- Clothing brand A
- Clothing brand B
- Clothing brand C
- Clothing brand D
- Clothing brand E

18. For the chosen brand (A-E), please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements based on the CSR practice of reducing water and the message of the chosen clothing brand.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This clothing brand is transparent about its practices.					
I believe this message.					
This clothing brand is honest.					
This company is fair.					
This clothing brand is telling the truth.					
The practices of this clothing brand are aligned with my social norms and values.					
The practices of this clothing brand are useful for the environment, economy and/or society.					
This clothing brand should serve as an example for other					

clothing brands.					
I consider this a good company.					
This company is trying to do the right thing ethically.					

19. Age:

- 1-10 years old
- 11-20 years old
- 21-30 years old
- 31-40 years old
- 41-50 years old
- 51-60 years old
- 61-70 years old
- 71-older

20. Gender:

21. Nationality:

22. What is your highest completed education level?

- Primary school
- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- University

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! Your answers have been recorded and submitted.

Appendix 2: Survey (Dutch)

Introductie

Deze enquête is voor mijn master thesis project aan de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Het doel van mijn thesis is om meer inzicht te krijgen in de communicatie van kleding merken. U kunt de enquête volledige anoniem invullen, de antwoorden zullen met zorgvuldigheid worden behandeld. Het invullen van deze enquête duurt ongeveer 15 minuten. Ik waardeer de hulp, alvast bedankt voor het invullen!

1. Noem een aantal van uw favoriete kleding merken: _____
2. Hoe belangrijk zijn de volgende factoren als u kleding koopt?

	Ze er on be lang rijk	On be lang rijk	Ne u traal	Be lang rijk	Ze er be lang rijk
Prijs					
Kwaliteit					
Reputatie van het kledingmerk					
Stijl					
Aanbevelingen van anderen					
Eerdere ervaringen met het merk					
Media rapportages/Nieuws over het merk					
Communicatie van het kleding merk (bijvoorbeeld advertenties)					
Uitverkoop, kortingen en/of andere promoties					
Anders, namelijk..					

3. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens/oneens bent.

	Ze er m ee o ne ens	M ee o ne ens	Ne u traal	M ee e ens	Ze er m ee e ens
Ik vind dat kleding merken alleen economische verantwoordelijkheden hebben: winst maken.					
Ik vind dat kleding merken economische					

en juridische verantwoordelijkheden hebben: winst maken op een legale manier.					
Ik vind dat kleding merken ervoor moeten zorgen dat de samenleving zoveel mogelijk voordeel heeft van hun praktijken.					
Ik vind dat kleding merken een grote rol in het helpen van de samenleving moeten spelen en hun economische winst moeten gebruiken om goede doelen te helpen die de kleding industrie proberen te verbeteren.					
Ik vind dat kleding merken een grote rol in het helpen van de samenleving moeten spelen en hun economische winst moeten gebruiken om welk goed doel dan ook te steunen.					

De volgende vragen zullen dieper ingaan op Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen (MVO) van kleding merken. Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen geeft aan dat de maatschappij/samenleving bepaalde verwachtingen heeft van ondernemingen, dat ze zich onder andere gedragen naar de sociale waarden van de maatschappij. Sommige samenlevingen hechten bijvoorbeeld veel waarde aan een bepaald minimumloon (dat niet wettelijk is vastgelegd) en verwachten daarom dat bedrijven dit loon aan hun werknemers betalen.

Uw favoriete kledingmerken in het achterhoofd houdend, geef aan of de volgende stellingen van toepassing zijn op u:

4. Het is belangrijk dat kledingmerken transparant zijn over hun praktijken en maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheden.

- Ja
 - Nee
 - Weet ik niet
5. Ik wil graag weten of mijn favoriete kleding merken maatschappelijk verantwoord zijn.
- Ja
 - Nee
 - Weet ik niet
6. Welk communicatie kanaal zou u gepast vinden voor kledingmerken om MVO informatie te communiceren? Geef aan in hoeverre u de volgende kanalen gepast vindt: 1 = zeer ongepast, 2 = ongepast, 3 = neutraal, 4 = gepast, 5 = zeer gepast.

	Zeer ongepast	Ongepast	Neutraal	Gepast	Zeer gepast
Officiële website van het kledingmerk					
MVO rapport					
Social media kanalen van het kledingmerk (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.)					
Traditionele media (kranten, magazines, nieuws uitzendingen op TV)					
Reclame en advertenties					
Kaartjes en merkjes in de kledingstukken					
Blog van het bedrijf					
In de winkels					
Anders, namelijk..					

7. Zoekt u wel eens informatie over MVO praktijken van kledingmerken?
- Nooit
 - Zeer weinig
 - Soms
 - Vaak
 - Altijd
8. Als u evalueert of een kledingmerk goed of slecht is, welke aspecten zijn dan van belang? Sleep de aspecten op volgorde van meest belangrijk (1) naar minst belangrijk (8).

- Dat de kwaliteit van de kleding hoog is
- Dat het bedrijf zijn medewerkers goed behandelt
- Dat de klantvriendelijkheid hoog is
- Dat het bedrijf goed zorgt voor het milieu
- Dat het bedrijf maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheden aanneemt
- Dat het management capabel is
- Dat het bedrijf open is en communiceert over de producten en praktijken
- Dat het bedrijf winst maakt

9. Geef aub aan hoe betrouwbaar u MVO informatie zou vinden als ze op de volgende kanalen zou verschijnen.

	Ze er onbetrouwbaar	Onbetrouwbaar	Neutraal	Betrouw- baar	Ze er betrouw- baar
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via de officiële website van het kleding merk.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via de officiële social media kanalen van het kleding merk.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via traditionele media die niet beheerd wordt door het kledingmerk (bijvoorbeeld de krant, magazines,					

nieuwsuitzendingen op TV)					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via advertenties/reclame.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via kleding merkjes en/of labels.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via MVO rapporten beschikbaar via de website.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via een MVO blog van het kledingmerk.					
Informatie over MVO activiteiten/initiatieven verkregen via vrienden en/of kennissen.					

10. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Kledingmerken moeten al hun belanghebbenden informeren over hun MVO activiteiten en initiatieven.					

Kledingmerken zouden hun belanghebbenden om feedback moeten vragen over hun MVO initiatieven en open zijn om met iedereen te communiceren over MVO onderwerpen.					
Ik zou graag om feedback worden gevraagd door mijn favoriete kledingmerk over hun MVO initiatieven.					
Kledingmerken hoeven niet transparant te zijn over hun MVO initiatieven zolang er niet naar gevraagd wordt.					

11. Welke van de volgende onderwerpen/problemen worden er volgens u het meest ondersteund door de kleding industrie? Sleep de onderwerpen op volgorde van 1 (meest ondersteund) tot 13 (minst ondersteund).

- Eerlijke salarissen voor alle werknemers
- Gelijke behandeling van alle werknemers
- Geen buitensporige werkuren voor alle werknemers
- Veilige werkomstandigheden voor alle werknemers
- Vermijden van kinderarbeid
- Vermijden van het gebruik van giftige chemicaliën in stoffen
- Vermijden van milieuvervuiling tijdens het produceren van kleding
- Behandeling van dieren (indien gebruikt) in het produceren van kleding
- Samenwerkingen met goede doelen gerelateerd aan de kleding industrie
- Tonen van maatschappelijk verantwoord gedrag gerelateerd aan de lokale bevolking rondom locaties van het kledingmerk
- Inspanningen gerelateerd aan (natuurlijke) rampen in andere gebieden in de wereld
- Duurzame manieren van kleding produceren (bijvoorbeeld het gebruik van biologisch katoen)
- Inspanningen in het reduceren van afval van (gedragen) kleding.

12. Welke onderwerpen zou de industrie moeten ondersteunen? Sleep de onderwerpen op volgorde van 1 (meest ondersteuning nodig) tot 11 (minst ondersteuning nodig).

- Eerlijke salarissen voor alle werknemers
- Gelijke behandeling van alle werknemers
- Geen buitensporige werkuren voor alle werknemers
- Veilige werkomstandigheden voor alle werknemers
- Vermijden van kinderarbeid
- Vermijden van het gebruik van giftige chemicaliën in stoffen
- Vermijden van milieuvervuiling tijdens het produceren van kleding
- Behandeling van dieren (indien gebruikt) in het produceren van kleding
- Samenwerkingen met goede doelen gerelateerd aan de kleding industrie
- Tonen van maatschappelijk verantwoord gedrag gerelateerd aan de lokale bevolking rondom locaties van het kledingmerk
- Inspanningen gerelateerd aan (natuurlijke) rampen in andere gebieden in de wereld
- Duurzame manieren van kleding produceren (bijvoorbeeld het gebruik van biologisch katoen)
- Inspanningen in het reduceren van afval van (gedragen) kleding.

13. Waarom denkt u dat kledingmerken zich bezighouden met MVO? Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de volgende stellingen. 1 = zeer mee oneens, 2 = mee oneens, 3 = neutraal, 4 = mee eens, 5 = zeer mee eens.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Het is een manier om te anticiperen op en het voorkomen van crises.					
Het creëert gedeelde waarden voor werknemers, wat vervolgens zorgt voor een sterker bedrijf.					
Kledingmerken willen zich differentiëren van concurrentie.					
Het is een manier om (meer) winst te maken.					

Het kan de reputatie van bedrijven verbeteren.					
Het is moreel juist om te doen.					
Er wordt druk uitgeoefend door consumenten, media, overheden en goede doelen.					
Het moet volgens de wet.					
Anders, namelijk..					

14. Welke groep(en) is/zijn het belangrijkste voor kledingmerken om hun MVO communicatie op te richten? Geef aan hoe belangrijk onderstaande groepen zijn door de sterren te gebruiken (1 ster = zeer onbelangrijk, 2 = onbelangrijk, 3 = neutraal, 4 = belangrijk, 5 = zeer belangrijk).

- Consumenten
- Goede doelen
- Overheden
- Aandeelhouders van het bedrijf
- Concurrenten in de kledingindustrie
- Medewerkers van het bedrijf
- Media

15. Kledingmerken kunnen zich op verschillende manieren bezighouden met MVO. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Ik vind het meest geloofwaardig als een bedrijf zich maatschappelijk verantwoord gedraagt zonder er economische voordelen van te verwachten.					
Voor mij is het belangrijkste dat een bedrijf zich maatschappelijk verantwoord gedraagt. Het maakt voor mijn perceptie van het bedrijf niet uit of het bedrijf daar zelf baat bij heeft of niet.					

Ik denk dat de reputatie van een bedrijf verbetert als het zich maatschappelijk verantwoorde gedraagt.					
Hoe langer een kledingmerk zich bezighoudt met MVO, hoe geloofwaardiger het is.					
Ik vind het geloofwaardig als een bedrijf communiceert over de MVO initiatieven.					

16. Waarom denkt u dat het belangrijk is voor kledingmerken om te communiceren over MVO initiatieven? Sleep de volgende stellingen in volgorde van 1 (meest belangrijk) tot 6 (minst belangrijk).

- Het kledingmerk wil transparant over de praktijken zijn, dit maakt het geloofwaardiger.
- Het kledingmerk wil de reputatie verbeteren.
- Het kledingmerk wil verantwoorden dat de praktijken in lijn zijn met de wet.
- Het kledingmerk wil reageren op de eisen van consumenten om ethisch verantwoord te opereren.
- Het kledingmerk wil reageren op eisen van goede doelen om ethisch verantwoord te opereren.
- Het kledingmerk wil laten zien dat het meer wil doen dan alleen winst maken.
- Anders, namelijk..

Om de volgende vragen te beantwoorden, leest u zorgvuldig de volgende hypothetische situatie. Vijf verschillende kledingmerken hebben de keuze gemaakt om het gebruik van natuurlijke hulpbronnen te reduceren in de productie van kleding. Het produceren van kleding verbruikt veel natuurlijke bronnen, bijvoorbeeld water. Katoen heeft water nodig om te groeien en de kledingmerken gebruiken het om hun kleding producten te wassen. De vijf kledingmerken hebben de manier van het wassen van denim producten veranderd, wat ervoor heeft gezorgd dat er 340 miljoen liter water minder wordt verbruikt per jaar. De volgende berichten van de bedrijven laat zien waarom zij hiervoor hebben gekozen.

- Kledingmerk A: “De reden voor onze beslissing om minder water te verbruiken was dat onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat 750 miljoen mensen geen of moeilijk toegang hebben tot drink water en meer dan een derde van de wereldbevolking is

afhankelijk van waterbronnen die onder druk staan. Daarnaast heeft dit onderzoek aangetoond dat het mogelijk is minder water te gebruiken bij het wassen van denim producten. Daarom is de beslissing gemaakt het productieproces aan te passen.”

- Kledingmerk B: “De vermindering van het water gebruik voorziet ons van concurrerend voordeel, aangezien wij geweldige kleding kunnen produceren met minder water. Als, in de toekomst, water schaarser wordt, hebben wij al de kennis en middelen om kleding te kunnen blijven produceren. Onze concurrenten lopen dan achter in kennis en middelen. Dit zal ervoor zorgen dat onze verkoop stabiel blijft en onze winst stijgt.”
- Kledingmerk C: “Aangezien wij afkomstig zijn uit landen waar een grote afhankelijkheid is van water bronnen die onder druk staan, voelen wij ons verplicht om ervoor te zorgen dat de praktijken onze landgenoten helpen.”
- Kledingmerk D: “Het is voor ons normaal geen middelen of bronnen te verspillen en om zo zuinig mogelijk te produceren. Vandaar dat het ook niet meer dan normaal is voor ons om te zorgen dat er geen water wordt verspild in het productieproces.”
- Kledingmerk E: “Om een duurzame toekomst van mode te creëren, moeten we rekening houden met toekomstige generaties en minder natuurlijke bronnen verbruiken. Het is onze taak om voor zwakkere samenlevingen te zorgen en er zeker van te zijn dat toekomstige generaties nog steeds gebruik kunnen maken van water en andere natuurlijke bronnen.”

17. Gebaseerd op deze berichten, welk kledingmerk is het meest legitiem volgens u?

- Kledingmerk A
- Kledingmerk B
- Kledingmerk C
- Kledingmerk D
- Kledingmerk E

18. Voor het gekozen kledingmerk (A-E), geef aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de volgende stellingen gebaseerd op het MVO initiatief (vermindering van water gebruik) en het bericht.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Dit kledingmerk is transparant over zijn praktijken.					
Ik geloof dit bericht.					
Dit kledingmerk is eerlijk.					
Dit kledingmerk is fair.					
Dit kledingmerk vertelt de waarheid.					
De praktijken van dit kledingmerk zijn in lijn met mijn sociale normen en waarden.					
De praktijken van dit kledingmerk zijn nuttig voor het milieu, de economie en/of de samenleving.					
Dit kledingmerk zou een voorbeeld moeten zijn voor andere merken.					
Ik vind dit een goed bedrijf.					
Dit bedrijf probeert ethisch het juiste te doen.					

19. Leeftijd:

- a. 1-10
- b. 11-20
- c. 21-30
- d. 31-40
- e. 41-50
- f. 51-60
- g. 61-70
- h. 71-ouder

20. Gender:

21. Nationaliteit:

22. Hoogst voltooide educatie niveau:

- a. Basisschool
- b. VMBO
- c. HAVO
- d. VWO
- e. MBO
- f. HBO
- g. Universiteit

