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**SUSTAINABLE BRAND IDENTITY COMMUNICATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA  
INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' INTENTION TO BEHAVE SUSTAINABLY**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The world is consuming at such a rate that 1,75 Earths would be needed to endure the effects. The effects of consumption on sustainable development have long been acknowledged, as is the role of marketing discipline in encouraging consumption, showcasing a need for the discipline to change, however still consumption continues to rise. The purpose of this research is to create an empirically validated framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably. The research focuses on an SME operating in the fashion industry and poses sustainable brands with sustainability as their core value to be a solution into influencing consumers' behavioral intention. Theories of sustainability marketing, branding and consumption, theories of sustainability communications and the theory of planned behavior were applied in creating the theoretical framework. The research is qualitative to pre-test the theoretical framework for future quantitative research. Two qualitative research methods were applied; content analysis of the case company's Instagram feed to study what kind sustainability content is communicated, and interviews of the case company's potential customers to study how the communications and content resonates to consumers, and lastly, if the content affects the consumers' consumption behavior through the theory of planned behavior.</p> <p>The research resulted in three theoretical contributions. The research created a theoretical framework for studying the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably and a framework for analyzing sustainable brand identity communications in social media. The research also validated the two frameworks empirically. The results demonstrated that consumers' intention to behave sustainably may be influenced with brand identity communications in social media by influencing consumers' attitudes and self-efficacy. Effect on consumers' descriptive norms was not realized. Also, the research showcased that brands can communicate their sustainable identity to consumers through social media content, and that consumers can and do create a perception of the brand's sustainability based on the brand's social media content. Lastly, the research contributed several methods on how to create influential sustainable brand identity communications in social media, reported consumers' perceptions of the communications, and the effects of those communications on consumers.</p> <p>The limitations of this study arise from the limited research on sustainability branding and communications as well as the research being unable to study actual behavior. Moreover, as the results are not statistically generalizable, the qualitative nature of the research may be considered as a limitation. Further research suggestions include adapting the research into another qualitative context and to test the framework quantitatively to validate it further.</p>			
Keywords sustainable brands, sustainable brand identity communications, sustainability content, sustainable consumer behavior, influencing consumers' intention to behave sustainably, social media content			
Additional information			

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Background and significance of the research topic .....	7
1.2	Research gap.....	8
1.3	Scope of the research .....	11
1.4	Research questions and description of research methods.....	12
1.5	Structure of the thesis .....	14
<b>2</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1	Sustainability marketing and branding.....	16
2.1.1	Sustainable brand and sustainability branding .....	20
2.1.2	Core values and authenticity in sustainability branding .....	22
2.1.3	Sustainable consumers and consumption.....	25
2.2	Social media – a channel for sustainability branding.....	27
2.3	Sustainability and the fashion Industry .....	29
<b>3</b>	<b>THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR .....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1	Applied model of the theory of planned behavior .....	32
3.2	The theoretical framework.....	34
<b>4</b>	<b>CONTENT IN SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING AND COMMUNICATIONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1	Sustainability communications .....	36
4.2	Rational arguments and emotional appeal.....	38
4.3	Psychological benefits with emotional appeal.....	39
4.4	Feeling of empowerment .....	40
4.5	Creating stakeholder engagement with sustainability content.....	42
4.5.1	Transparency and openness.....	42
4.5.2	Brand authenticity.....	43
4.5.3	Interactivity and dialogue.....	45
4.6	User-friendly message format .....	46
<b>5</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1	Research perspective and methods .....	47
5.2	Content analysis and the sample .....	48
5.3	Content analysis process .....	49
5.4	Interviews and the sample .....	51
5.5	Interview analysis process.....	53
<b>6</b>	<b>EMPIRICAL RESULTS .....</b>	<b>54</b>
6.1	Post 1 results .....	54
6.1.1	Content analysis results.....	54

6.1.2	Interview analysis results - Implicit .....	55
6.1.3	Interview analysis results – Aided memory.....	57
6.1.4	Summary of post 1 .....	64
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Post 2 results .....</b>	<b>65</b>
6.2.1	Content analysis results.....	65
6.2.2	Interview analysis results - Implicit .....	65
6.2.3	Interview analysis results – Aided memory.....	67
6.2.4	Summary of post 2 .....	74
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Post 3 results .....</b>	<b>74</b>
6.3.1	Content analysis results.....	74
6.3.2	Interview analysis results – Implicit .....	75
6.3.3	Interview analysis results – Aided memory.....	77
6.3.4	Summary of post 3 .....	85
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Post 4 results .....</b>	<b>85</b>
6.4.1	Content analysis results.....	85
6.4.2	Interview analysis results – Implicit .....	86
6.4.3	Interview analysis results – Aided memory.....	88
6.4.4	Summary of post 4 .....	96
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Instagram results .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>Summary of results for sustainable brand identity communications .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>6.7</b>	<b>Influence on consumers’ intention to behave sustainably .....</b>	<b>98</b>
6.7.1	Attitude .....	98
6.7.2	Norms.....	100
6.7.3	Self-efficacy .....	101
6.7.4	Intention to behave sustainably.....	102
6.7.5	Sustainable brand identity communications.....	104
<b>6.8</b>	<b>Perceptions of the theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Theoretical contributions .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Answers to the research questions .....</b>	<b>109</b>
7.2.1	How sustainable brand identity communication in social media may influence consumers’ intention to behave sustainably?.....	109
7.2.2	What kind of sustainable brand identity communications in social media is influential to consumers’ intention to behave sustainably?.....	114
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Managerial implications .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Validity and reliability of the research .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>126</b>

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1 Outline of the semi-structure interview (in Finnish) .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Demographic information of the interviewees .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Appendix 3 Social media post 1 (reprinted by permission of Lovia) .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Appendix 4 Social media post 2 (reprinted by permission of Lovia) .....</b>	<b>138</b>

<b>Appendix 5 Social media post 3 (reprinted by permission of Lovia).....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Appendix 6 Social media post 4 (reprinted by permission of Lovia).....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Appendix 7 Theoretical concepts of content in sustainability branding and communications .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Appendix 8 The themes emerged from content and interview analysis.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Appendix 9 Framework for analyzing sustainability aspects in social media content .</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Appendix 10 Main themes of analysis associated with each social media post .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Appendix 11 Conclusions and theoretical contributions to sustainable brand identity communications in social media .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix 12 Example of the three-level coding process from content analysis .....</b>	<b>149</b>

## **FIGURES**

**Figure 1 Conceptual diagram based on the theory of planned behavior (adapted from de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017) ..... 32**

**Figure 2 Theoretical framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably..... 34**

**Figure 3 Empirically validated framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably..... 110**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and significance of the research topic

Currently, the world is consuming at such a rate that 1,75 Earths would be needed to endure the level of current consumption (Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts, 2019a), showcasing the level and patterns of consumption are not sustainable (Lim, 2017). Marketers have encouraged limitless consumption (Kotler, 2011), but it is consumers who consume (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019), demonstrating that consumers have a critical role in the change, as do marketers as the influencers of consumers' choices (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011).

Consequently, the connection between rising consumption and the environmental crisis as well as the effects of consumption to the environment, sustainability and quality of live have long been recognized among marketing researchers. For instance, Fisk (1974) has been identified as one of the first researchers to recognize the connection and also to put forth the concept of sustainable consumption. (Sheth et al., 2011.) Scholars further agree that consumption decisions; consumers' choices, behaviors and lifestyles, have a major effect on sustainable development (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003 via Lim, 2017). However, these acknowledgements have yet to be transformed into macro-level results in decreasing consumption as the level of consumption continues to rise (Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts, 2019b).

Furthermore, as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals further highlight, there is a profound need to "Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patters" as well as "Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (United Nations, 2019), highlighting the importance of tackling unsustainable consumption and its effects. Sustainability and environmental issues are one of the forces recognized also by Kotler (2011) to affect the science and practice of marketing, alongside with social media, globalization and brand proliferation for instance. Companies and marketers need to address the issue of sustainability, and the marketing discipline needs to reinvent its practices and theory to be environmentally responsible. The marketing discipline has operated according

to the profound presumption of unlimited resources of the planet. Further, marketers have encouraged limitless consumption, arguing consumption to increase consumer happiness, following the principles of the Dominant Social Paradigm (Kilbourne, 2010, pp. 364, 370, 373-375). (Kotler, 2011; Sheth et al., 2011.) Hence, this study aims to find means for marketing discipline to support sustainability instead of encouraging more consumption and to decrease the negative effects of consumption. The study postulates sustainable brand identity communications in social media as one means to influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably, which has not been done in earlier research.

## **1.2 Research gap**

Sustainability marketing literature has been considerable since the establishment of the Journal of Marketing Management (JMM), which can be mirrored to the marketing literature in general (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). However, the literature is rather scattered focusing on certain research streams as defined for instance by McDonagh and Prothero (2014). There have been few reviews of the research on sustainability marketing over the years, the first review starting already from the year 1969. In the review by McDonagh and Prothero (2014) five research streams were identified along the sustainability marketing research showcasing an overview of the research perspectives so far and the state of the research. The research streams are discussed further in chapter 2. A research stream focusing on the consumer and individual perspective exists (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014), however previous research has not connected brand identity-based sustainability communications in social media in influencing consumers' sustainable consumption. The present research goes further in the consumer research combining concepts such as brand values, sustainable consumption, social media content and theory of planned behavior, which has not been done previously.

The current megatrends of sustainability (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014) and digitalization in the form of social media are indisputable as are the megatrends' effects on consumers and their behavior. Even though there is a growing interest among consumers in sustainability issues, the contradictory nature of consumption and sustainability makes it difficult to take action (Lim, 2017; White et al., 2019),



making it a challenge to address sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption has been identified as a key influencer to the sustainability crises and the subject has been researched quite vastly. For instance, White et al. (2019) have identified several methods to shift consumer behavior to be more sustainable and de Lenne and Vandebosch have investigated the role of media exposure to consumption behavior. Still researchers have yet to explore particularly the role sustainable brands may play in influencing sustainable consumer behavior, even though the power of brands is acknowledged (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Particularly the role of content by sustainable brands in influencing sustainable consumption, and especially communications via disputedly one of the most used media platforms today, social media, has not been studied. A connection lacks between sustainable brands creating social media content based on their sustainable brand identity, and moreover, research lacks specifically in how the sustainable brand's content may influence consumption behavior.

Research on brands and branding are extensive. Brands are for instance seen as clusters of values (De Chernatory, 2001, p. 33 via Urde, 2009) and there are methods in defining the core values of a brand depending how internally rooted and externally experienced they are (Urde, 2009.). Further, consumers have been recognized to intentionally choose brands that share their values (Gerzema, 2010 via Kotler, 2011). Moreover, research on brand authenticity has for instance established different types of brand authenticity (e.g. Eggers, O'dwyer, Kraus, Vallaster & Guldenberg, 2013) and defined antecedents and outcomes of brand authenticity (e.g. Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn, 2017). However, brand values and brand authenticity have not been connected into communicating of sustainability. The present research poses the core values of a brand and its authenticity to be essential elements in effectively communicating of sustainability and also in influencing consumer behavior through content. The research poses brands with sustainability as their true core value holding the power to influence consumer behavior and consumption choices by resonating the brand's sustainability values to consumers through social media content.

Moreover, the idea of brand communications initiating from brand identity and influencing consumer behavior through exposure to the communications has not been addressed in sustainable brands communicating sustainability in social media.

This causal idea seems to follow the construct of communications theories where a signal (brand identity) creates exposure (communications / content) and leads to influence (consumer behavior). Further, this general construct of communications theories has not been combined with the theory of planned behavior to create a causal framework combining theories of communications and consumer behavior research.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1988) was designed to predict and explain human behavior and it has been previously applied to the context of marketing and sustainability. The theory has been applied to the context of sustainability in examining for instance if sustainability knowledge affects sustainable behavior (Heeren, Singh, Zwickle, Koontz, Slagle & McCreery, 2016), in the education of sustainability issues (Swaim, Maloni, Napshin & Henley, 2014) and students' sustainability behavior and in testing the potential effect of environmental concerns to behavior (De Groot & Steg, 2007). Further, the TPB model has been applied to the sustainability apparel industry to test the effect of certain media exposure on the purchasing of sustainable apparel (de lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017). However, the TPB model has not been applied to the sustainability branding context particularly to study the effects on consumer behavior from exposure to sustainable brand identity communications in social media. The TPB is applied to embrace a consumer perspective and thus advance the sustainability research stream in marketing as well as to study if the social media content may have an effect on consumer behavior through the theory's cognitive processes introduced later on.

Communicating about sustainability through content has received some attention in research focusing on for instance using rational and emotional appeal (e.g. Grubor & Milovanov, 2017; Williams, Page and Petrosky, 2014 ) and empowering consumers (e.g. Hartmann, Apaolaza & D'Souza, 2018), however, the research lacks concrete guidelines and recommendations on how to convey for instance empowerment through content as well as overall, what kind of content resonates to consumers. Furthermore, brands communicating of sustainability is lacking a separate research stream (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014) indicating lack of research in the field. Moreover, the most used media platform, social media, is largely lacking research in

sustainability communications as compared to other marketing research in regard to social media as a communications channel.

To conclude, previous research lacks a framework for studying and evaluating sustainable brand communications in social media to study what kind of content is effective. Further, the research lacks a framework for studying the potential effects of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably. Next, the scope of this research is discussed further.

### **1.3 Scope of the research**

To address the before mentioned research gap, previous literature on sustainable brands, sustainability branding, sustainable consumption and theory of planned behavior are discussed in the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework however excludes the concepts of social media marketing as the focus of this research is on sustainable brands and their potential power to influence consumption behavior, therefore the literature focuses on brand communications instead of social media communications. Further, the theoretical framework is based also on the basic construct of communications theories, however, communications theories are not further addressed in the theoretical background as the research has a deeper focus into influencing consumption behavior, thus addressing the theory of planned behavior.

The scope of this study is further exclusive to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion industry that have built their business on the core value of sustainability. This exclusion exists for the purpose of eliminating opportunistic gains of businesses that do not really want to make a change in the consumption habits of consumers but to solely make profit. The SME chosen for the research focus, is a Finnish brand called Lovia, whose mission is to inspire consumers to start respecting things around them (Lovia, 2020a).

Respect towards nature, people, honesty, and the purpose of their products are the company's core values. Lovia believes they are offering a solution to the fashion industry's polluting effects. The company was founded to turn around the vicious

cycle of producing and consuming fashion. The brand rethinks four aspects of fashion: resources, value chain, transparency and design. (Lovia, 2020a.) Lovia has turned the design process around. They view trash as valuable material, which they give new life. They want to end the era of using too much of nature's resources and instead give new meaning to existing material. Lovia sees their value chain as extended family, they have cut the middlemen and truly know their value chain enabling them to be sustainable and give value back to the makers of the products. Full transparency is one of Lovia's core values. Lovia shares all the materials and makers of their products with their Transparency DNA, showing also all the production costs of the products. Lovia's design has purpose. Their goal is to create purposeful items that are both timely and timeless, each seam of their products having a purpose. (Lovia, 2020d.) Currently, the company employs 6 individuals (Loviacollection, 2020). Their products are sold online as well as in their concept store in Helsinki (Lovia, 2020c).

Lovia was chosen as it depicts the deepest degree of sustainable brands with sustainability as the core value of the brand and with conducting strong sustainable practice. Since sustainable brands are positioned as a solution to drive sustainable consumption, sustainability must be incorporated to all aspects of the brand and business with corresponding internal culture and brand image both built on sustainability as the core value (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017) to assure the brand is truly sustainable. Thus, as SMEs by definition are smaller companies with less employees, the integration of sustainable culture can be seen naturally easier, similarly as the creation of an organizational culture and strategy based on sustainability easier to implement, hence SMEs were chosen into the focus of this research. Further, the fashion industry is chosen into the research focus due to its tremendous global effect to the climate crisis, being one of the most polluting industries in the world (The Guardian, 2018).

#### **1.4 Research questions and description of research methods**

The purpose of this research is to create an empirically validated framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communication in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably. Further, the research strives to establish what kind of

sustainable brand identity communication in social media is perceived to influence consumers' behavioral intention towards sustainable consumption by consumers. The research further aims to ignite discussion and more research on the topic.

The research recognizes the need to guide consumption behavior to sustainable and the impactful role of truly sustainable brands in influencing consumers intentions to behave sustainably due to brand proliferation (Kotler, 2011). Consequently, this research focuses on examining the potential power sustainable brands possess in influencing consumer behavior to be sustainable for the purpose of decreasing global consumption and/or increasing sustainable consumption. The sustainable brand identity communications in a social media channel, Instagram, and the content's potential influence on consumer behavior through the cognitive process of Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) are studied. The research task is to study whether truly sustainable brands may represent a solution into influencing consumption with the power the brands' hold (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), their authenticity and their sustainability communications in social media, a channel that enables more transparent and dialogic communications with wide reach and low cost (Saxton, Gomez, Ngoh, Lin & Dietrich, 2019). To fulfill the purpose of the study two main research questions were formulated:

- How sustainable brand identity communications in social media may influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably?
- What kind of sustainable brand identity communications in social media is influential to consumers' intention to behave sustainably?

The present study possesses a subjectivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology utilizing qualitative research methods in order to dive into the research topic and more deeply investigate what kind of communications is influential and how it may influence consumer behavior. Qualitative content analysis is conducted into the Instagram content of the case company to determine what type of content the brand has, and further qualitative, semi-structured interviews are conducted to study how the analyzed content resonates to consumers and if the content can affect consumption behavior through the cognitive determinants of TPB. The research data

comprises of the Instagram content of the case company Lovia and the interview scripts. Detailed description of the methodology and data used as well as the analysis process are found in chapter 5.

The research methods are qualitative as the topic is new to sustainability marketing research and acts as a so-called pre-research for future quantitative research and aims to ignite more research to the topic. The qualitative methods enable the author to immerse herself into the phenomenon (Wilson, 2010, pp. 9-11, 13-14); to study the process of sustainable brand identity communications influencing behavioral intention with interviews as well as to study the meanings and interpretations of the sustainable brand identity communications by consumers with content analysis and interviews. The combination of these two research methods enables a more profound study of the sustainable brand communications and its potential influence on consumers' intention to behave sustainably.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis comprises of seven main chapters. The theoretical framework is presented in chapters 2-4. Chapters 2 and 3 are utilized as a foundation to create the theoretical framework presented in Figure 2. In chapter 2 theory on sustainability marketing and branding are introduced, alongside with brand authenticity and core values with their relationship to sustainability branding as well as social media as a communications channel and the sustainability of the fashion industry justifying its significance as the chosen research focus. Here also the main concepts of a sustainable brand, sustainability branding and sustainable consumption behavior are defined. Chapter 3 focuses on introducing and explaining the theory of planned behavior that is applied in the research to predict and explain consumer behavior, chapter 3 presents also the theoretical framework created in this research. Chapter 4 continues the theoretical framework by creating a synthesis of literature on sustainability communications in social media and what kind of content is recommend for communicating sustainability. This synthesis (see Appendix 7) is then utilized in the empirical analysis to conduct the content analysis and to study with the interviews how consumers perceive the content. Next, the research methodology is presented in chapter 5 including details of the research methods used and the analysis process. In

chapter 6 the empirical analysis is explained, that is the results of the research are presented both from the content and interview analysis. Lastly, in chapter 7 the conclusions, theoretical and managerial implications as well as the limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## **2 SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING**

This chapter, alongside with chapter 3, is utilized to create the theoretical framework presented later on in chapter 3 in Figure 2. The chapter provides an introduction into sustainability in the marketing discipline and literature, defines key concepts such as a sustainable brand, sustainability branding and sustainable consumption. Also, the aspects of brand authenticity and core brand values are explained and their significance into the research topic is established. Further, the chapter discusses the context of the study by introducing social media as a channel to communicate sustainability and the fashion industry's sustainability effects. The theoretical framework (Figure 2) is based also on the general idea of communications theories, that is a signal created by the brand leads to exposure which leads to influence, however, even though this general construct is followed in the framework, communications theories are not further discussed in the theoretical frameworks as the framework rather focuses on the aspects of sustainable brands on the sustainability communications and on how the communications may change consumption behavior, which is discussed in chapter 3.

### **2.1 Sustainability marketing and branding**

The interest in sustainability and the concern for environmental and social issues have fluctuated over the years within the marketing literature. Recently, the discussion has been on the broader concept of sustainability not only on the environmental impacts of responsibility but also on social and economic impacts. (Charter, Peattie, Ottman & Polonsky, 2002.) Commonly, in the marketing literature sustainability is defined according to the United Nations Brundtland Commission's (1987) definition on sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The concept of sustainable development aims to build an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for both people and the planet. In order to embrace sustainable development, three core elements need to be harnessed: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. (United Nations, 2019.) The three core



elements are intertwined and also to some extent in conflict with each other (United Nations, 2019; Jeurissen, 2000). These three core elements of sustainable development are aligned with the three organizational goals determined in the managerial tool for harnessing sustainability. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is used for managerial and corporate decision making and it is a holistic concept that penetrates every aspect of the company from its purpose and objectives to its processes and results (Enderle, 2004). The Triple Bottom Line comprehends the company's economic, social and environmental responsibility. In this research these two conceptualizations on sustainability are applied: the UN Brundtland Commission definition on sustainable development and the TBL definition on corporate responsibility. Special attention on the economic aspect is due as until now the focus economically has been on pursuing continuous economic growth despite of its environmental and social impacts (Kotler, 2011; Kilbourne, 2010, pp. 364, 370, 373-375). However, in order to overcome and combat the climate crisis companies need to find ways to be economically viable ergo being economically sustainable and simultaneously also being socially and environmentally sustainable, instead of merely focusing on economic gains.

Sustainability is more than a current megatrend but rather the concern over environmental and social impacts of business has existed for years (Charter, et al., 2002). However, the Western Industries' Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) has been and still continues to be on striving for continuous economic growth at the expense of the environment, its resources and the society. The DSP has been identified to be the root cause for the current sustainability crises, as an historical ideology is applied to the current crisis. The DSP needs to be challenged to inflict the birth of a new Dominant Social Paradigm that supports sustainable values in order to solve the sustainability crisis. (Kilbourne, 2010, pp. 364, 370, 373-375.) To embrace the sustainability theme, companies need to have a purpose that contributes value to the society instead of aiming for profit maximization and operating according to the principles of capitalism (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Sustainable branding answers to the need of inflicting a change in the current DSP by emphasizing solutions that are responsible and sustainable for the society at large. The historical roots of sustainable branding can be traced back to being developed as a criticism to the economic roots of marketing. Also, the critical

view of marketing has questioned the very roots of the marketing discipline and its effects on the society, thus creating a new stream of research in the marketing discipline. (Firat & Tadajewski, 2010, pp. 130–134.)

The whole concept of sustainability within marketing due to its paradoxical nature awakens a discussion on what sustainability marketing is, and more so, what marketing as a discipline is today. Many definitions of sustainability marketing have surfaced, yet a widely accepted, unified definition lacks. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, 2017). The definition, yet almost three years old, does not depict any clear micro or macro level connection to sustainability. The definition does include the “society at large”, however the meaning of this can be multi-layered and merely open to interpretation. The leading marketing association does define Green Marketing to be

“the development and marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe (i.e., designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality). This term may also be used to describe efforts to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns.” (AMA, 2017)

However, already to term “presumed to be environmentally safe” is vague and does not include all the three aspects of sustainability; economic, social and environmental. Furthermore, there are more advanced definitions of sustainability marketing in the literature such as by Belz and Peattie (2009, p. 31) who define sustainability marketing as,

“planning, organizing, implementing and controlling marketing resources and programmes to satisfy consumers’ wants and needs, while considering social and environmental criteria and meeting corporate objectives“. (Belz & Peattie, 2009, p. 31)

Within the scope of this research sustainability marketing is defined building on the definition by Belz and Peattie (2009, p. 31) to state sustainability marketing being marketing that incorporates the three aspects of sustainability within its planning and execution. Sustainability marketing literature has been considerate since the

establishment of the Journal of Marketing Management (JMM), which can be mirrored to the marketing literature in general. There have been few reviews of the research on sustainability marketing over the years, the first review starting already from the year 1969. In a review by McDonagh and Prothero (2014) five research streams were identified among the sustainability marketing research showcasing the state of the research so far.

One research stream is *Individual consumer concerns, behavior and practices*, which considers consumer attitudes, behavior and preferences alongside with characteristics of the individual. This research stream also includes research considering consumer values, sustainable consumers and sustainable consumption. The individual level of research continues to be important and the research stream is seen to continue. (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014.) The present research follows this research stream in examining how social media content may influence sustainable consumption of consumers and how the values of consumers and sustainable brands may be aligned through the content thus affecting consumer behavior.

Another research stream is *Organizational sustainability strategies and sustainability markets* that focuses on the organization perspective regarding sustainability. This research stream considers research regarding the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) discussed earlier in this research and recognizes the need for sustainability to be at the core of organizations (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014.), which is also what the present research finds crucial and the perspective of the research. Other research streams are Environmental laws, regulations and policies, Literature review and assessment of sustainability, and Reframing sustainability: institutional, societal and systems perspective. (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014.)

Additionally, to the research showing interest in sustainability, also the private sector in addition to governments and philanthropy have understood the need and seen the potential in contributing to global sustainable development. This is defined as social entrepreneurship in which the actor aims for social and environmental outcomes simultaneously as generating financial returns. (United Nations Global Compact, 2012.) Social entrepreneurship of private sector supports the notion that sustainable brands may pose a solution into overcoming the paradox between marketing and

consumption, and a solution into changing the current way of consumption. Further, this research postulates that in order to overcome the inherent paradox between marketing and sustainability, a brand should embrace the culture and values of sustainability to truly contribute to sustainability instead of the DSP. Next, the concepts of sustainable brands and sustainability branding are elaborated on.

### 2.1.1 Sustainable brand and sustainability branding

A brand is a multi-faceted concept that holds many definitions. Here, a brand is defined as a unique collection of functional and emotional characteristics that transcend to consumers as the additional value, unique experience and fulfilled promise delivered by the brand. Moreover, the brand represents the core strategic resource for a company whilst holding symbolic value in addition to traditional economic and functional value. Utilizing brands enables consumers to express attitudes, preferences and even personality and identity. Brands also represent a reliable source of information. (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017.) Due to brand proliferation recognized as one of the forces changing the marketing discipline (Kotler, 2011), the author sees brands holding power to inflict change in consumer behavior. Furthermore, the connection and interdependence between a brand and consumers is evident but also significant; brands have the power to influence and guide consumer behavior, similarly as consumers have the power to determine the development and success of a brand. (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017.) The power brands hold in guiding and influencing consumer behavior can be harnessed in supporting the notion of sustainability by driving the consumption behavior of consumers to be sustainable.

Furthermore, one of the major strategic decisions in building strong brands is positioning the brand. Brand positioning can be done in three levels. The first level is positioning the brand merely according to product attributes and the second level according to the produced benefit. However, the third level of positioning goes deeper engaging customers on an emotional level by positioning the brand according to brand's beliefs and values. These are the strongest brands. (Kotler et al., 2018, pp. 265-266.) Thus, the author argues that companies with true sustainable core values

have the best possibility to change consumption behavior by creating social media content based on the organization's true values of sustainability.

Sustainable brands represent characteristics of ecological, social and economic attributes. Sustainability, green, CSR and responsibility are all terms used in the marketing and branding literature with similar definitions. However, sustainable brands embracing the sustainability concept as such can be divided into "degrees of sustainability" depending on the degree of sustainability incorporated into the brand. (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017.) The scope of this research is on brands possessing sustainability as their core value, moreover as their true core value (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017; Lim, 2017). In general, sustainability holds the effect of building deeper meaning to the brand image and thus contributing to a stronger emotional bond between consumer and brand as well as provides a tool for differentiation (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017).

There is further evidence showing consumers consciously and intentionally buying solely from brands they feel share their values and avoid buying from brands whose values they do not relate with (Gerzema, 2010 via Kotler, 2011), which supports the value and worth of brand values, a concept disputed in branding (Urde, 2009). Further, the superiority of creating abstract brand concepts infused with human values, goals and emotions instead of emphasizing the functional attributes of the brand concept (Torelli, Ozsomer, Carvalho, Keh, & Maehle, 2012) also speaks in favor of differentiation by core values of sustainability in order to influence consumer behavior, as sustainability is also a goal and value of humans. Brands are infused with human values in order to make consumers feel the brands have meaningful benefits for the consumers' lives instead of merely utilitarian benefits (Durgee, O'Connor & Veryzer, 1996 via Torelli et al., 2012). Brands can be seen as clusters of values (De Chernatory, 2001, p. 33 via Urde, 2009) the core values forming the identity of the brand (Urde, 2009), thus a sustainable brand can be defined as a brand that has sustainability as its true core value.

Joyce Stuart (2011) builds the definition of sustainable corporate brand on the normative alignment model by Thomas et al. (2009) and on an application of the Balmer's et al. (2009) AC3ID test. The normative alignment model is used to

reassure that the company is engaging in sustainability through internal motivations not as an add-on to its strategy, which is indeed what the present study finds necessary. Therefore, in applying the normative alignment model, the sustainable corporate brand needs an identity that considers norms for emotion, efficacy and action (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 202 via Joyce Stuart, 2011), crafting sustainability as a core aspect of the brand identity (Joyce Stuart, 2011). Joyce Stuart (2011) indeed defines a sustainable corporate brand as a brand that has sustainability embedded into its brand promise. To conclude, this research defines a sustainable brand as a brand that has sustainability as its core value and embedded into its brand promise.

Furthermore, the definition for sustainability branding is applied from Joyce Stuart's (2011) definition of sustainable corporate brand. Sustainability branding is defined as branding activities considering social, environmental and economic aspects for a brand that has sustainability immersed into the core values and promise of the brand. This research strongly agrees with the view that sustainability needs to be embedded into the brand identity (Joyce Stuart, 2011) in order for the brand to truly be sustainable, and further emphasizes the role of brand values in determining a truly sustainable brand, as the core values of a brand form the brand identity regardless if the values are defined or not (Urde, 2009). As previous research has not connected core brand values and brand authenticity into sustainability branding, here, the concept of brand core values is explained to craft a foundation for authentic sustainable brand and authentic sustainability branding to influence consumption behavior.

### 2.1.2 Core values and authenticity in sustainability branding

A sustainable brand has sustainability embedded into the brand identity through the core values of the brand, also called the first degree of brand sustainability (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). The identity of a sustainable brand needs to be emotionally charged, authentic and behaviorally based (Joyce Stuart, 2011), supporting the notion of authenticity in sustainability branding. The core values and authenticity of a brand are relevant for sustainability branding also through content as Abitbol and Lee (2017) demonstrate with their quantitative content analysis that content with a company-cause fit, meaning content eliciting the mission and/or values of the

company, to gain more engagement with the public. Their results showed that for most industries topics congruent with the company values and mission elicited higher engagement (Abitbol & Lee, 2017).

What are then core values? Core values can be defined as having five qualities. Firstly, true core values are not stagnant but evolve with the brand and are essential to the brand. Secondly, true core values are part of the corporate culture and rooted in the organization. The company is built upon the core values which are built brick by brick, since a proven track record strengthens the core values over time and communicating and documenting the value-based track record add to the credibility of the company. Core values are broad concepts and they summarize the brand, even so they tend to be challenged time to time for instance for not supporting the financial targets of the company as might be the case with sustainability as a core value. Lastly, core values support the promise of the company. Core values captivate both emotions and reason, support in building relationships as well as evoke feelings. Deliberately chosen and true core values are building blocks for the promise of the brand. (Urde, 2009.)

The values rooted in a brand need to resonate with customers and with the values the customers perceive over time, and vice versa. True core brand values help in building and managing the brand, whereas hollow core values do the opposite. (Urde, 2009.) As true values help in building and managing a brand, the values thus can also positively build brand equity. As the true core values of a brand resonate with and are perceived by consumers, this increases brand awareness, brand knowledge, brand associations and perceived quality of a brand and other proprietary brand assets, which are indeed the building blocks of brand equity (Aaker, 1991 via Yoo & Donthu, 2001), proving the necessity for true core values for successful sustainability branding.

Urde (2009) defined four types of corporate core values according to two dimensions: internally rooted values & externally perceived and appreciated values. This taxonomy yields four types of core values: true, potential, aspirational and hollow. (Urde, 2009.) In order to achieve the purpose of this study, that is to influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably with sustainability branding in

social media, a company needs to define its true core values and potentially also its aspirational core values, since these core values are highly rooted internally in the company. Whereas potential and especially hollow core values are only low internally rooted and therefore companies exhibiting these core values in sustainability will most potentially engage in green marketing and/or green washing, that is green marketing efforts for promoting the consumption of green products, that tend to be distrusted by consumers and be perceived as misleading and deceptive (Sheth et al., 2011). This further proves the necessity for authenticity in sustainability branding to avoid green marketing and greenwashing and thus overcome the negative effects.

True core values are indeed internally rooted in the brand and are also perceived and appreciated among consumers over time, meaning the internally rooted core values also resonate with consumers. Whereas, aspirational core values are also internally rooted in the brand, but they are not perceived by consumers. Therefore, the aspirational core values have a potential to become true values if they are resonated to consumers over time with a proven track record. (Urde, 2009.) The evermore conscious and demanding consumers of today (Sheth et al., 2011) will see the difference in authentic and opportunistic endeavors. Thus, any effort in green marketing or worse green washing will not be sufficient. Contrary authentic sustainability branding is needed that is based on the true core values of the brand. In order to succeed in changing consumer behavior as sustainable, a brand needs to be authentic with its core values and engage in authentic branding communications to differentiate from the competitors and appeal to consumers' values.

Authenticity is especially demanded for at times of crisis or threat to society such as the climate crisis, and similarly, at times of change, uncertainty and distress. Authenticity represents a means for differentiation, a key source of competitive advantage as well as evidence of quality of the brand. (Eggers et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2017.) Authenticity is defined within several research areas such as psychology, anthropology, sociology and marketing research. In general, authenticity is seen as a subject-related behavioral attribute. Authenticity is connected with moral behavior, to the preservation of cultural norm, beliefs and values and to subjective internal experiences. (Fritz et al., 2017.)



Within marketing research, brand authenticity refers to brand behavior reflecting its core values and norms which is consistent and being true to itself (Fritz et al., 2017), hence demonstrating the need for authenticity and true core values for sustainable brands to be able to resonate the sustainability values to consumers through social media content. Simply said, a brand is authentic when it is perceived as honest and real and the authenticity is intrinsic not superficial or fabricated. Brand authenticity provides means to build brand trust, sustainable success and community reputation, all beneficial for sustainable brands. Brand authenticity is the answer to aligning brand's core values with the brands actions and practices, thus diminishing the corporate dissonance of misaligned goals/values with actions/achievements. Hence, a company must pursue authenticity both in its core values and in branding in order for the brand as a whole to be authentic, (Eggers et al., 2013.) and to succeed in communicating influentially the brand's sustainability.

How to then build brand authenticity? Eggers et al. (2013) define brand authenticity to be built upon two factors: brand consistency and brand congruence. Brand consistency is achieved when the brand resonates with its stakeholder groups at all brand contact points and when the brand promise is aligned with brand values, strategy and vision. Brand congruency on the other hand is achieved as the brand stays true to its values rather than continuously following market trends as well as when the employees' individual values are aligned with the brand values thus providing high commitment to the brand and thus behavior in line with the brand values. (Eggers et al., 2013.) Further, Eggers et al. (2013) prove how brand authenticity then increases brand trust and has a positive relationship with SME growth, demonstrating the importance of brand authenticity for the case company that is also an SME. Next, sustainable consumers and sustainable consumption are discussed.

### 2.1.3 Sustainable consumers and consumption

New concepts in the marketing discipline have evolved indeed to define those consumers who are consuming socially and environmentally responsibly. As studying responsible consumption from the demand side, in other words consumer side, many definitions have emerged of the so-called responsible consumer (Lim,

2017). Terms such as socially conscious consumers, socially responsible consumers, environmentally conscious consumers, green consumers, lifestyles of health and sustainability (LOHAS), downshiffters and sustainable consumers have been used (see for instance: Lim, 2017; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Environmental Leader, 2009 via Kotler, 2011). Nonetheless, despite the variety of terms, each of these strive to define a target consumer that is consuming responsibly by considering environmental, social and/or ethical concerns. Consequently, a responsible consumer is one who considers environmental, social and ethical concerns in their consumption decisions and behavior (Lim, 2017).

Furthermore, the responsible consumers in the scope of this research need to also be defined according to their core values. According to sociologists' values impact attitudes which in turn affect behavior (Durgee, O Connor & Veryzer, 1996), meaning consumers behave according to their values. As the core values of consumers affect their consumption behavior and if the consumers are consuming sustainably it is sufficient to say that their core values involve around sustainability.

Even though, there is no one agreed-upon definition of sustainable consumption, the various definitions all seem to have certain commonalities which are; meeting the basic needs of consumers, when consuming beyond the basic needs one is seen as irrational and immoral, and wanting to maintain current needs without compromising the ability of future generations meeting their needs. (Lim, 2017.) In order to comprehend the vast impacts of consumption, be that environmental, societal or economic, consumption must be understood as a process including all the activities and decisions beyond only the activity of purchasing but also including activities such as information search, decision making, product or behavior adoption, product usage, and disposal (White et al., 2019; Lim, 2017).

As there is no one agreed-upon definition of sustainable consumption, the comprehensive definition of sustainable consumption by Lim (2017) is used to comprehend the concept. Lim (2017) defines sustainable consumption with the parallel concepts of mindful consumption, anti-consumption and responsible consumption, creating an integrated model for the definition of sustainable consumption. The integrated model declares sustainable consumption transpiring as

consumers transform their inner beliefs and responsibilities of sustainability into sustainability actions, by averting from unsustainable consumption by expressing their disgust and dislike towards unsustainable actions and thus translate this attitude to behavior by avoiding and abandoning unsustainable consumption practices. The integrated model presents a solution to the attitude-behavioral gap in sustainable consumption, in other words the gap between pro-environmental attitudes and the lack of pro-environmental behavior (White et al., 2019) by presenting the options for sustainable consumption as rejecting, restricting and reclaiming in both private and public consumption. In practice, the model shows how the concerns of a consumer (mindful consumption) are translated into responsibilities (responsible consumption), which represent the sustainability mindset that then leads to behavior via the anti-consumption alternatives. (Lim, 2017.) Simply, sustainable consumption is consumption behavior that considers the environmental, social and ethical perspectives of the said consumption decision or behavior, further sustainable consumption is seen as deriving from the mindset and attitudes of consumers (Lim, 2017).

In order to influence consumer behavior to begin consuming sustainably, the author deduces based on Lim's (2017) definition of sustainable consumption that marketers must influence the sustainability mindset of consumers to start a chain of reactions resulting in changed attitudes which result in changed behavior. (see Lim, 2017; Sheth et al, 2011.) More precisely, the Theory of Planned Behavior that conceptualizes three cognitive determinants influencing behavioral intention and the influence of exposure to sustainability content through social media, is applied. How to then influence the mindset of consumers, how to make them concerned for and care of the self, community and nature? The answer lies in examining the sustainability content sustainable brand's communicate through social media, a channel seen as interactive, engaging and having a broad reach with usually low costs (Minton et al., 2012; Saxton et al., 2019).

## **2.2 Social media – a channel for sustainability branding**

Social media refers to a set of tools, technology and platforms that harnesses interactions and enable for instance content creation (Tufts University Web

Communications, 2013 via Williams et al., 2014; Cohen, 2011, p.1 via Williams et al., 2014). Social media is a communicate environment that enables wide reach and interactivity with low cost (Minton et al., 2012; Saxton et al., 2019) as well as a marketing platform, perceived less persuasive by consumers offering a platform for instance for influencing brand attitudes, promoting a brand and informing consumers (Minton et al., 2012). Social media has enabled more transparent, dialogic and democratic communications environment (Saxton et al., 2019) that aids in detecting the true sustainability of brands.

de Lenne and Vandebosch (2017) point out previous research that has examined the effect of media type and media message on the effectiveness of the media. The richness of the media type is considered an influential factor in sustainability communications, which is why social media would be an effective medium as of its interactive nature to engage users and hence affect consumer attitudes (de Lenne & Vandebosch, 2017). The present research focuses specifically on the social media channel Instagram, that is owned by Facebook. Facebook describes the platform as a place for inspiration in a safe and inclusive community for users to express themselves. (Facebook, 2019.)

Instagram is a social networking app and a platform for sharing pictures. The platform allows users to take pictures and edit them with filters, enables video sharing and has a feature called Instagram Stories, that is similar to Snapchat's Stories. Since June 2018 the platform has reported to have more than one billion active users monthly and 500 million daily active users. (Statista, 2019a.) With these statistics Instagram is one of the most used social media channels of today (Statista, 2019b). Moreover, in 2019 Instagram was gaining momentum as a channel for marketing, being reported as the second most important social media channel for marketers in a survey by Statista (2019c). Similarly, the survey recorded nearly 70 % of marketers planning to increase their Instagram usage and in turn decrease their usage of Facebook (Statista, 2019c). To the knowledge of the author, Facebook has been more researched social media channel within the sustainability marketing literature, posing a need for more research focusing on Instagram. The research focuses on Instagram as a communications channel as the channel is used to share content with both pictures and text thus enabling brands to share more rich content,

due to the channel's rising popularity as a marketing channel and popularity as a social media channel as well as due to the lack of research into Instagram as a communications channel.

### **2.3 Sustainability and the Fashion Industry**

The fashion industry is among the most polluting industries in the world, arguably identified as the second-most polluting industry with both environmental and social impacts (The Guardian, 2018). The fashion industry produces 20 % of global wastewater, 10 % of global carbon emissions, is a major contributor to plastic pollution in oceans and the industry is linked to labor, gender and poverty issues (The Guardian, 2018; Unece, 2018). Totalling to a large-scale impact of people and the planet, whilst the impacts are likely to increase in the future (Unece, 2018). The complexity of the fashion industry in responding to environmental and societal impacts comes from the diversity of their material sourcing and supply chains, which is much more complex in comparison to the food industry for instance. Further, as there is no specific organization and governmental body demanding and regulating the ethicalness and/or sustainability of the fashion industry, each organization is left to make their own practices and decision regarding sustainability. This, however, results in the use of various terminology in branding sustainable fashion, easily causing confusion in consumers and ultimate leaving the responsibility to consumers on evaluating the true sustainable nature of each fashion brand. (Beard, 2008.)

As the fashion industry has become aware of the impacts it has on society and the environment, both larger and smaller companies have started to act. To stand out in the growing sustainable fashion sector, companies have two strategies to focus on. For startups and SMEs, the strategy would be to build their whole business on the concept of sustainability and for larger, already established companies the strategy would be to transform their business towards sustainability. Either way, the companies must balance between sustaining and growing a profitable business and with responding to the growing demand and trend of sustainable fashion. (Beard, 2008.) Following Beard's suggestion, the present research focuses on the context of SMEs and startups building their whole business on the concept of sustainability.

The fashion industry as a whole can be viewed as existing for social pressure and regulation, which means that the actors in the industry tend to follow what others do; if one company embraces sustainability in its operations, eventually others will follow. Similarly, there is a pressure in sustainable fashion in being transparent and authentic. Authenticity in fashion brands is increasingly important since consumers seek brands that meet their expectations and aspirations. Further, the authenticity and transparency of a fashion company contributes both to its sustainability image and its long-term economic success. Nevertheless, as companies embrace sustainability they need to truly embrace and incorporate the concept into every aspect of the company, which is why having sustainability as the core value of the company is a must. This will be perceived as authenticity and transparency and will thus ensure long-term success for the company. Further, by increasing the amount of genuine sustainable companies with sustainability branding, the misleading of consumers and polarization of consumer behavior into sustainably conscious and not sustainably conscious are diminished. (Beard, 2008.)

Furthermore, why small- and medium-sized brands are the best solution to changing the fashion industry is that the passion of the founders for sustainability is more easily implemented in a smaller company, and their passion for the cause is indeed an important aspect for success. Further, branding in particular is the best way of evoking consumers' interest towards sustainable fashion and evoking the birth of more sustainable fashion companies due to the present era of globalization and due to transient world brands offering a reliable point of reference in an overwhelming amount of choices. (Beard, 2008.)

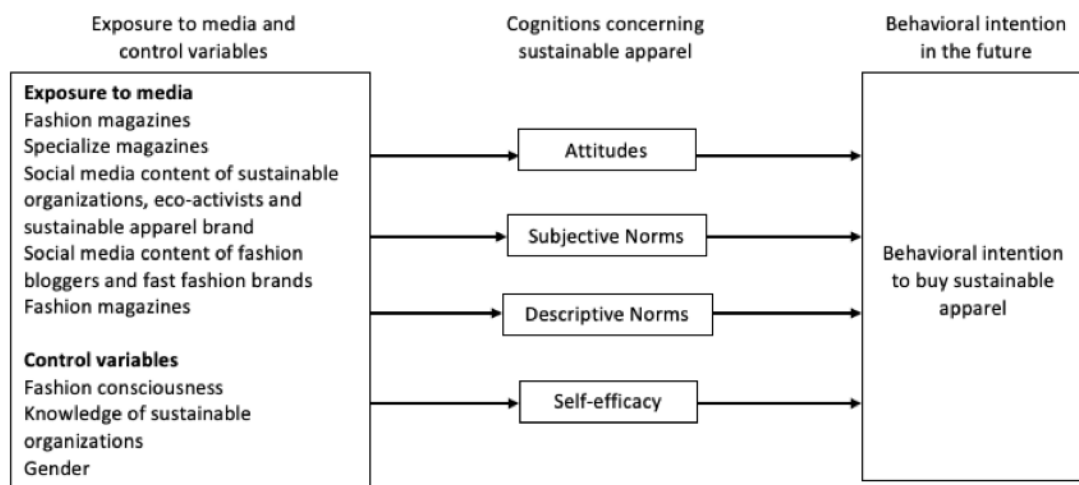
### 3 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

This chapter, together with the previous one, is utilized to formulate the theoretical framework seen in Figure 2. This chapter focuses on introducing and discussing the theory of planned behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991). Further, a previous application of the TPB by de Lenne and Vandebosch (2017) is explained, which is then utilized as a foundation for the present study's theoretical framework on theory of planned behavior. Theory of planned behavior is applied alongside with the general construct of communications theories in the theoretical framework. The theory of planned behavior is introduced and examined in the theoretical framework, even though the communications theories is not, since this research specifically wanted to focus on the influence of sustainable brand communications on consumers' behavioral intention as indicated by the purpose of the study, indicating higher significance to the theory of planned behavior and the cognitive process of influencing consumer behavior.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1988) is constructed to predict and explain human behavior. The theory is an extension of the theory of reasonable action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which was improved on the limitations regarding behaviors with incomplete volitional control. The model conceptualizes three independent determinants of intention; attitude towards behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. The determinant of perceived behavioral control is what distinguished the TPB from the TRA. Intention and perceived behavioral control together can be used to predict behavioral achievement. At its simplest the theory postulates that beliefs are the foundations of said behavior, when beliefs represent significant information relevant to the behavior. The beliefs; behavioral, normative and control, are determinants of intention and action. The abovementioned aspects of the model can be used according to the theory to change behavior. The theory of planned behavior has been empirically tested for different behaviors such as problem drinking and leisure behavior. (Ajzen, 1991.)

### 3.1 Applied model of the theory of planned behavior

The applied TPB model comprehends media to influence three applied determinants of the TPB model to then explain the intention of the consumer to engage in the said behavior. The media exposure is defined to contain messages of a certain behavior, in other words buying sustainable apparel. The different media exposures outlined in the study are fashion magazines, specialized magazines, social media content of fashion bloggers and fast fashion brands as well as social media content of sustainable organizations, eco-activists and sustainable apparel brand. The model by de Lenne and Vandebosch (2017) is presented in Figure 1. The present study proceeds to examine the effect of exposure to sustainability content in social media by sustainable brands. Further, the present study postulates the core values of the brand formulating the brand identity as the starting point for the creation of the sustainability content in social media, which then consumers are exposed to and the exposure potentially influencing the cognitive determinants of intention and of behavior, following the TPB model. (see Figure 2)



**Figure 1 Conceptual diagram based on the theory of planned behavior (adapted from de Lenne & Vandebosch, 2017)**

de Lenne and Vandebosch (2017) postulate the theory of planned behavior to be used in explaining the relationship between media exposure and the buying intention of sustainable apparel. However, the limitations of the study are that it focused on a convenience sample of young consumers and the study did not study actual behavior,



only the intention. The TPB is applied such that “exposure to media message containing information about a particular behavior influences a set of cognitions that explain individuals’ intention to engage in that behavior”. The set of cognitions are attitudes, norms and self-efficacy. (de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017.) Attitudes implies the extent to which the consumer holds favorable beliefs about the outcome of engaging in a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991 via de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017). Ajzen (1991) regarded this cognition with the term attitude towards behavior and with the behavioral belief. Norms are divided into subjective and descriptive. Subjective norms imply pressure from the consumer’s social environment towards engaging in the particular behavior and the consumer’s motivation to comply with the pressure. Whereas descriptive norms imply the extent to which the consumer believes his/her social environment is engaging in the particular behavior. (Connell & Kozar, 2012 via de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017.) Ajzen (1991) regarded merely subjective norms with normative beliefs. Lastly, self-efficacy beliefs imply the extent to which the consumer believes he/she is able to engage in the particular behavior when aimed to do so (Ajzen, 1991 via de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017). Self-efficacy was regarded as control beliefs and as the construct of perceived behavioral control by Ajzen (1991). The TPB application model represents how these three cognitions influence behavioral intention and, how the behavior and the cognitions are influenced by media exposure.

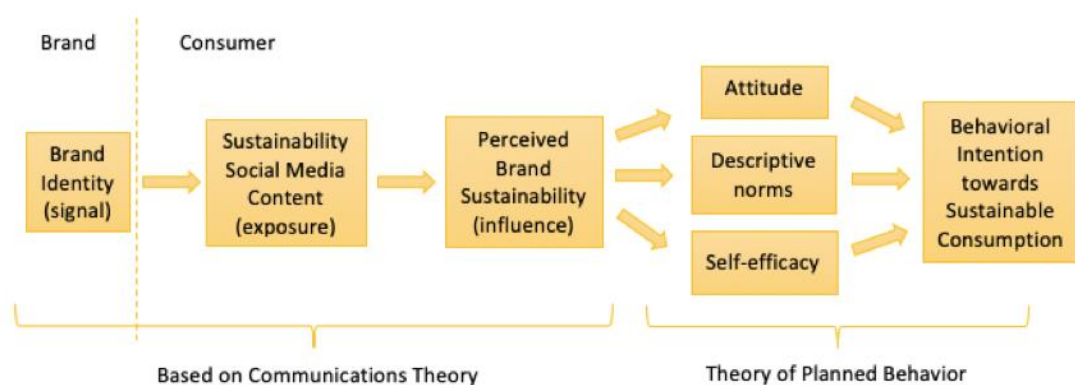
The quantitative study by de Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017) examined different types of media exposure within the model and the results were that social media indeed has the potential to shape the cognitive processes, attitudes, norms and self-efficacy, of consumers. Moreover, the social media content of sustainable organizations and sustainable apparel was found to encourage the intention to buy sustainable apparel, and that the intention to buy sustainable apparel and the use of social media is mediated with the three cognitive processes. (de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017.)

Firstly, attitude towards behavior was found to mediate the relationship between social media use and the intention to buy sustainable apparel. The social media content of sustainable organizations was connected to increased positive perception of the outcome of buying sustainable apparel, and the attitude was associated with

increased intention to buy. Secondly, descriptive norms mediated the relationship between social media use and intention to buy sustainable apparel. The more exposure to social media content of sustainable organizations, the more the consumers believed their social environment bought sustainable apparel, which was connected to higher intention to buy. Contrary, subjective norms were not connected to the intention to buy sustainable apparel, perhaps as subjective norms are difficult to learn from social media channels of sustainable organization. Thirdly, self-efficacy mediated the relationship between social media use and intention to buy sustainable apparel, the social media content of sustainable organizations is connected with increase in consumers' self-efficacy beliefs, which then predicts intention to buy. (de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017.)

### 3.2 The theoretical framework

The study by de Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017), the theory of planned behavior (1991), the basic construct of communications theories, and the theories of sustainability branding create the foundation for the present study to create the theoretical framework presented in Figure 2. The framework portrays the causal relationship between brand identity, brand communications in social media and the social media content's effect on behavioral intention through the TPB.



**Figure 2 Theoretical framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably.**

As explained earlier a brand is a cluster of values (De Chernatory, 2001, p. 33 via Urde, 2009) which forms the identity of the brand, whether the values are defined or

not (Urde, 2009). This brand identity as postulated by the author then acts as a foundation or context within which social media content is created, be that regarding sustainability content or content in general, thus representing the signal of communications.

Next, as consumers are exposed to the sustainability related social media context, they formulate their own perception of the brand's sustainability, representing the exposure part of communications perspective. As consumers formulate a perception of the brand's core values which may or may not differ from the internal core values of the brand (Urde, 2009), they formulate a perception of the brand's sustainability that then formulates the identity of the brand in the eyes of the consumers (Urde, 2009). Perceived brand sustainability is thus consumers' perception of the sustainability of a brand, which has sustainability embedded into its core values and brand promise (Joyce Stuart, 2011), representing their view and opinion of the brand's sustainability and the influence of the communications perspective. This perception that is formed of the consumers' exposure to sustainability related social media content is postulated to influence the three cognitions established in the theory of planned behavior; norms, attitudes and self-efficacy (de Lenne & Vandebosch, 2017). The three cognitions then influence the intention to behave, which may lead to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

## 4 CONTENT IN SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING AND COMMUNICATIONS

This chapter focuses on creating a synthesis of existing literature on communicating sustainability, which is presented in Appendix 7. The synthesis is then utilized in the empirical analysis, more specifically in the content analysis to analyze the case company's Instagram content. Further, this synthesis is later on combined with the conclusions of the content analysis, which leads to the framework for analyzing sustainability aspects in social media content, presented in Appendix 9 and applied in the interviews to receive consumers' perceptions of the content. The theories presented in this chapter aim to describe the content to which consumers are exposed to and based on which they create a perception of the brand's sustainability, as presented in the theoretical framework as *Sustainability Social Media Content (exposure)* (see Figure 2).

### 4.1 Sustainability communications

Literature on sustainability branding is still rather limited and fractioned, the research focuses on certain aspects of sustainability in marketing (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Furthermore, as the literature relating content and communications in sustainability branding is somewhat limited, aspects pertaining to the theme can be found in other themes present in the sustainability branding literature. The themes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green branding, sustainable branding and sustainability branding are considered in this literature review related to content, some research in sustainable advertising is also considered. The theoretical concepts chosen for this research concerning social media content, content and sustainability are presented in Appendix 7.

With their communications brands have the social responsibility and means to promote sustainability and with their communications strive to change the world (Elliot, 2011 via Lee, 2017; Dahlsrud, 2008 via Lee, 2017). Consumers make decisions on sustainable brands based on available information (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017) demonstrating the importance of sustainability communications for brands to be the preferred choice for consumers. Lee (2017) defines customer-

centric corporate sustainability marketing communications (SMC) as marketing communications to promote sustainability and commitment to related value activities while pursuing economic growth for the personal, economic and environmental wellbeing of consumers, referring to Sheth et al. (2011) seminal article on mindful consumption. The aim of SMC is to inspire consumers to rethink their consumption behavior, to eventually restrain from excessive consumption and instead resetting their mindset to care about themselves, the community and nature (Lee, 2017).

Similarly, to Williams et al. (2014) who indicate the goal of sustainability communications to be in communicating issues that are important to consumers, Lee (2017) also indicates the importance of customer centrality in sustainability communications via social media. SMC should communicate sustainability issues of concern to consumers, when sustainability issues are defined as topics related to sustainable awareness, social justice and environmental products (Signitzer and Prexl, 2008 via Lee, 2017). Promoting sustainability issues that concern consumers are seen to showcase honesty and transparency, as well as demonstrate commitment to meet consumers' needs regarding sustainability (Lubin and Esty, 2010 via Lee, 2017). Williams et al. (2014) agree that a brand should understand what issues are most important to consumers and focus on those in their sustainability communications.

Further, O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) indicate communication approaches to include a personal point of reference to the consumer as this kind of content is more likely to engage consumers in a meaningful way. The personal point of reference to consumers should be built upon the consumers' values, beliefs, environment and experiences. Overall, they posit communication strategies of sustainability to be in touch with the everyday life of consumers, the concerns and pressures of everyday life. (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009.) SMC should also set out to stimulate sustainability mindset and encourage to sustainable consumption. Stimulation of sustainable mindset refers to stimulating consumers to consider sustainable consumption, that is considering the results of consumption and the consumptions' influence on people, communities and nature before making the purchase. Lastly, encouragement of sustainable consumption aims to restrain acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational consumption. (Lee, 2017.) Sustainability Marketing

Communications should inspire consumers think of their own wellbeing, the community and the nature as well as the influences of consumption of their wellbeing before making consumption decisions. SMC may direct consumers to temperance instead of excessive consumption by resetting them to care of themselves, the community and nature. (Lee, 2017.)

#### **4.2 Rational arguments and emotional appeal**

Content and communications in general can try to appeal to the emotions and to the cognition of consumers. In sustainability content and communications, arguments for both rational and emotional appeal exists. Grubor & Milovanov (2017) argue rational arguments being important in conveying brand sustainability. Convincing and sound communications provide foundation for consumer's knowledge of the company's vision and actions regarding sustainability, laying a foundation for consumer motivation to make a change. Important is to inform consumers of the benefits arising from sustainable purchase as well as a sustainable brand should strive to fit the aspect of sustainability into the consumers' lifestyle as well as possible. (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017.)

Further, Williams et al. (2014) establish certain methods on how to specifically use social media for effective sustainability communications for instance by suggesting a brand to communicate of its good citizenship, sustainable activities and positions, to be sure and promote the brand's sustainability, as well as communicate the financial benefit from sustainable purchase, all which can be seen as rational arguments. However, similar to Grubor and Milovanov (2017), Williams et al. suggest appealing to consumers' emotions rather than rational logic to be able to influence consumers' lifestyles to be sustainable. Both Grubor and Milovanov (2017) and Williams et al., (2014) seems to prefer a combination of rational arguments and emotional appeal to influence consumers' consumption behavior. Moreover, Gahlot Sarkar, Sarkar and Yadav (2019) indicate in their quantitative study that for non-technical products, such as accessories, to have a higher impact on consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intention, emotional and self-expressive appeals are more effective.

### 4.3 Psychological benefits with emotional appeal

Emotional connection with the sustainable brand provides value for the consumer in three ways (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), indicating the benefit of forming said emotional connection with the consumer through appropriate content. Within the context of green energy brands and advertising, Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) indicate three psychological benefit categories to potentially enhance consumer attitudes towards these brands as well increasing consumers' purchase intentions. Due to the limited nature of literature in sustainability communications in social media, the context of green advertising is considered as it depicts similar emotional appeal as sustainability communications studied by Grubor & Milovanov (2017).

Warm glow describes a consumer's intrinsic warm glow feeling of wellbeing derived as a response of the moral satisfaction engendered from contributing to environmental common good with environmentally responsible behavior (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992; Nunes & Schokkaert, 2003; Ritov & Kahneman, 1997 via Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). To support consumers warm glow feeling, sustainable brands such as the case company, are recommended to communicate the common good derived from purchasing the product or service of the sustainable brand. For instance, Lovia may want to focus on communicating how purchasing their handbags, consumers support circular economy and the repurposing of waste material.

Self-expressive benefits represent psychological benefits inferred from self-expressive and socially visible environmentally responsible consumption (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012), also called as auto-expression benefits (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017) and unique/self-expressive experience (Minton, Lee, Orth, Kim & Kahle, 2012). Consumers are more willing to consume sustainably when signaling is likely, that is consumers are conveying information of themselves implicitly via their consumption behavior (Glazer & Konrad, 1996 via Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012). Furthermore, products possessing higher signaling potential convey greater benefits from the association with pro-social behaviors (Bennett & Chakravarti, 2009

via Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012), which indicates also status motives driving sustainable consumption behavior (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012).

Similarly, brands by creating self-expressive appeal to consumers through content, the brand is able to create an improved psychological bond with the consumer (Aaker, 2009; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006 via Gahlot Sarkar et al, 2019). Consequently, Gahlot Sarkar et al. (2019) posit effective communication of the functional, emotional and/or self-expressive benefits to provide an appealing brand positioning for a sustainable brand. In order to tap into these self-expressive benefits and signaling behavior of consumers, sustainable products that are more socially visible, such as handbags for women, possess a greater potential for delivering self-expressive benefits. For instance, conveying information of all the possible occasions a handbag can be worn, may support the signaling power of that product.

Nature-related benefits deriving from content can be described as the satisfaction derived from love towards nature (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), showcasing the role nature imagery can play in creating an emotional connection to nature. Nature experiences may be elicited via photographs and videos igniting similar affective responses to genuine nature experiences. Photos and videos of nature may support in constructing positive beliefs of product attributes and increase importance of environmental product features. Emotional response to nature imagery was demonstrated to result in positive brand attitudes that also affect purchase intention. (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012.) Care and concern for nature is also one of the antecedents for sustainable consumption (Lim, 2017) and thus a meaningful foundation for creating sustainability related content. Hence, including nature images and videos to social media communications is recommended to support the creation of positive brand attitude and increase purchase intention.

#### **4.4 Feeling of empowerment**

Consumers may opt for sustainable products and services for the positive feeling and empowerment they receive from doing that purchase (Williams et al., 2014). Hartmann et al. (2018) examined the role of psychological empowerment in sustainable consumer behavior. As promoting and communicating of sustainable



products and sustainable behavior, marketers should aim to enhance consumers' subjective feeling of empowerment and highlight the potential impact of consumers' actions posing that by buying the brand's products the consumer can make a difference. This is recommended as the quantitative study affirms psychological empowerment to act both as an antecedent to and an outcome of sustainable behavior, where psychological empowerment acts as a motivational factor for sustainable behavior and as a psychological outcome of sustainable behavior. (Hartmann et al., 2018.)

As psychological empowerment might be an important motivational factor for sustainable behavior, marketing should be aimed at increasing the subjective feeling of empowerment and similarly decrease the feeling of disempowerment via appropriate communications (Hartmann et al., 2018), for instance fearful messages in sustainability communications may evoke feelings such as denial and disempowerment in consumers towards sustainability issues (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Fearful messages of climate change are efficient in evoking consumers attention to the topic; however, the messages do not motivate consumers to engage with the issue, moreover, tends to do the opposite. More research is needed in how to encourage profound personal concern and lifestyle engagement with climate change through communications. (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009.)

Further, apocalypse fatigue, as defined by the psychologist Per Espen Stoknes, may affect negatively consumers' feeling of empowerment and lead to demotivation as negative vocabulary is used in addressing sustainability issues and climate change (Stoknes, 2017). A common trend of climate anxiety is present in the society, which is shown for instance in EU declaring the climate change to be a global climate emerged (European Parliament, 2019) demonstrating the severity of the issues with negative vocabulary, which may indeed lead to apocalypse fatigue as indicated by Stoknes (2017).

Instead, communications should be aimed at making consumers feel that with their consumption behavior they have an impact and that their behavior and decisions matter (Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Wright et al., 2006 via Hartmann et al., 2018). Feeling of empowerment may be dependent also on other consumers and their

behavior (Wathieu et al., 2002 via Hartmann et al., 2018), then marketers should communicate the contribution other consumers have already made with their changed behavior (Hartmann et al., 2018). Even though, Hartmann et al. (2018) provide an interesting perspective to influencing sustainable behavior through psychological empowerment, the research does not outline specific means to convey and evoke the feeling of empowerment via marketing communications apart from conveying appropriate stimuli, cues and relevant information that evokes a feeling in the consumers that with their own behavior they can make a change and specifically by purchasing the said brand's products can make an impact (Hartmann et al., 2018). Hence, the present study aims to establish how consumers perceive the feeling of empowerment from social media content of sustainable brands.

#### **4.5 Creating stakeholder engagement with sustainability content**

Abitbol and Lee (2017) discuss methods for organizations to be able to engage in communications with stakeholders in social media. To engage stakeholders with sustainability messages, an organization must be transparent, commit to a two-way dialogue with its stakeholders and avoid self-serving communications of sustainability and to communicate a company-cause fit (Abitbol & Lee, 2017), that is to be authentic in their communications regarding sustainability. The study by Abitbol and Lee (2017) focuses on CSR dedicated Facebook pages and examines Fortune 500 companies, however the study is adapted here regarding the dialogic theories applied in the study, overlooking the specific issues connected to Facebook so that the study is applicable to the context of Instagram and an SME.

##### **4.5.1 Transparency and openness**

For communicating sustainability in social media, the dialogic theory by Kent and Taylor (1998) provides a strategy for communicating sustainability content (Abitbol & Lee, 2017) that is disclosure which implies the ability to provide useful and appealing information to consumers, transparency and openness being the key aspects of it (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003 via Abitbol & Lee, 2017) Full disclosure is achieved with content that may impact the consumer and the brand beyond their

daily operations, as well as with content that creates a sense of belonging in the consumers. (Abitbol & Lee, 2017.)

Furthermore, brands must be open and transparent in their communications (LeCompte, 2010 via Williams et al., 2014) and convey information for instance of the sourcing, production and distribution of the brand's products and services (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Furthermore, Abitbol and Lee (2017) suggest companies to post of sustainability issues that preferably are congruent with the brand's mission and values. Moreover, to support transparency it is important to communicate openly and regularly with the consumers about real topics instead of only conveying marketing messages (LeCompte, 2010 via Williams et al., 2014).

#### 4.5.2 Brand authenticity

In communicating sustainability through social media content, the company-cause fit which indicates the congruence of the brand with the sustainability content they communicate is important as in most industries it evokes more engagement (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). However, Abitbol and Lee (2017) also found that disclosure of company related information, that is being transparent and open, did not affect engagement, this might be since the context of the study is CSR dedicated Facebook pages, where consumers are more interested in CSR than the company, evoking a feeling that the brand is communicating of sustainability merely for its own gain when disclosing company-related information. As the context in this study is company pages in Instagram, this result by Abitbol and Lee might not apply, which is why brand congruence is studied. Brand congruence is a part of brand authenticity which is an important aspect of sustainability communications, indeed, to avoid self-serving sustainability communications from brands. The antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity by Fritz et al. (2017) are applied here as the foundations and guidelines for communicating brand authenticity through content.

Brand authenticity is influenced by the brand's past (i.e. brand heritage, brand nostalgia), the brand's virtuousness (i.e. brand commercialization, brand clarity, social commitment), the employees representing the brand (i.e. employee's passion) and lastly, consumers self-identification with the brand (i.e. brand legitimacy, actual

self-congruence) (Fritz et al., 2017). This conceptualization is wider than the one of Eggers et al. (2013), who introduce the elements of brand congruence and brand consistency, which can also be found in Fritz et al. (2017) conceptualization. Brand consistency describes similar issues with brand heritage, and brand congruence with actual self-congruence and employees' passion.

In addition to studying the antecedents of brand authenticity, Fritz et al. (2017) indicate how brand authenticity creates increased emotional bonds between consumers and the brand, and thus increase the relationship quality between the two actors. Further, this enhanced relationship quality, results in increased consumer loyalty (i.e. purchase intention, the willingness to pay a price premium) towards the brand as well as tolerance against ill performance of the brand (i.e. willingness to forgive mistakes), thus indicating the importance of brand authenticity to marketers and brand performance (Fritz et al. (2017), as well as the importance of authentically communicating sustainability to create an emotional bond with the consumers.

Moreover, as the antecedents to brand authenticity were discussed, the strongest effect on brand authenticity was discovered to be on brand legitimacy, that is the cultural fit between the brand and the consumer (Fritz et al., 2017), whereas the fit between sustainability and the brand is one of the influencers for consumers on sustainable brand choice (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Hence, highlighting the strong importance of matching brand values with the values and norms of the target consumers. Furthermore, the strong negative effect of brand commercialization (i.e. behavior that supplements values for profit maximization) to brand authenticity (Fritz et al., 2017) further highlight the need for authenticity both in the brand core values and in branding efforts. These discoveries act as one of the many justifications into why this research is focusing on authentic brand values in communicating sustainability as well as in authentic content.

Even though Fritz et al. (2017) offer several antecedents to brand authenticity, they do not indicate how each of these antecedents can be communicated to affect brand authenticity. Further, consumers are capable of finding authentic aspects in consumption objects or experiences that others value false or unreal (Grayson & Martinec, 20014 via Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Rose & Wood, 2005 via Beverland

& Farrelly, 2010). Thus, it is important to understand how consumers interpret authenticity in brands to avoid the sense of authenticity towards inauthentic brands (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Consumers that share the same quest for authenticity in brands or for instance in experiences seek it however for different reasons. The reasons being control, connection and/or virtue. Hence, the author would deduct that authenticity is rather subjective concept in branding and thus there might not be any one absolute solution into being perceived as authentic.

However, by combining the results of the beforementioned researches, certain key aspects can be defined for increasing brand authenticity that are analyzed from the sustainable brand's social media content:

- Create a strong cultural fit between the brand and consumers by aligning the brand values with consumers' values; brand legitimacy (see Fritz et al., 2017).
- Align brand values, strategy and vision with brand promise; brand consistency (see Eggers et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2017).
- Stay true to the brand values instead of always changing and aligning the values according to market trends; brand congruency (see Eggers et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2017).

#### 4.5.3 Interactivity and dialogue

The interactivity of sustainability content leads to increased engagement. An important aspect for creating engagement with stakeholders is the creation of two-way communication and dialogue with stakeholders as consumers are more likely to engage with interactive content. (Abitbol & Lee, 2017.) One of the dialogic strategies in communicating CSR messages is interactivity, which refers to consumers' ability to ask questions and the company's ability to respond to those questions (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). As social media is built on the concept of interactivity, interactivity in sustainability content in social media can be seen as the ability to facilitate and encourage interaction between and with consumers and other companies (Saxton & Waters, 2014 via Abitbol & Lee, 2017). Further, interactivity can be prompted with

the inclusion of for instance contests to activate users (de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017), and with prompting action in the online environment (Abitbol & Lee, 2017).

Social media content should be a conversation with consumers, instead of overselling the brand's for instance products and ideas (Matthews, 2011d via Williams et al., 2014; Abitbol & lee, 2017). Furthermore, a direct question or encouragement to an interactive action in the online environment is preferable (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). Thus, sustainability content that for instance asks questions and/or encourages to act sustainably in the online environment would be more engaging and thus more influential to consumers. Additionally, to creating interactivity, sustainability communications should aim for consumers' cooperation to ensure success (Lee, 2017) as well as aiming to establish relationships with mutual trust and gain with consumers (Williams et al., 2014) as the relationship strength is one influencer for consumers of sustainable brand choice (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Furthermore, instead of merely creating interactivity, sustainable brands should aim to create a community of brand enthusiasts who additionally to being loyal to the brand also become brand influencers who share the brand and its message to others, which is made easy with the social media and its functions (LeCompte, 2010 via Williams et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2014).

#### **4.6 User-friendly message format**

User-friendly message format is one of the dialogic strategies for sustainability communications and refers to content being easily accessible to consumers, which is one reason why social media is applied in the research. The usage of multimedia content inflicts more engagement in users; therefore, the usage of imagery, videos and links is recommended for sustainability content. (Abitbol & Lee, 2017.) Furthermore, the imagery can be used to elicit affective responses toward nature and thus create positive brand attitudes and influence purchase intention (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012).

## 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 5 proceeds with introducing the research perspectives applied in the research. The chapter focuses on describing the two research methods applied in the research, the sample utilized in both analysis methods and to explain in detail the analysis processes applied in both research methods.

### 5.1 Research perspective and methods

Within the scope of this research, the author embraces a research perspective similar to the *Critical marketing* research stream and the *Activist school of thought*. Furthermore, the author's research perspective falls into the interactive and noneconomic perspective of the classification of marketing schools of thought by Sheth, Gardner and Garret (1988). The interactive perspective describes a balance of power between two actors. The author views both the brand and the consumer as active partners in changing consumer behavior to be sustainable. Further, the noneconomic perspective encompasses the view that the actions of marketers are not solely based on economic factors, but social and psychological factors are at play too. This is exactly what the author calls upon in order for authentic and sustainable brands to succeed in changing consumer behavior to sustainable. (Sheth et al., 1988.) Contrary to the classification by Sheth et al. (1988) the author views sustainable branding initiatives as interactive.

Quantitative and qualitative research are the most used research strategies; quantitative research is the study of measurement and analysis of causal relationships, whereas qualitative research is the study of qualities of entities as well as processes and meanings. (Wilson, 2010, pp. 9-11, 13-14.) The study possesses a subjectivist ontology as well as interpretivist epistemology and utilizes qualitative research methods. Indeed, qualitative research is the study of entities, processes and meanings. With an interpretivist epistemology a subjective view to research is applied and the importance of researchers participating in the research and interacting with the participants is emphasized. (Wilson, 2010, pp. 9-11, 13-14.) The researcher's participation enables the research to study the meanings and associations derived from the content by consumers. Further, abductive reasoning is applied that

is the combination of inductive and deductive reasonings and the aim in abductive reasoning is in building and transforming theories. The research process is an iterative cycle advancing back and forth from data collection and analysis to examining previous literature.

Even though the theoretical framework is a causal model, referring to a quantitative research with a positivist ontology, the research utilizes qualitative methods specifically to examine the meanings associated to the social media content and to receive deeper knowledge of the phenomenon of sustainable brands influencing consumer behavior. The research applies two qualitative research methods; content analysis and interview. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to immerse into a phenomenon and examines its meaning as well as qualitative research may for instance enable to explore reasons for the occurrence of a phenomenon and code the meaning of an experience to participants (Williams & Moser, 2019). With qualitative research perspective the author is able to more profoundly examine the research topic and examine the meanings and interpretations consumers draw from the sustainability related social media content to better understand the role sustainable brand identity communications play in influencing consumers' intention to behave sustainably, and thus answer to the research question. Moreover, the qualitative research perspective enables the research to pre-test the theoretical framework (see Figure 2) before a larger-scale, quantitative research.

## **5.2 Content analysis and the sample**

Content analysis is a research method in which documents are analyzed systematically and objectively, the documents considered in content analysis may be basically any kind of material such as a report, dialogue, interview or a letter (Kyngäs & Vanhanen, 1999 via Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). Content analysis strives to create a description of the research phenomenon in a condensed and general form, which is also the basis for criticism towards content analysis for not being able to create proper conclusions of the data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009).

The qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine the Instagram feed of Lovia, both pictures and text, and to evaluate the content based on previous research



in sustainability communications. With content analysis the author was able to analyze the content to see if it aligned with the recommendations of previous research as well as to understand what type of content the case company produces. The analyzed data consists of over 40 Instagram posts posted over the period of July 2019 – September 2019. The qualitative content analysis was executed with the help of Excel. Based on the content analysis four Instagram posts were chosen for deeper analysis. These four posts were further analyzed with the qualitative interviews.

### 5.3 Content analysis process

The content analysis process utilized progressive coding, that is a cyclical process comprising of three levels of coding; open, axial and selective, in order to derive meaning from the collected data (Williams & Moser, 2019). To begin the analysis, the author spent time to familiarize herself with the brand's IG content, then she started with the initial analysis with open coding. Open coding is the first level of coding where distinct concepts and themes are identified for categorization (Williams & Moser, 2019). The open coding was executed so that the posts were marked into an Excel sheet according to their publication date after which both the text and the picture of the posts were separately coded with open coding. The initial codes were listed to separate columns on the excel sheet, one row representing the codes of one post. Concepts identified in the open coding stage were for instance *functionality*, *nature*, *purpose* and *design*.

Then, the second level of coding, axial coding, was conducted. In axial coding the codes are refined, aligned and categorized into themes, axial coding enables the identification and categorization of relationships between the codes. (Williams & Moser, 2019.) For axial coding the author reread the data collected and the open coding done earlier in order to identify relationships, connections and differences between the codes identified in open coding. This was done by modifying the codes in the Excel sheet, combining certain concepts, creating new concepts and deleting unnecessary concepts. In the second stage new concepts emerged from the data such as *narrative* and *purpose*, and from the concepts emerged in initial coding new themes were created such as *company purpose* and *product*.

Next, the third level of coding, selective, was conducted. In selective coding categories are integrated and selected to create meaningful expressions, selective coding enables a higher level of abstraction from the data. The aim is to further refine the data and select a main theme/category and to align the other categories and their relationships to the main theme. (Williams & Moser, 2019.) To identify the main themes/categories from the data and the previous two levels of coding, color coding was used. The main themes emergent from the data were color coded and the relationships within those main themes were identified. For instance, the initial code of *company values* and *company roots* were connected under a main theme of *brand values*. A detailed example of the three-level coding process is given in Appendix 12.

In between the three levels of coding the author also examined the gathered literature relevant to the topic as well as gathered more literature to support the data analysis process. Further, after the coding process the author returned to further examine the theoretical framework of the research as well as further search for new theoretical concepts applicable to the research. After which, the author returned back to the data and redid the coding process to increase its validity and reliability. Then the analysis results were compared to and connected with the existing theoretical framework to find commonalities and discrepancies. At this point new concepts and themes emerged from the analysis such as the main theme *macro perspective* and *design purpose*. As a result of the extensive analysis process, main themes both from the data regarding pictures and text were abstracted, which are the output of the content analysis. Further, the data analysis enables the author to divide the analyzed posts into certain main themes according to their content.

After the this analysis process, the appropriate posts were selected for the qualitative consumer interviews. The posts were selected on the basis of the content analysis so that as many of the main themes derived from the analysis were present in the selected posts. Further, also the reach of the posts was taken into consideration as choosing the posts to the interviews. As mentioned earlier, altogether four posts were chosen to represent the whole sample of more than 40 posts. At this point, each of these four posts were reread alongside with their analysis and a joint list of the observations and analysis were formed for each of the chosen posts. This list (see Appendix 8) is used in the interviews to follow and compare the remarks the

interviewees make in comparison to the author's remarks and the theoretical knowledge. The list represents the second part of the theoretical diagram (see Figure 2) *Sustainability Social Media Content (exposure)*, representing consumers' exposure to sustainable brand identity communications.

#### **5.4 Interviews and the sample**

To validate the content analysis done by the author, the research chose to apply qualitative interviews as another research method. Qualitative interviews, a widely used research method (Fielding & Thomas, 2016, p. 282), were conducted also to gain an understanding of the consumer perspective to perceiving sustainability related social media content and how that content may influence the consumers' intention to behave and consume sustainably. The interviewees were potential customers of the case company, which they define as 25-35 years old, living in cities, highly educated individuals who are interested in sustainability and/or new innovations. The chosen interviewees were all inhabitants of the capital of Finland, Helsinki. One of the interviewees was male and the others female, the interviewees were between the ages of 26-28 and of differing educational background and occupation. Some of the interviewees were already familiar with the company beforehand and some were not. The demographic information of the interviewees is presented in detail in Appendix 2. The names of the interviewees are not revealed to support their anonymity.

Each interview lasted approximately two hours, and due to the profundity of the interviews in total four interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured where the interviewer asked the same, major questions from all of the interviewees, however, the interviewer was still free to alter the order of the questions and if needed ask additional questions (Fielding & Thomas, 2016, p. 282). The interview guide is presented in full in Appendix 1. The interviews were constructed as such that each of the four Instagram posts were examined individually with specific questions related to the content of the posts. First the initial impressions and perceptions of the interviewee regarding the individual posts were obtained. Then in the aided memory-section specific elements of the content was discussed based on themes risen from the theory and content analysis. After discussing the

individual posts, all of the four posts were examined together with specific questions related to the applied model of theory of planned behavior. The interview ended with the examination of the theoretical framework and leaving room for the interviewee to freely comment, criticize and discuss the framework.

The semi-structured interviews facilitated both open discussion and standardized questions for all interviewees supporting the proceeding of the study. Interviews are often used to uncover opinions of a topic or to establish dimensions of attitudes, interviews may also be used to create hypotheses of the motivations driving behavior and attitudes (Fielding & Thomas, 2016, p. 283). The present study utilizes interviews to uncover the opinions and perceptions of consumer to the chosen social media content and moreover to uncover the consumers attitudes and perceptions of the brand based on that content. To support this notion, the tactic of probing was used, that is asking follow-up questions to get a fuller response from the interviewee (Fielding & Thomas, 2016, p. 286), probing was done in a neutral manner mainly by asking a follow-up questions of why, what do you mean by that or can you give an example.

The first interview was a test-interview, after which the author revised and modified the interview questions as needed based on the first interview. The most important modifications were firstly that in the beginning of the interview, the interviewer will introduce the case company to the interviewee briefly, introducing the mission, values and purpose of the company as communicated on the brand's website. This will enable the interviewee to answer to the interview questions more profoundly, as this was not possible for the test interviewee not having the said information (mission, values, purpose) of the case company. Secondly, in the test interview only the detailed aspects the author interpreted in the content analysis were asked for each individual post. Contrary, in rest of the interviews all of the detailed aspects from the theory were asked for each post. Reason for this was that in the test interview it was recognized that the interviewees might notice aspects of the content that the author did not, showcasing the importance of asking all the theoretical concepts and content analysis themes from the interviewees. To conclude, the test-interview is also considered in the research, as its contribution is as meaningful and remarkable as the

other interviews, if not even more as it operated as the foundation for improving the interviews.

## **5.5 Interview analysis process**

All of the interviews were recorded, and transcriptions of the interviews were made for analysis. The transcriptions were done verbatim (Fielding & Thomas, 2016, pp. 290-291) to ensure increased and detailed data for analysis. The interview analysis was done with Excel and the three-level coding process was used similarly as in the content analysis. The interview analysis process initiated after transcription with transferring the interview responses to Excel so that each interviewees' responses were indicated under the same question to enable comparison of responses. One sheet was made for the implicit-section of the interviews and another sheet for the aided memory-section.

In analyzing the implicit results, first the answers of each interviewee were color coded based on initial concepts and themes. Then the color-coded themes were compared to each other to revise the themes, make new ones and delete unnecessary ones. In this manner, the main themes emerged from the results were discovered. The results were yet again revised and modified as needed. Then the main themes, were compared to the content analysis themes and commonalities and differences were identified. At this point, many of the themes discovered in the implicit section analysis were merged into the themes discovered from the content analysis, yet new themes did emerge from the implicit section that were not found in the content analysis. Hence, showcasing the importance of mixed method approach for this research. In analyzing the aided memory-section, the answers of the interviewees were color coded based on if the answer was positive, negative or neutral/conflicting. Based on this division the results were analyzed by finding commonalities in the interviewees' justifications for their answers as well as recognizing differing opinions. Conclusions of the research were drawn based on the content analysis results, the analysis of implicit-section of the interviews and the analysis of the aided memory-section of the interviews.

## 6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this chapter the analysis results both from the content analysis and the interview analysis are discussed. The main themes and their descriptions emerged from the content and interview analyses are presented in Appendix 8. This chapter is divided into sub-chapters each representing one of the social media posts analyzed in the research. In each sub-chapter first the content analysis results are explained and justified, followed by the examination of the interview results. The interview results are first explained from the implicit interpretations of the interviewees, followed by the analysis results of the aided memory -sections of the interviews, where the aspects of the theoretical framework were asked from the interviewees.

The results associated with each post are discussed in detail in order to showcase the variety in consumers' perceptions of the communications, to showcase the difference in results between the different research and analysis methods as well as to enable the reliability and applicability of the research conclusions. The chapter continues to discuss which themes were associated to which social media post (see Appendix 10) comprising the sustainable brand identity communications of Lovia. Lastly, results for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications on consumers' intention to behave sustainably according to the TPB are discussed in the context of the four social media posts.

### 6.1 Post 1 results

#### 6.1.1 Content analysis results

The main focus of post 1 (see Appendix 3) was determined based on the combined focus of the text and picture to be *product*. The other main themes emerged from the content analysis are *functionality*, *customer*, *narrative* and *design purpose*. The first theme *functionality* was interpreted both from the picture from the multiple handles portrayed with the bag and from the text from the description of multiple occasions and purposes the bag could be used for. The multifunctionality was described in a practical manner in a form of a story, which resulted in the *narrative*-theme in the content analysis. The term functionality is mentioned in the text two times, alongside

with other terms to describe functionality such as “adapting to many different needs”, “with all these six dimensions” and “it serves multiple purposes”, all showcasing the narrative-theme.

The *product* focus of the most is imminent both from the picture and the text, the picture portrays only the product and the text focuses on introducing the KAINUU - bag as mentioned in the beginning of the text, this is supported by the text that continues with an extensive description of the multifunctionality of the bag. The *design purpose* is interpreted from the text from this part: “Adapting to many different needs has always been an important aspect of Lovia design, but now it is pushed to the next level”, since the text describes how their design purpose is to create products that adapt to many different needs and they continue to develop their design in this area.

*Customer* -theme is not necessarily said in the text however it is interpreted from it. The text is formatted in the way that it speaks with the word “you” indicating the customer, thus speaking straight to the customer. Also, the *narrative* -theme supports the customer orientation of the post as the multifunctionality of the post is brought to the level of the customer with a narrative of different occasions the customer may use the product. Captions such as “You can also leave the straps home and use it...” clearly have a customer focus and strive to bring the product to the everyday life of the customer.

### 6.1.2 Interview analysis results - Implicit

The *implicit* results revealed the following main themes, which the interviewees agreed upon: *multifunctionality, sustainability, consumer goods, Finnish brand, product and long text*. The results also revealed main themes the interviewees had differing opinions: *brand values, perception of the brand, picture and consumer goods*. The themes *functionality* and *product* similar to content analysis did emerge, but themes *narrative, customer* and *design purpose* as such did not emerge from the implicit results. Additionally, the following themes emerged; *sustainability* and *trash*.

*Multifunctionality* was implicitly interpreted by three of the four interviewees (B, C and D). Interviewee A did not interpret multifunctionality from the post, as overall interviewee A perceived the post to be highly confusing, without a clear message, evoking even negative emotions. Interviewees B, C and D all named multifunctionality of the product to be the main message of the post, arising from the text. The interviewees described the multifunctionality of the product to be perceived from how it can be used for different purposes and situations, and that one does not need many bags but only the one suffices for different occasions. Further, the three interviewees also implicitly recognized that the post focuses on the *product*, supporting the content analysis results. Interviewee D described how the text extensively and in detail tells the different functions of the product, as did C adding that the text tells also of the brand's story. Interviewee B stated how the picture of the post nicely portrays the product.

Interviewee C was the only one who mentioned the story of the brand from post 1, the interviewees had differing opinions of this and of the *brand's values* being communicated in the post. Interviewee A found the post confusing and that the values of the brand are not communicated in post 1. However, C mentioned how the purpose of the post is to add another perspective to the *sustainability* of the brand, and D stated *sustainability* to be interpreted from the hashtags of the post that signal the ethicalness and excess materials (i.e. *trash*) used to make the products, thus supporting sustainability. C and D did thus recognize the brand's values from the post contrasting A's opinion and revealing a new theme *sustainability*.

However, B, C and D all specifically described the *picture* of the post to be confusing and not to represent the values of the brand, instead of being clinical, confusing and boring as C and D stated, it should have represented the values of the brand and have supported the text better. Even though B admits the picture to be serene, calm and minimalistic, whereas D describes it to be clear and neutral, they would still change the picture of the post. B's suggestion was to add *nature* elements to the picture to portray closeness to nature, and D's suggestion was to add a *human* element in it to give context to the product and its users. Furthermore, C explained that she would not read the post since the picture have her an expensive image of the



product, whereas A, C and D all told that the *text* is too long, which would prevent D from reading the post.

A new theme *Finnish brand*-emerged from the analysis as B, C and D all received the perception of Finland from the post, B described the brand Finnish and said color scheme to be Scandinavian, whereas C and D both explained that Finland was perceived from the name of the product: KAINUU. D continued the name to give a perception of nature and the Finnish countryside.

B and C had contradictory impressions as B indicated the *product* to seem to be a *consumer good*, a utility product, not a high fashion product, whereas C described the picture to remind her of a high fashion brand. However, regarding *consumer goods*-theme C did support B's impression by mentioning the post to give a perception of a product with a long life instead of a fast fashion brand.

### 6.1.3 Interview analysis results – Aided memory

#### *Customer Perspective*

All of the interviewees agreed that the content of post 1 conveyed sustainability issues of concern to consumers, however A's view was a bit unclear and B's specified the post to concern regular consumers but not consumers with strong left-wing political values on sustainability. The issues of concern to consumers were, according to C and D multifunctionality of the product, according to C the domesticity of the brand and according to both B and C the long product life. Both C and D point out that *multifunctionality* enables the decreasing of consumption as there is no need to buy multiple handbags to concern consumers. B perceived multifunctionality and long product life from the product's *design* and how the product is portrayed in the picture simply and clearly.

If the content touches upon the everyday life of consumers, the interviewees had somewhat similar opinions. C nicely points out that this depends on the consumer, which is also seen from the interviewees' answers. B agreed the post did touch

consumers' everyday life since multifunctionality enables the everyday usage of the product

“...enabling smooth and optimal everyday life” (Interviewee B)

Even though a handbag is an everyday product, D pointed out that regarding everyday sustainability choices one thinks more of grocery purchases and recycling for instance. A connection to everyday life is seen in the functionality enabling everyday use, *domesticity of the brand* and the quality and *materials* used to make the product, which all result in benefits for the consumer as A summarized. Furthermore, B, C and D all agreed that the post strives to include sustainability into the lifestyle of the consumer. D clarifies it to be specifically the purpose of this post, whereas B states the purpose being at least to ease the lifestyle of the consumer through everyday life. C sees the story of the brand to be used as the method to do it.

To summarize, according to the interviewees post 1 does have a customer perspective and it does touch the everyday life of consumers as well as tries to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers. Which are conveyed with functionality of the product, the brand being Finnish, long product life and the story of the brand.

#### *Inspire Sustainable Mindset and Encourage Sustainable Consumption*

B, C and D agreed post 1 to stimulate a sustainable mindset through indicating the multifunctionality of the product and the sustainability of purchasing such multifunctional product. However, A perceived the post to be commercial, even populist, and thus did not agree it to stimulate a sustainable mindset.

B and C did agree the post to encourage sustainable consumption mainly with the text and with the elements that highlight the multifunctionality of the product and its role in the everyday life of consumers. D also saw the post to focus on the multifunctionality of the product instead of sustainability but did notice the question at the end of the post that can be seen as an encouragement. A did not view the post to encourage sustainable consumption even though the topic is touched as he saw the

post commercial. A and D agree that interpretation is needed to perceive encouragement from the post.

To summarize, the theme *functionality* was extensively recognized and discussed by the interviewees in relation to sustainable consumption and encouragement to it. Some saw multifunctionality to encourage to sustainable consumption and some saw it to encourage only to multifunctionality and have a strong *product* focus, which made the post to seem even commercial.

### *The aspects of Sustainability and Wellbeing*

D states that none of the aspects of wellbeing is present in the post as does B clarifying that these aspects are not at least directly present in the post but rather the post focuses on the lifecycle of one product. C explains that the wellbeing aspects are present to some extent, but one would need to analyze the post further to find these aspects in it, which is not typical with behavior on social media for consumers.

B, C and D agree that economic sustainability may be interpreted from the *functionality* of the product and its long life, enabling the need for less products. B also sees personal wellbeing being conveyed through multifunctionality but does not interpret environmental sustainability from the post. C and D both question the price of the product as it is not told in the post, seeing that it might be expensive.

C specifies the post not to leave her with a broader thought of her own consumption behavior, which from the company's perspective might not be a good thing. If sustainability is something the brand wants to highlight more, then mentioning the word "*sustainability*" itself in the post would be good as well as questioning consumption behavior. However, C also mentions that knowing the story of the brand, it is not necessary for the brand to overly communicate about sustainability as the brand's story proves its true sustainability values.

To summarize, Post 1 focuses on the *functionality* of the product and thus does not directly portray different aspects of sustainability on a broader level, the elements

may however be interpreted from the post with deeper analysis, but this would be too laborious for regular viewing of the post in social media.

### *Rational Arguments*

All three interviewees (B, C, D) agreed that the content of post 1 was reliable and sound. B and D had almost identical justifications to the reliability of the post as both perceived the post not to give too big promises, instead it was practical and well-justified text without trying too much. This relates to the *narrative*-theme emerged from content analysis, describing the positive qualities of the text.

To some extent all of the four interviewees agree that the reliable content creates a foundation for the brand's sustainability vision and actions. D perceives both the sustainability vision and actions to be conveyed in the beginning of the post where the multifunctionality and *purpose* of the product is introduced as the brand's most important wish. C on the other hand perceives the sustainability vision to be explained via the post's hashtags; #excessleather, #ethicalbags and #sustainablebags. B and C both agree that the production of the bag is the brand's sustainable action communicated. A sees the post to attempt to communicate the sustainability vision but view the post to be too generic and to be lost into the mass media communications. To better communicate both the vision and actions, A suggests adding tangible information of the sustainable actions related to both products and their production.

B, C and D all felt the purpose of the post was indeed to communicate benefits to the consumers from sustainable purchase, primary purpose as indicated by B. All three agree the communicated benefits to be the *multifunctionality* of the bag and the benefits arisen from the multifunctionality. B adds that these benefits influence the everyday life of consumers. C interprets certain choice of word to also convey the benefits, such as

“creative...possibility to add...multifunctional bag” (Interviewee C)

To summarize, all of the interviewees agreed that the post communicates benefits for the consumer from buying the product which was the *multifunctionality* and its benefits for everyday life, that the content is convincing and sound due to its honest and practical nature, and agreed that the sustainability vision is possible to interpret from the post, however they did not specifically see the post to communicate sustainability actions of the brand apart from making the bag.

### *Emotional Appeal*

If the interviewees receive warm glow when purchasing the product based on post 1, the answers were conflicting. A and B answered no whereas C and D answered yes. C would receive warm glow based on the brand's story and *values* since buying this bag

“would provide a more positive feeling than buying an unsustainable product”  
(Interviewee C)

D would receive warm glow based on making a *sustainable* and multifunctional purchase, where one product enables the decreasing of consumption. B would receive warm glow but from selfish reasons as the bag would provide benefits for the consumer's everyday life through *multifunctionality*.

Whether the interviewees would receive self-expressive benefits, all three have conflicting answers. Firstly, C and D do not view the brand to be so known among the public that self-expressive benefits would arise. Instead, C would proudly tell of the purchase to friends due to the *values* and story of the brand and receive self-expressive benefits this way, whereas D and B would only receive warm glow feeling, based on inner reasons and the benefits received to everyday life. Regarding nature experiences and imagery, the responses are somewhat negative. Neither B or D felt a strong emotional connection since the post focuses on the everyday life of consumers and since the picture does not have any nature elements, even though D does recognize the earthy tones in the picture and *nature*-related name of the product. C's attention is drawn to the issue of using leather in sustainable products and if that

is sustainable or not, that is the only *nature* connection she receives, admitting the issue is conflicting.

A mentioned already in the implicit section the post to evoke negative feelings, the *picture* brings negative emotions to B as it gives a mental image of a grocery store catalogue and does not portray the values of the brand. C received positive feelings from the post and likes that it does not blame consumers, whereas D did not receive negative feelings but would not read the post due to its *length*.

To summarize, the results indicate that consumer may feel warm glow based on the *values and story of the brand* as well as how the positive qualities of the *product* benefit the consumers in their life. The results also show that to receive self-expressive benefits consumers may need to feel that the *brand is known by the public*. For consumers to feel a strong emotional connection to nature, it is beneficial to portray *nature in the picture* and/or refer to *nature in the text*. The results also indicate that consumers negative emotions towards social media content may be evoked by a confusing and or too long text as well as a confusing picture that does not represent the brand's values.

#### *Feeling of Empowerment*

None of B, C or D did receive a feeling of empowerment from post 1, however, all three felt that by buying the brand's products they can have an impact on *sustainability*, yet again demonstrating the *product* focus of the post as indicated with the content and implicit analysis. B and D specify that the post focuses on describing the *functionality* of the bag, which provides the impactful feeling from making the purchase as overall it enables the decreasing of consumption. C's feeling of empowerment would be only personal, moreover C feels the message to be misleading as always refraining from purchasing is better than to purchase. Even though B is not empowered by the post, she does recognize the post to convey the meaningfulness of using products until the end of their life, preferring *multifunctional products* and not consuming fast fashion, that relate to the meaningfulness of the product and brand. Further, none of the interviewees felt the post to convey what other consumers have done in regard to sustainability. To

summarize, the feeling of empowerment especially connected to the brand may be evoked with description of the *sustainable* elements of the product that would by purchasing the product benefit sustainability as well as by describing the *sustainability of the brand* and its impact to sustainability.

### *Creating Stakeholder Engagement*

The interviewees B, C and D have differing opinions of the transparency, usefulness and appealing nature of the post. B and C feel the post is transparent and open since the content is positively honest in explaining the benefits of the product without trying to oversell the product, hence making it reliable. B, C and D all feel the content is appealing, further all three also see the content does not disclose any information of the sourcing, production and distribution of the product, which is why D thinks the content is not open. B specifies this information not to be needed as she is familiar with the story and *values* of the brand and highlight that this depends on the target audience. D finds information of the *multifunctionality* of the product useful, whereas B feels the content is not useful and would not read the text since the post does not attract her attention.

All three (B, C, D) feel the brand values, vision and strategy are aligned with the brand promise in the content and do not sense any contradiction. B and C feel the post strives to align brand values with consumer values, C specifies the post

“...to communicate through the brand’s viewpoint what the consumer needs”  
(Interviewee C)

D does not agree, D feels the post only explains what is important to the brand and what is their value. All three agree that the brand communicates their true authentic values and are not following current trends, since the post is believable, does not try to oversell the product and merely explains the benefits of the product and the brand’s values in a neutral manner,

“...this is what we stand for, take it or leave it -type of message” (Interviewee B)

B and D feel the content does not try to build a relationship with consumers since it focuses on the product. C receives a feeling that we are all in this together, hence trying to build *a sense of community*, and thus somewhat feels an attempt to build a relationship. B and C feels the content somewhat encourages action in the online environment, D feels the encouragement focuses on the physical world by describing the different usages of the product. B sees the positive nature of the post is encouraging, C suspects that since the channel is Instagram it encourages to some sort of online action, perhaps guides to the online store.

To summarize, a feeling of transparency and of true brand values are can be created with positive, honest and explanatory text without overselling, with explaining the brand values and the benefits of the product. The positivity of a post, the choice of communications channel and creating a sense of community all may be perceived as encouraging to interactivity and to build a relationship with the consumer. Too high focus on a product can eat away the attempt to build a relationship with the consumer. Whereas, a brand's perspective in the content may be perceived merely as one-way communications from the brand or also as communicating a consumer perspective through the eyes of the brand.

#### 6.1.4 Summary of post 1

Overall, based on post 1 the interviewees received different images of the brand; C received a positive image of the brand, whereas A received a negative image, D a neutral perception and B did not comment this implicitly. The interviewees perceived the following themes from the post: *sustainability, nature, functionality, consumer goods, consumer, product and Finnish brand*. The interviewees' focus was drawn to the picture, that was seen confusing and not to portray the values of the brand, as well as to the text that was too long. The main focus of the post was on the *product* and its *functionality* as indicated both the content and interview analysis.



## 6.2 Post 2 results

### 6.2.1 Content analysis results

The content analysis of post 2 (Appendix 4) resulted in the following main themes: *purpose, functionality, customer, macro, design purpose, celebrity and brand values*. The main focus of the post is *purpose*, arising from the whole post, both picture and text, as the post focuses on explaining the purpose of the brand in the text and also the purpose is interpreted from the determined expression in the picture. A new theme based on the interview analysis was also later on interpreted from the content analysis, *changing the world*.

*Functionality* is derived from the text as it is indicated the core of their purpose. *Design purpose* is interpreted from the text: “through our own design we want to inspire on this journey to meaning”. *Customer* emerged from usage of “we” to include the reader into the brand’s purpose. “A single person by themselves cannot change the world, but together many actions create an impact.” acknowledges the individual in conveying that not all the responsibility to make a change lay on the individual but *together* we can have an impact and *change the world*. The post mentioned few issues that showcase the brand to have a *macro* perspective to sustainability; “valuing purposeful and sustainable consumption”, “our time is of exaggerated abundance” and “our mission is to discover new purpose for abandoned resources, essentially trash”. The *celebrity* -theme was interpreted from both the *text and picture*, when addressing Meeri Koutaniemi. All these themes nicely represent the *brand values* of Lovia, which is another theme emerged.

### 6.2.2 Interview analysis results - Implicit

Analysis of the implicit section resulted in all the same themes as in the content analysis and additionally several other themes emerged. *Purpose* was interpreted by all the four interviewees, showcasing a strong focus on it, which also resonates to consumers. Purpose was interpreted from the post to have a purpose; to communicate the brand’s story and purpose. Further, purpose was portrayed in the brand’s desire to *change the world*, in what they want to do and what decisions they have made to

save the world; a separate theme of *changing the world* was created based on the implicit analysis.

Furthermore, A, B and C right away implicitly recognized the post to convey the *brand's values*. *Functionality* emerged from the content analysis was also mentioned by B implicitly. A and D both acknowledge the post to communicate about sustainable design, which is one of the values of the brand and portrays *design purpose*-theme. *Sustainability* was specifically interpreted to arise from the post by A and C. D recognized the *macro*-theme by interpreting the content to discuss of sustainable consumption as well as the impact one consumer can have with their consumption choices, showcasing *consumers' power*-theme. B indicated the decreasing of consumption that is a *macro*-theme. Lastly, B, C and D all recognized the *celebrity*-theme by how the post represented a person that shares the same values as the brand and acts as a brand ambassador. They describe Meeri to advance the brand's values together with the brand and Meeri to be determined and pondering in the picture. They further recognize Meeri to have a gaze into the future with a determined mind, symbolizing the brand's *purpose* and motivation to achieve it.

Additionally, other themes also emerged implicitly. All of the interviewees recognized the post to be empowering and communicating the brand's purpose by stating the following:

“...make the world a better place together” (Interviewee A)

“...join us and let's do it together” (Interviewee C)

“...by doing together we can have an impact” (Interviewee D)

These comments represent what was also interpreted in the content analysis; however, a specific theme was not assigned earlier as the theme's significance was not understood. Based on the implicit analysis, new themes *sense of community* emerging from the *purpose*-theme and *changing the world* emerging from the *customer*, *purpose* and *macro*-themes are created.

The interviewees did not agree on the text, A felt the text was clear, whereas B said the language of the text was difficult to understand and recommended to use more simple English. However, C and D agreed that the text was too long and should be shorter. Overall, all of the interviewees liked the post and said that it gave a positive feeling and a good image of the brand, also the picture was mentioned to be pleasant.

### 6.2.3 Interview analysis results – Aided memory

#### *Consumer Perspective*

All four interviewees agree that post 2 has a *consumer* perspective, it communicates sustainability issues that concern consumers, touches the everyday life of consumers and it strives to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers. Issues of concern to consumer according to the interviewees were the changes and impact and individual can make (i.e. *consumers' power*), *multifunctionality* of the product, *sustainability* as a trend, the brand's mission, overconsumption and climate anxiety representing *macro* perspectives, and sustainable consumption. C specifies that this post does have a customer perspective but not as much as Post 1, since this post has a brand perspective.

The post touches the everyday life of consumer by speaking about the power each individual has to make a change, the changes consumers can make in their everyday life, the everyday pondering consumers need to do of their own meaning as consumers, by encouraging consumers to make small, good deeds to *save the planet* and by encouraging sustainable consumption. Interviewee A points out the encouragement to sustainable consumption and to making small, good deeds to be interpreted from these two convincing and clear messages: “Our mission is to discover new purpose for abandoned resources, essentially trash.” and ” A single person by themselves can't change the world, but together many actions create an impact.”. Again, C sees the brand perspective to be communicated by

“by buying our products you will support our values, but only if you buy”  
(Interviewee C)

Further, fitting sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers, B and D feel that this is clearly what the post intends as the it communicates the purpose of each individual and the necessity of their own will to be sustainable in order to actually behave sustainably, adding that consumers as the brand

“must believe in their own purpose” (Interviewee B)

C receives negative associations from the post as she feels the post to encourage consumption, whereas B and D receive messages related to the *purpose* of the brand and the consumers, the impact and power of individuals’ decisions and behavior, receiving much more positive message that is aligned with the values of the brand. To conclude, the post clearly has a strong consumer perspective by communicating sustainability issues of concern to consumers with macro issues of sustainability, consumers’ power-theme and sustainability-theme. Whereas the everyday life of consumes may be touched with the consumers’ power, changing the world, sustainability and consumer themes as well as communicating consumers’ power, will and purpose to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers.

#### *Inspire Sustainable Mindset and Encourage Sustainable Consumption*

All four interviewees agreed the post stimulates a sustainable mindset and encourages sustainable consumption. This is interpreted from the good combination of picture and text, the determination shown in the picture, with the brand’s perspective and devotion to sustainability, the inspiration Meeri provides, and the overall motivational nature of the post which makes it overall successful. Showcasing that inspiration and encouragement may be conveyed with the *celebrity, purpose, good combo of picture and text*, as well as motivational content. D mentioned the post to lack tangible advice, but this not necessary in the post. B notices the post to encourage to sustainability via the methods of social media, in other words encouraging to follow Meeri.

#### *The aspects of Sustainability and Wellbeing*

All three interviewees B, C and D agree that the post inspires to consider the effects of consumption to the wellbeing of the society and environment, B and C also agree that it inspires to consider one's own wellbeing, however D does not. The wellbeing of the individual is conveyed with the decreasing of consumption (i.e. *macro*-theme) and from the inspiration to be like Meeri in the picture (i.e. *celebrity*-theme), determined and wellbeing. The wellbeing of society was conveyed with the decreasing of consumption and how every small action of consumers' matter and have a big impact together (i.e. *consumers' power* and *macro*-themes). The wellbeing of environment was communicated through the picture that the consumption of individuals affects the environment and from the recycled material used to produce the product, representing yet again *consumers' power*-theme but also the *trash*-theme. C interpreted all three types of wellbeing from the inspirational story of the brand. Whether the post speaks about the economic aspect of sustainability, C and D did not see that it did, whereas B interpreted the encouragement to decreasing consumption (i.e. *macro*-theme) also to refer to economic sustainability. Indicating that the *macro*- and *consumers' power*-themes are rather useful in conveying of the different aspects of sustainability and wellbeing.

### *Rational Arguments*

B, C and D all felt the content is convincing and reliable, since it is clear and gives a wholesome picture, it portrays a positive Finnish celebrity to give inspiration, and it portrays Finnish elements such as the location in the picture, the Finnish nature, the determined Finnish woman and the people tagged in the photo. The justifications thus point out themes from the implicit analysis: *Finnish brand*, *celebrity* and *transparency*. Even though B views the post reliable, she highlights the text to be trying too hard, making her doubt if the brand has something to hide.

B and D did view the post to communicate benefits for consumers from buying the brand's products, whereas A and C did not, this is since the interviewees perceive the benefits differently. A and C do not view the post trying to sell any products, which is why benefits of the products are not conveyed, D agrees, however feels benefits of the brand are conveyed by the small deeds individuals make that together create larger impact and

“by consuming our brand, you will support these benefits we mention here”  
(Interviewee C)

Benefits from purchasing are also perceived as the following:

“furthering sustainable thinking...multifunctionality...increased versatility of a bag can limit the need to consumer more...valuing purposeful and sustainable consumption” (Interviewee A)

All four interviewees recognized the post to communicate the brand’s vision and actions of sustainability. C already mentioned implicitly that the brand explains its mission of sustainability, explains the actions they want to make and what kind of decisions they have made to *make the world better*. Both A and D agree that the utilization of *trash* to make new products is a concrete sustainability action, whereas B feels the actions they communicate are decision making, the ones making the decisions and the usage of a *celebrity* as a brand ambassador. D explains well that the vision is to focus on the *purpose* and that way make a difference.

To summarize, content may be perceived reliable when it is clear, utilizes a celebrity to represent the brand and explains of the Finnish qualities of the brand and with transparency. A content that is seen to try too hard can be interpreted to be unreliable. Whereas rational arguments as benefits from sustainable purchase may be benefits related to the product or to the brand. Sustainable vision may be conveyed with the *purpose* and *chancing the world* -theme, whereas sustainable actions may be conveyed with the *celebrity* and *trash*-themes.

### *Emotional Appeal*

A, B and C would receive warm glow from purchasing the brand’s products based on this post, however D states she would not buy the brand’s products based on this post since the post is not trying to sell or promote a product. D would only look at Meeri’s profile and maybe follow her but not buy. A and C receives warm glow based on the text, as it is

“a praise for the sustainability of the brand” (Interviewee C)

“...gives a feeling that I am part of something bigger” (Interviewee A)

These comments demonstrate themes *sustainability* and *sense of community*. B receives warm glow based on the picture, that with this purchase she has done something to prevent climate change and can thus be under the sun like Meeri in the picture (*celebrity*-theme). Whether they would receive self-expressive benefits B and C gave the same answer as to post 1, and the interviewer did not ask this question from D as she already answered she would not buy based on this post.

All four interviewees agreed that the post conveys a strong emotional connection towards nature. C and D’s emotional connection is based on both on the *nature* and earthy tones depicted in the picture and from the text of the *power individuals* have with their decisions and from the re-usage of materials (i.e. *trash*). A receives emotional connection based on the re-usage of trash and how this benefits nature and animals living in nature, whereas B receives it from the nature depicted in the picture and the mental image it gives of a Finnish summer day.

B, C and D agree the post does not evoke negative emotions. All agree that the post has a positive viewpoint to the matter and a positive approach, the only thing that is brought into a negative light is consumption itself, according to B, which is naturally aligned with the *values of the brand*. C specifies that the positive approach is seen from captions such as

“we believe...this journey” (Interviewee C)

To summarize, warm glow may be evoked with conveying a sense of community, with communicating the brand’s sustainability and by using celebrity as inspiration. Self-expressive benefits may be evoked with if the brand is perceived to be known by the public, if not then by sharing the *values* and story of the brand with friends, and emotional connection to nature with *nature* imagery, *consumers’ power* and *trash*-themes. Positivity to content may be created with certain narrative elements such as choice of words, whereas negative emotions may be utilized as long as the target for negativity is aligned with the brand values.

### *Feeling of Empowerment*

All four interviewees agreed the post to evoke a feeling of empowerment. D and A highlight the feeling of empowerment to be conveyed from the last chapter that speaks about the change every consumer can make and the power each consumer has, showcasing *consumers' power*-theme. B acknowledges the usage of mental images to support empowerment. A, B and C agree the post to convey that by buying the brand's products the consumer could make an impact to sustainability since the products are made from recycled materials, trash, and by buying the brand's products one would be part of the brand's purpose supporting the consumer to believe that one's own actions matter, falling under *changing the world, consumers' power, sense of community, purpose* and *trash*-themes. C indicates empowerment to be conveyed in the post's last chapter. D disagrees and does not necessarily feel the impact from buying the brand's products as the post encourages and empowers generally to a sustainable lifestyle, not specifically empowerment through the brand. Overall, the post is seen empowering by all of the interviewees, however the way they are empowered differ per consumer, demonstrating also that content with a connection to the brand is connected to empowerment towards the brand particularly.

B, C and D agree that the post does convey what Meeri Koutaniemi has done regarding sustainability, as Meeri is also a consumer but only one, however C and D highlight that the post does not convey additionally what other consumers have done. B feels that conveying the sustainable actions of this celebrity, it will inspire consumers to act sustainably as well, falling under the *celebrity*-theme.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

B, C and D feel that the content is transparent since the first chapter clearly explains what the brand is, how they operate, what is their *purpose* and how they advance it, who is the person in the picture as well as by tagging all the background information of the campaign to the post giving them credit. All three also feel the information to be pleasant and told in a positive way, however they do not feel they receive useful information. They feel they did not learn anything new from the post, expect that Meeri is the new brand ambassador. C adds that as sustainability is a trend nowadays



and discussed vastly in the media, consumers know about the subject somewhat a lot making it difficult for a brand to discuss sustainability in an interesting and useful way. Regarding sustainability all the interviewees recognized that the post conveys information about the materials used to make the products, trash, thus falling under the *trash*-theme, however no other information of the production is given. Except, B states that the post informs that the Research & Development -phase is important especially regarding decision making.

Regarding authenticity all interviewees feel the post is aligned with the values, vision and strategy of the brand. D specifies that the post communicates the *brand's values* with *multifunctionality*, recycling of materials and reusing old materials, *trash*. The interviewees also felt the post strives to align the brand values with consumer values. C and D agree the brand is explaining their values in the beginning from their own perspective, however they explain how each individual can act according to that value making it relatable. All interviewees also agreed that the brand seems to convey its own, authentic values. C and D acknowledge sustainability to be a prevailing trend which is why the whole brand could be seen following that trend but as one knows the brand's story and *purpose*, they know the values are authentic, as is the post. A acknowledges that authenticity comes from the way the text is written, that it is inspiring and by bringing a *sense of community*. Overall, this post is viewed by the interviewees as highly authentic.

The interviewees have differing opinions of the interactivity of the content. Interactivity is encouraged by tagging the partners into the post, highlighting the sustainability of consumers, highlighting decision-making and by stating

“together we can change the world” (Interviewee B)

However, these are not direct encouragements to interactivity but interpretations from the content that may encourage it. B, C and D all feel the post encourage cooperation with consumers and the brand. Both B and C specifies the post to

“somehow ask to join to the sustainability movement” (Interviewee C)

Thus, conveying to together make a change. D feels cooperation coming from the tagging. B feels the post encourages consumers to share their value in social media and find their own purpose, whereas D feels the post encourages both online and offline action. In the online world the post encourages to familiarize with the person tagged in the photo and in offline world to think about one's own actions and choices and by highlighting the impact each person can have, without giving concrete ideas to act.

To summarize, transparency may be communicated with purpose-theme, with clear, open and explanatory text as well as with tagging. To receive useful information according to consumers they may need to receive new information. Authenticity may be conveyed with communicating the brand values, sense of community and with inspiring text. A consumer perspective to the brand values may be created by making the values actionable and relatable. To give a perception that the brand values are authentic, communicating the brand's purpose helps.

#### 6.2.4 Summary of post 2

Overall, all of the interviewees liked the post and said that it gave a positive feeling and a good image of the brand. The following themes were implicitly interpreted from post 2 by the interviewed consumers: purpose, functionality, design purpose, celebrity, macro and sustainability. The brand was interpreted to be empowering, determined and want to create *a sense of community*. Some disagreement did appear in relation to the text of the post, one felt the text was clear and another it to use too difficult English, whereas two of the interviewees felt the text was too long which would prevent them from reading it. The main focus of the post, *purpose* which is one of the carrying *values of the brand* has both positive and negative contributions.

### 6.3 Post 3 results

#### 6.3.1 Content analysis results

According to the content analysis, the main focus of post 3 (Appendix 5) is *nature* and *product*, as the picture clearly depict a product in the midst of nature. The other

main themes emerged from the analysis are *transparency, narrative, brand values, design purpose and macro*. The *narrative* -theme is present both in the picture and the text, which support each other. The picture portrays a reflection from water and showcases the product amidst nature, whereas the text starts with “what’s behind the reflection?”, creating a bridge between the text and picture as well as a focus on the *product* through a mental image and a metaphor. *Transparency* is interpreted both from the picture and the text as the text clearly mentions the DNA Transparency concepts of the brand but also the clear water in the picture supports the mental image of transparency, which is one of the *brand values*. Moreover, the fact that the post promotes the future stories the brand will share of the artisans also supports transparency. *Design purpose* is also communicated with the DNA Transparency concept; the designs they make, and the value chain of the products is transparent, which is then taken into consideration in the production.

In addition to focusing on the value transparency the post mentioned other *brand values* in the text “love and respect for the things you own, the people around you, as well as our environment”. The picture supports the values of respecting *nature* and the things you own as the product is portrayed in the picture gracefully and carefully placed into the wooden branch encouraging respect towards it. Moreover, respect towards nature is depicted from the clear, fresh nature image. The *macro* -theme is interpreted from the text, mainly from the last sentence conveying the values of the brand that are tied to a macro perspective, the values do not focus on merely the brand itself but they are of universal significance relating to the environment, society and possessions of people.

### 6.3.2 Interview analysis results – Implicit

The following themes of the content analysis also emerged from the implicit section: *product, nature, brand values, transparency, narrative and macro*, whereas design purpose did not emerge. Additionally, the following themes emerged from the implicit results: *sustainability, humanity and Finnish brand*. Further, the implicit results resulted in certain themes where the interviewees had differing opinions: does the post awake trust, image of the brand, deepening the brand story / focusing on competitors and picture.

The theme *product* arose from the implicit results, however largely in a different manner as in the content analysis. The *product*-theme arose from the picture similarly to the content analysis, however three of the four interviewees stated they had difficulties noticing the product from the photo initially as the *picture* was disorienting, unclear and did not support the text. B wanted to showcase the product more clearly in the picture, and C would have wanted the picture to represent the artisans of the product. However, D does understand the metaphorical meaning of picture and its connection to the text.

“When I look at it more closely, I understand it has the clear surface of water and a reflection, and I am tempted to break the surface of water and dive in.”  
(Interviewee D)

This comment by D truly showcases the *narrative*-theme’s effect on consumers at its best. Utilizing a story or a metaphor to resonate the *brand’s values* to the consumer and awaken emotions and mental images in the consumer. With the caption:

“encouraging to look beyond the surface, which is a good thing” (Interviewee A)

A pointed out the *narrative*-element from the content, however he did not realize the metaphorical connection of the text to the picture, nor did B or C.

All four interviewees interpreted *transparency* from the post; the brand is communicating the value chain’s transparency, encouraging others to be transparent, they strive towards full transparency and their intention to develop transparency is by telling the stories of their skilled artisans. According to A, the value chain’s transparency is an important matter, whereas B points out that the brand may affect the *transparency* of the whole value chain. B, C and D all noticed the *nature*-theme from the post. D described how the picture depicts a Finnish lakeside view conveying closeness to nature, whereas B comments that now the product is brought into the correct environment (nature) and thus it communicates the values of the brand, unlike post 1. Regarding theme *brand values*, D recognizes from the text the caption where Lovia tells their values, already cited earlier. C also mentions the post to convey of respect and nature, which are one of the brand values. As explained

above these values itself have a macro perspective which is why this same comment by D relates to the *macro*-theme.

D described the picture to have a Finnish lakeside view and Finnish colors, which showcase the *Finnish brand*-theme. C describes how the post conveys of *humanity*, which D supports by interpreting the brand to view their employees important and wanting to tell more about them. *Sustainability* was yet another theme to emerge from the analysis, mentioned by A and C, especially A explained how the post is conveying the brand's sustainability and that they are praising themselves of being a sustainable brand operating sustainably. C mentions that the nature depicted in the picture awakens thoughts of sustainability.

There are some differing views arising from the interviewees. C thinks the post is trying to *deepen the story behind the brand*, whereas A felt the intention of the post was to especially encourages to dive deeper into the competitors of Lovia, which A sees improper and to evoke mistrust towards Lovia. This perception was received from here: "Instead of just taking in what the first layer offers, we always want to encourage you to dive deeper." This evoked mistrust in A, whereas the openness of Lovia's value chain and their desire to share the stories of the makers evoked trust in D. Overall, A saw the post negative and suggested to even delete the post, whereas C saw the post positive based on the text and D saw the post positive, clear and good, demonstrating the post to evoke mixed feelings in consumers.

### 6.3.3 Interview analysis results – Aided memory

#### *Consumer Perspective*

Some disagreement emerged regarding if the post has a consumer perspective. C does not think the post covers sustainability issues of concern to consumers instead the post has a strong brand perspective more than post 2, the only consumer perspective in the post is when they suggest if the consumer is willing to hear more of the brand and their story, which C believes is used to build brand loyalty. A and B both view the value chain's transparency an important issue for them and therefore an issue of concern to consumers. B and D thinks the post wants to show care

towards others by telling about the skilled artisans behind the products (i.e. *humanizing the brand*) inspiring consumers to think about it, which D thinks showcases the consumer perspective as does the sentence: “generate love and respect for the things you own, the people around you, as well as our environment”. However, C and D do not think the post touches the everyday life of consumers as the thoughts presented in it would not change or affect the everyday life of consumers according to C. Contrary, B sees a connection to everyday life as the post encourages to value the daily things in one’s life and to love and value the things you own and the environment.

All four interviewees feel that the post strives to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers. A and D feel the post is indeed trying to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers as it particularly encourages to “look beyond the mere surface and you may be amazed by what you find”, which applies to everything one owns, similarly as the post encourages to *transparency* and to respect the *environment*. B feels the post encourages consumers to consider all the effects one purchase may have and to understand this they need to know where the product comes from, representing the *macro*-theme.

To summarize, the consumer perspective arises from the *transparency* of value chain, *humanizing* the brand, by encouraging to love and respect the things you own, others around you and the environment, and lastly to consider all the effects one purchase may have, showcasing *consumers’ power*-theme. According to interviewees the post strives to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers by highlight these above-mentioned issues.

#### *Inspire Sustainable Mindset and Encourage Sustainable Consumption*

All four interviewees were in consensus that the post both stimulates a sustainable mindset and encourages sustainable consumption. A and B state the stimulation of sustainable mindset be conveyed in the text, B specifying the reason to be clear justification into why *transparency* is important without any attempt to oversell or push the idea. C and D identified “We hope this way to generate love and respect for the things you own, the people around you, as well as our environment” to somehow

stimulate a sustainable mindset and to be the gentle encouragement towards sustainable consumption. D clarifies the stimulation arising from the awakened interest towards one's own possessions and their potential *sustainability*. A feels encouragement towards sustainable consumption due to the brand being a sustainable actor that reveals their value chain and show the actual humans behind their products, bringing the makers close to the consumer showcasing *humanity*-theme. To summarize, the stimulation of sustainable mindset and encouragement to sustainable action may be communicated with a consumer perspective by connecting the issues to the lifestyle of consumers, with transparent communications of the brand and its operations, with stating the brand's goal and hopes for sustainability directly in the post as well as with humanizing the brand.

#### *The aspects of Sustainability and Wellbeing*

If the content communicates of wellbeing of the individual, community and environment, the interviewees had differing opinions. C recognized the post's last sentence to convey of the wellbeing of individuals, society and environment, whereas B and D recognize the wellbeing of the environment to be conveyed in the picture as the product is displayed in balance with *nature*, and the wellbeing of society is covered when telling about the value chain and the makers of the products, who are part of the society thus representing *humanity*-theme. B adds that if one buys the brand's product, they would support the makers which would also support the society, moreover B sees individual wellbeing being supported by being able to help others, the artisans, (i.e. *humanity*-theme), thus supporting also the economic sustainability of the whole value chain financially and by supporting the makers' employment as seen by B and C. Indicating that environment's wellbeing may be communicated with nature imagery and individual's and society's wellbeing as well as economic sustainability may be conveyed with the *humanity*-theme. However, D does not interpret economic sustainability from the post. Lastly, C comments to disliking the post as the picture is annoying and text too long, C does not find the post inspiring at all, which may be that she does not understand some point of the post, also admitting the idea of the post to be good but execution bad.

#### *Rational Arguments*

The interviewees' perceptions of post 3's reliability and believability were conflicting. B and D felt the post was convincing and sound. B's justification was that the post was well-justified, and also visually appealing making it convincing. D felt the post was intriguing and would be even more reliable when she would see the stories of the skilled artisans in the Instagram feed of Lovia later on to see the *consistency*. A feels the post is not reliable due to what was explained already earlier, a brand should not encourage consumers to look more closely at its competitors and their operations. C admits to not have an opinion, the post does not awake distrust or trust, C feels the post is conflicting due to the *misaligned of the picture and the text*, she feels the post does not evoke any feelings.

A, B and C all feel the post communicates benefits for consumers from buying the brand's products, however all notice benefits that are related to the brand not the product per se. A, B and D mention benefits that arise from the *transparent* and clean value chain as for instance emotions it evokes and also benefits to the whole value chain brought by transparency. Other benefits mentioned are the value and appreciation consumers start to feel towards oneself, the environment and people around them. A specifies that the benefit of transparent and *sustainable* value chain would inspire him to recommend the brand to his friends and this way the post encourages sustainable consumption. Overall, C likes that the benefits are not directly listed in an advertisement way, but the benefits can be interpreted from the text, showcasing the *narrative*-theme. Financial benefits from buying the product are not interpreted from the post however, the post communicates financial benefit to the whole value chain with transparency and an ideological benefit to the consumers from supporting the value chain financially.

All of the interviewees agree that the post communicates the brand's sustainability vision and actions. C comments that the vision is interpretable from the post but probably it is not directly stated in it. A and D agree that the vision is to treat the employees well, to bring them close to the consumer (i.e. *humanize the brand*), and to have a *transparent* and *sustainable* value chain to operate in a sustainable manner throughout the value chain. C tells the sustainability actions are evident from the last sentence of the post regarding love and respect. D notices the sustainable actions to



be the treatment of employees, respect towards the environment and operating sustainably.

To summarize, for a post to feel convincing and sound for consumers the picture and text should support each other, the text should be well-justified and consistent with other content of the brand. Based on the results this post demonstrates the sustainability vision and actions of Lovia well, which as explained next have an impact on the emotional appeal the consumer feels towards the brand. The post also demonstrated that the communicated benefits for consumers may be connected to the brand not only on the product itself. Both the benefits and sustainable vision and actions may be communicated “between the lines”, that is *narrative* elements may be used to convey rational arguments.

### *Emotional Appeal*

All four interviewees feel that based on this post if they bought the brand’s product, they would receive warm glow, due to the transparent value chain and knowing that there are real people behind the products who benefit from the purchase and who are close to the consumer, representing themes *humanity* and *transparency*.

Whether the interviewees would receive self-expressive benefits based on this post B and C answered yes based on the same reason as mentioned for warm glow. However, A and D answered no, A based on personal reasons that he does not think about purchasing and using things in that way anymore. D explained that the feeling of wellbeing would come from inner values and feelings and when using the brand, it would add any value to her personal brand or provide self-expressive benefits as the brand is not recognizable from the products and known by the public.

Strong emotional connection to nature received conflicting feelings. C did not feel an emotional connection to nature but instead to the people behind the product. B and D comment the emotional connection to be felt from the *nature* in the picture, the blue water and sunshine, and since the product is displayed in nature conveying a connection between nature and the product. B, C and D were asked if the post evoked negative feelings and all of them answered no, except C mentioned the post

to evoke negative feelings since she did not like the picture. D describes the post to be motivational and to encourage to act and dive deeper into the products one owns.

To summarize, warm glow and self-expressive benefits may be evoked with themes transparency and humanity, whereas to create self-expressive benefits it may be needed that the brand is perceived to be known by the public and that the consumer is influenced by what other consumers think about their consumption behavior. Emotional connection to nature may be evoked with nature imagery.

### *Feeling of Empowerment*

All four interviewees agree that the post evokes a personal feeling of empowerment that one's own actions matter and that by buying the brand products they would make a difference, C was a bit hesitant but said that if you start to think about it then yes, it is conveyed, but at the same time says that it is not apparent clearly and that she would not start to analyze the post that much. Justifications for the feeling of empowerment were similar for all of the interviewees, they felt that when buying the product, they would buy a *sustainable* product, would feel that they enable the employment of the makers of the product who would receive the proper pay for the job, and that the makers of the product are close to the consumer (i.e. *humanizing the brand*). Moreover, D points out the last sentence of the post to support empowerment. All the interviewees also agreed that the post did not convey what other consumers have already made to support sustainability. Indicating that the feeling of empowerment may be created with humanizing the brand and communicating of its sustainability.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

B, C and D all agree that the content is *transparent*, since the text is well-justified, it mentions the word sustainability few times and especially to be transparent once the brand shares the stories they promise to share in this post. To increase transparency C would change the picture to have the makers of the product portrayed in it (i.e. showcasing *humanity*). If the post communicates of the sourcing, manufacturing and distribution of the product, the interviewees have differing opinions. A feels yes

since the post encourages to familiarize oneself with the whole value chain, B feels it communicates of the value chain but not of the materials of the product, C feels it does communicate about them but not how the product is made instead it communicates that they will tell about it later with the stories, lastly D states the post does not actually tell anything about the product but conveys that the materials of the product are in harmony with nature, since the product is portrayed in the picture amidst *nature*.

All interviewees also felt the post had useful information and was appealing. They did agree the information relating the production and makers of the products was useful however they at the same time feel they did not receive new information. B and C felt the post was pleasant, D saw the picture very pleasant and matching well with the text, D especially likes the metaphor between the picture and the text, which brings the two elements well together. This was something the other interviewees did not realize, and perhaps the reason why they felt the picture to be confusing and why C does not like the picture. Demonstrating the potential effects of using *narratives*.

Each interviewee had their own opinion of whether the post tries to align the brand's values with consumers' values. A feels the issue is contradictory, as there is a positive aspect to encourage consumers to dive deeper and a negative aspect to encourage consumer to examine their competitors. Moreover, the post made A feel that if he would buy the product, he would be above others which A hopes is not a brand value nor something they want to convey. B feels the post does try to align the brand's values with consumers' values by justifying why *transparency* is needed and why it is a good thing, encouraging consumers to follow transparency. C comments not specifically, maybe the last sentence tries to align the values. D feels yes, this is exactly what the post strives to do by encouraging consumers to dive deeper. What values the brand strives to align is the respect towards environment and the society and this is something the consumer can then also respect. All four interviewees however did feel the post is aligned with the brand's values, vision and strategy. D specifies that the post is aligned with the values in a very concrete manner by telling the stories of the makers that is in accordance with the value transparency as well as respecting *nature* that is conveyed in the picture especially.

Whether the brand is communicating its authentic values or following current trends the interviewees had conflicting opinions. D and B agree that the brand is portraying its true values. D explains receiving a believable feeling from the post and justifies that if the brand would not be following its authentic values then it would not be able to tell the stories of its makers. D receives a feeling that the brand truly wants to be *sustainable* and *transparent* in their operations and they also want to prove it in order to evoke trust towards the brand to be honest and true for the consumers. B states that since the own values are well explained, the brand is following its own true values. A feels the brand is utilizing a trend by shifting the focus to their competitors and encouraging their examination. C feels brand is portraying both own values and following a trend. C feels the brand is following a trend by trying to *humanize the brand*. C continues that the text feels authentic, but the picture does not,

“if they want to bring genuine feeling then bring genuine people to the picture, now the post feels commercial since it has a product in it.” (Interviewee C)

B, C and D were asked if the content encourages interactivity and all of them mentioned the sharing of stories and the encouragement to keep following and reading the stories, which B and D felt to be encouragement for interactivity unlike C who felt the content is a monolog rather than dialog. However, all three agreed that the post strives to create a relationship with the reader as it encourages to follow and read the stories that are shared later. They also feel that it encourages to act in the online environment. B feels it encourages to share positive sustainable things in social media, C and D feel it encourages to follow the brand to read the stories, also D continues that the post encourages to dive deeper into product and brands which encourages action in the offline world as well. At the end D wanted to add that she noticed the DNA Transparency concept in the text and especially the DNA-text caught her attention as it is written in capital letters and that it refers to human DNA, showcasing both the *transparency*- and *humanity*-themes.

To summarize, a transparent post according to the results is well-justified, consistent with other content of the brand and clearly tells the message it wants to convey. Transparency is also connected to the language used in the content, as the usage of narratives and metaphors in the text may be cause confusion instead of insight. Here

it was also indicated that useful information necessarily does not require receiving new information, contrary to what post 2 suggested. The authenticity of social media content is supported by transparency, explanatory and well-justified text as well as the fit between the text and the picture, to increase the authenticity of a brand it may be beneficial to act in accordance of the brand value and showcase it with tangible action online, for instance by sharing the stories of the products' makers. Interactivity of a brand in social media may be communicated by asking the consumers to wait for future content and thus encouraging the building of a longer relationship with consistent content.

#### 6.3.4 Summary of post 3

Post 3 was able to convey the following values implicitly to the interviewed consumers: *transparency, sustainability, nature, humanity, Finnish brand and macro*. The post did however have some challenges, regarding the focus of the post to be on the brand itself or to encourage the examination of their competitors regarding transparency, whether the post evoked trust or mistrust and positive or negative emotions. Lastly, the picture and its metaphorical meaning was not clear to all of the interviewees but evoked confusion in some of them. Overall, the post evoked contradicting emotions in consumers.

### 6.4 Post 4 results

#### 6.4.1 Content analysis results

The content analysis revealed the main focus of post 4 (Appendix 6) to be *nature*, which is imminent from the picture of the post. The main themes emerged from the content analysis are *purpose, brand values, macro, narrative and celebrity*. The *purpose*-theme is interpreted both from the text and the picture. The text includes a quote, which is seen inspirational and encouraging to consumers with the combination of the text and the peaceful, Finnish nature in the picture. The post is seen to encourage consumers to follow the same purpose as the brand, that is to encourage sustainable consumption. The text gives concrete advice how to focus on

consumers choices without actually calling it consumption, however consumption is mentioned in the quote.

*Brand values*-theme is connected to the purpose, the values of the brand are interpreted again from the whole content. The picture depicts the brand appreciation to, and respect of nature and the text tells of their value to be sustainable and encourage sustainable consumption, as well as their value of respecting others. The respect towards others is interpreted from the caption “Every decision we make creates a reflection on someone else, concerning other too”. The brand’s value of sustainable consumption is conveyed in the text: “let’s be mindful and critical in our choices and consciously strive to create a positive impact of the other side”. This last value also justifies the *macro*-theme as sustainable consumption is a global issue, giving the post a macro perspective to sustainability instead of merely a brand perspective. *Narrative*-theme comes from the language of the text, yet again the text utilizes metaphors and has a story-like structure. Metaphorical expressions in the text are for instance “the other side” and “creates a reflection on someone else”. The *celebrity*-theme comes naturally from the usage of Emma Watson’s quote in the post, most probably with the intention of drawing more attention to the post.

#### 6.4.2 Interview analysis results – Implicit

The implicit results from the interviews resulted in almost all the same themes as in the content analysis: *nature, purpose, brand values, narrative, macro, and celebrity*. Additional themes emerged from the analysis were *sustainability, consumers’ power, Finnish brand*, too generic picture and stronger connection to the brand. *Nature*-theme is interpreted only from the picture implicitly, D describes how the image awakens a mental image of being on a Finnish cabin alone and quiet on the side of the lake at dusk, giving a feeling of appreciation towards nature, simultaneously also showcasing the *Finnish brand*-theme. *Purpose*-theme was interpreted by all of the interviewees, not as a term as such but from the content that describes the brand’s purpose. Every interviewee recognized the post to communicate about the *power* and effect each *individual* has, the power every decision hold and how everyone can make an impact. They say the post to convey

“criticalness in one’s choices” (Interviewee C)

“think twice before buying something” (Interviewee A)

These comments connect to the *macro*-theme as the interviewees recognized the larger effects of each decision, understanding the macro perspective of small everyday decisions. A, C and D describes how a purchase can have large effects:

“we have a chance to affect so that the view in the picture will look exactly the same in the future” (Interviewee C)

“everything you do has an effect, ...every consumer can change the world by considering and paying attention to what they buy” (Interviewee D)

These comments nicely showcase the *consumers’ power*-theme. At the same time, the above-mentioned aspects represent the *brand values*. Additionally, the interviewees also recognized *sustainability*-theme from the post, saying the post communicates of the brand’s sustainability, conveying

“sustainability’s effect to nature and to the physical environment we live in” (Interviewee B)

This demonstrates that the interviewees understand that sustainability is important for the brand and that the content communicates the effects of sustainability.

The *celebrity*-theme was discussed also, B and C commented that they like quotes, B especially Emma Watson quotes, whereas D commented the matter more profoundly. Instead, D would have wished for more connection to the brand in the post as now the only connection is the hashtags, #loviacollection and #fashionrevolution. In fact, B mentioned the same issue and also hoped more connections to the brand. Contrary, C feels the post does bring the brand’s viewpoint to the post with the text but remains wondering if the brand should be more strongly present in the post. Further, *narrative*-theme was recognized by A as he mentioned the post to be skillfully written.

Otherwise the interviewees felt the post was positive and gentle, further A felt that it evoked strong feelings and that the picture was aimed to make consumers feel guilty. There were a lot of opinions regarding the picture, A feels it blames consumers and wanted it to even strongly blame consumers by having a picture of clear water, that is endangered nowadays. However, the others felt the picture was such that anybody could have taken it, meaning the whole post could have been made by a normal consumer, giving it a consumer perspective and distancing it from the brand. Furthermore, B wondered even why the post had been published since it felt fake and was so general that any consumer could have made a similar one.

#### 6.4.3 Interview analysis results – Aided memory

##### *Consumer Perspective*

The interviewees were rather unified in their opinions of post 4's consumer perspective, all of the interviewees recognized the post strives to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers, everyone except B agreed the post also touches the everyday life of consumers and C and D understood the post contains sustainability issues of concern to consumers. Instead of consumer perspective A noticed the post to have a larger perspective to sustainability, which he acknowledges to lead to the brand's product as well thus supporting also the consumer perspective. B feels the post lacks tangible aspects, the post represents the following idea,

“it is important to do important things to create positive influence, but it does not tell how or what. The idea should be taken further” (Interviewee B).

The comments of A and B showcase the *macro*-theme in this post. Whereas, D feels the post specifically to push the responsibility of sustainability to the consumer by stating that every purchase decision matter (showcasing *consumers' power*) and the decisions can be used to *change the world*. C agrees by stating that the post has a consumer, Emma Watson, telling other consumers what to do, in addition to the brand communicating its message from a consumer perspective. D comments the content's picture:



“it is just a basic picture that anybody could have taken” (Interviewee D).

This comment showcases the same impressions as B mentioned already implicitly.

The post touches the everyday life of consumer according to A since it conveys that with everyday choices, we can impact climate change and that it is important to be even more careful in what we buy, referring to mindful consumption which is a *macro*-theme. D and C had the same justifications, D explains how the post talks about purchase decisions and interprets it that we, consumers, do make purchase decisions in our everyday life all the time, which gives the post a perspective into consumers' everyday life. B criticized this perspective and stated the post being very generic and a popular format used in social media, which was the only reason it could be seen to have a perspective into the everyday life of consumers. However, all four interviewees agreed that the post strives to fit sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers as it emphasized the *power of consumers*, their decisions and how the decisions impact sustainability starting from the everyday behavior which then shape the lifestyle of the consumer. To summarize, a consumer perspective may be conveyed with *consumers' power, changing the world, macro* and *celebrity*-themes.

#### *Inspire Sustainable Mindset and Encourage Sustainable Consumption*

All four interviewees agree post 4 to stimulate a sustainable mindset, A confirms that both text and picture together stimulate sustainability, whereas D points out that the stimulation comes from the text where it emphasizes the acknowledgement of *sustainability* in every decision. B feels the post stimulates sustainability as other mass media does but does not stimulate a consumer that is more aware of sustainability issues. B is the only one who does not see the post to encourage sustainable consumption and feels the post does not motivate her at all. Contrary everyone else feels the post indeed does encourage sustainable consumption, A specifies this post to do it best out of the four. D notices the text to have a direct encouragement to act in the form of “let’s”, and C feels the *picture and text to make a good combination* that together encourage sustainable consumption. Indicating that encouragement to sustainable consumption may be direct or more subtle so that it is interpreted from the text and picture.

### *The aspects of Sustainability and Wellbeing*

Does the post deal with the wellbeing of the individual, society and environment? Again, B feels no. B's initial reaction is no but she also says that if one starts to analyze it then the positive influence of every decision is connected to the wellbeing, but B does not want to analyze the post that much. A, C and D agree that all three levels of wellbeing are present in the post. C feels environment's wellbeing to be conveyed the strongest and mainly conveyed from the picture. From the text, C interprets the wellbeing of the individual and society, realizing that *the picture and the text create a good combination* that enables the communication of all three aspects of wellbeing. D specifies that individual's wellbeing same as society's wellbeing is conveyed in how everything one does affects others and vice versa, the idea that positivity grows positivity. D feels the picture particularly wants to communicate the wellbeing of environment and that that is something the brand wants to highlight, since based on the text the picture could have had for instance people in it but instead, they chose a picture that represent only nature. Regarding the third level of sustainability in addition to societal and environmental, economic wellbeing, B and D feels that it is not conveyed in the post. C sees that as the post speaks about consumption it is connected to economic wellbeing as well even though that is not directly mentioned in the post. To summarize, a good combination of picture and text may be an efficient method to communicate of the aspects of sustainability and wellbeing.

### *Rational Arguments*

When asked if B, C and D found the content of post 4 convincing and sound, the answers were conflicting. B gave a direct negative answer that the post has not seen either of them. C merely answered yes without justification and D gave a long explanatory answer which entailed that the post does not contain any information per se, but it is just a beautiful picture and a beautiful quote. Further, it does not awake trust or credibility towards the brand, nor does the choice of Emma Watson feel credible since D does not know if Emma Watson is especially sustainable person.

If the post communicated benefits for the consumer from buying the brand's products, B and D felt it did not and C saw that the benefits could be interpreted from the post, but they are not directly stated, showcasing the *narrative*-theme. B and D both notice the post not having a connection to the brand and that the post does not communicate or promote any product, which is why they feel no benefits of buying are communicated. D continues that maybe some general benefits may be interpreted from the post such as be mindful of what you buy, and your behavior has an influence, demonstrating *macro* and *consumers' power*-themes. C sees the benefits to arise from interpretation that by buying the brand's products the consumer will support the *values of the brand*, but again the post does not encourage the consumer to buy anything.

Whether the post communicates the sustainability vision and actions of the brand, the perceptions of the interviewees were conflicted. A saw that the post probably does convey the brand's sustainability vision, but since A was not introduced to the vision before the interview like the others were, he cannot be sure. B saw that neither the vision or actions are conveyed and continues that somehow the idea that by doing sustainable and good actions every day is conveyed, but it falls short and should be elaborated on. C on the other hand acknowledges that both the vision and some actions are conveyed in the post but does not specify how. D explains that the sustainability vision communicated is to be mindful in our consumption and make careful purchase decisions and not to buy fast fashion without careful deliberation, showcasing the *consumers' power* and *macro*-themes. However, D sees that the post does not communicate any sustainability actions of the brand since the post does not go into any detailed information.

To summarize, the themes *consumers' power* and *macro* may be used to convey the brand's sustainability vision, whereas the communication of sustainability actions may require detailed and practical information. Further, benefits from sustainable purchase may be communicated with *consumers' power*, *macro* and *brand values*-themes. Whereas for a post to feel reliable and convincing it may need to consist practical and detailed information.

*Emotional Appeal*

A and C feels the post would give them warm glow and whereas B and D do not. C explains the warm glow to be received form the whole entity of the post, and moreover as the post talks about the importance of decision making and then when buying the product, the consumer would have made just the right decision the post talks about. A continues that for the warm glow feeling it is important that the sustainability mission of the brand resonates with the consumer, A feels that Adidas' recycled plastic sneakers is an excellent example of a campaign that was able to resonate with the consumers and improve the brand image. According to A the key is to be able to differentiate from the competitors with a meaningful mission. D did not receive a warm glow feeling from the post as D feels she would not even make a purchase decision based on this post as it does not depict any product, nor does it tell how the company itself is being sustainable.

Self-expressive benefits are another means of evoking emotional appeal. The interviewees had conflicting opinions related to this. B would not receive self-expressive benefits as the post does not have a connection to the brand and thus also using the product is not in the focus of the post. C admits to probably receiving self-expressive benefits with the same justifications as with earlier posts and admits to liking the #fashionrevolution, which makes C feel that they are a part of a movement towards a better future. D actually also mentioned the #fashionrevolution in the implicit section already and described it being the only connection to the brand in the post. These represent the theme of creating a *sense of community*. D feels that this post does not provide self-expressive benefits since the post does not provide any insight into the sustainability of the brand.

A did not feel an emotional connection towards nature from the post, not even when specifically asked if the picture would bring such a feeling. B admits that it is nice to look at picture of the Finnish nature and that the picture gives a mental image of midsummer but that is all, not such a strong emotional connection is present, however this does represent the *Finnish brand*-theme. C states directly that an emotional connection is made merely based on the picture, moreover D agrees and explains how the picture conveys serenity, quietness and respect towards *nature*. D describes how it would be nice to jump into the warm lake water, and that the picture gives D a nice feeling and makes her miss summer.

The post did evoke some negative feelings in interviewee B and D. B wondered why the post was even published and felt it to be merely a post to fulfill the feed without a purpose, this surely represents negative feelings toward the content. D felt the quote by Emma Watson felt blameful toward consumers as it is stated right in the beginning of the post. D feels that if the chapters of the text would have been in the opposite order then the post would not have felt so blameful toward consumers, D does feel that the post is motivational as well and emphasizes the positive outcomes of actions.

To summarize, to evoke warm glow a connection to a product may be necessary as well as the sustainability mission resonating to the consumers, beneficial might be to highlight sustainable decision-making. To evoke self-expressive benefits a connection to the brand may be needed in the content, whereas conveying a sense of community may evoke self-expressive benefits. An emotional connection to nature may be evoked with a picture and narrative elements creating a mental image of nature.

### *Feeling of Empowerment*

A, C and D did receive a feeling of empowerment from post 4, whereas B did not, which B already mentioned this implicitly but continues here that if these kinds of posts were not so common a feeling of empowerment would have been received. C explained that empowerment was conveyed already from the quote itself but also from the rest of the text. D explains empowerment to be communicated with the text where they explain that every decision matter and that it is important to be critical and careful in our consumption choices, this makes the consumer feel that

“every small action matter” (Interviewee D).

This demonstrates the theme *consumers' power*.

However, B and D feel empowerment is not connected to the brand, meaning that by buying the brand's products one could have an impact, since the post does not have a strong connection to the brand. However, C feels the brand particularly encourages

to buy from them and that the purchase would have an impact, even though the post does not sell any product, the idea of buying from the brand is interpreted and a carrying thought in the post. B and D both noticed that the post does tell what Emma Watson has contributed to sustainability and that choosing an impartial consumer to the post may evoke inspiration in consumers. C point to the wording of the text, how it uses the word “we” which might tell what others have done, supporting the *narrative-theme*, however C admits that this is highly ambiguous. To summarize, empowerment may be evoked with consumers’ power-theme, further, a connection to the brand may be required for the sustainable purchase to feel empowering and impactful. Narrative-theme may be used to convey empowerment.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

B, C and D were asked if the content is transparent and open, everyone feels it is not, since the post feels very abstract and does not have a strong connection to the brand. The interviewees feel that as the post does not reveal basically anything of the brand, the content is not transparent. Similarly, none of them saw that the post communicated about the sourcing, production or distribution of the products. D did interpret closeness to *nature* being an important aspect to the brand and thus relate it to the production of the products, whereas C noticed the decision-making being an important aspect to the brand, which also may be connected to the production. D continued that based on the post one might think the product are manufactured in *Finland*. The interviewees had differing opinions of the usefulness and appealing nature of the post. B did not find the post either appealing or useful, A felt that no new information was gained from the post but still it was relevant and appealing. C and D saw the post very appealing, C found it useful in the sense that it was appealing but D did not find it useful since it did not provide any benefit for the reader.

B, C and D all feel the post tries to align the brand values with consumer values, B since it highlights sustainable decision-making, C due to the whole second chapter of the text and D feels the post tries to appeal to consumers. D feels the brand values are not seen from the post, but the post is very generic also representing generic values. C has the same view as she admits not being sure if the post is conveying the brand’s

values or consumer values. All four interviewees felt the post is aligned with the brand's values, vision and strategy. D highlighted the aspect of *nature* and both A and D highlighted the responsibility each consumer bears with their everyday actions to be meaningful for *sustainability*, showcasing *consumers' power*. A was the only one who felt the brand conveyed its own values but at the same time admitted that if he would be a more skeptical person more reassurance would be necessary, since the post does not talk about tangible actions the brand has done. C felt the post does convey the brand's own values but also follows a trend since listening to the customer is an important aspect of business nowadays. B and D had the same opinion, and both felt the post did not feel authentic and that the brand is following a trend instead of their own values. Both mentioned that the post is done to create awareness and get likes and comments. This impression was received since the post highlights Emma Watson so much and uses a very generic picture that anybody could have taken and use these two methods to try to get awareness. D mentioned here the same things about the generic picture and about the post being done just to have something to post, as B did already in the implicit part of the interview.

B and D felt the post is not encouraging interactivity, whereas C felt that this is encouraging interactivity the most out of all four posts. B justified as there is no direct request for communication like there was in post 1, a direct question. B admits that if the text or picture truly resonates with someone, they might be encouraged to comment something but that is all. D has the same view that the post does not contain a question or a direct encouragement to follow or comment. D hopes that the post would connect stronger to the brand and encourage to learn more about the brand. C interprets that this post has a strong *consumer* perspective and it creates *a sense of community* which then encourages interactivity, even though it does not require that everyone would actually comment to the post. C feels the post particularly encourages cooperation with the consumer, whereas B and D does not feel this way since the post does not awake interest towards the brand. D did feel the post to encourage action in the physical world by telling about the influence our everyday consumption has but the post does not encourage to online action. B and C also agree that the post does not encourage any sustainable online action.

To summarize, to evoke transparency a connection to the brand and concrete information may be needed. The true authenticity of brand may be hindered with content that is too generic and aims to get likes and comments instead of focusing on communicating the brand values. Interactivity may be encouraged with a consumer perspective and *sense of community*-theme.

#### 6.4.4 Summary of post 4

The following themes emerged from the content analysis and the implicit-section of post 4: *nature, purpose, brand values, narrative, macro and celebrity*, additionally *sustainability and consumers' power* emerged from the implicit-section. An issue with the post was that it was seen too generic and not having a connection to the brand, making some consumers feel the post was a waste for the brand. Instead of focusing on the brand, the post has a strong *macro* perspective to sustainability but is also was able to showcase the values of the brand through that lens. Overall, the interviewees felt the post was positive and gentle, however, there were a lot of opinions regarding the picture, one consumer felt it blamed consumers and could have been even more blameful, whereas the others felt the picture was so generic that anybody could have taken it, making the post lack a connection to the brand. Furthermore, one consumer wondered even why the post had been published since it felt fake and was so general that any consumer could have made a similar one.

### 6.5 Instagram results

Lastly, the interviewees were asked of their opinion of Instagram as a communications channel, whether it is convenient, and information is easily available. C feels Instagram is probably the most user-friendly channel from a content-perspective, whereas D feels Instagram is an everyday channel that is easily available. B feels that everyone uses the channel and it is used all the time, even though there is so much information that some it will go to waste. D continued that some of Lovia's posts had so long text that they are not ideal for Instagram, since consumers will not stop to read that long texts.



## 6.6 Summary of results for sustainable brand identity communications

Appendix 10 demonstrates which of the themes emerged from empirical analysis were interpreted from each social media post and in which part of the analysis. The results indicate that each post was seen to convey the themes of *brand values*, *sustainability*, *nature*, *Finnish brand* and *good combination of picture & text*. This demonstrates that the before-mentioned topics and themes are significant in Lovia's sustainable brand identity communications. The fact that brand values are interpreted from all four posts, suggests that the brand identity, which is based on brand values, indeed can be communicated to consumers and resonates to consumers via sustainable brand identity communications.

Interestingly the theme *sustainability* was not associated to the content at all by the author in the content analysis, but still the theme was associated to each post in both *implicit* and *aided memory*-sections of the interviews, demonstrating that *sustainability* is strongly perceived by consumers from Lovia's content, hence indicating sustainability to be a core aspect of the brand. The fact that sustainability did not emerge from the content analysis done by the author, it strongly supports the benefit and necessity of applying the interviews to validate the content analysis done by the author. *Nature* theme was associate to post 3 and 4 in all three analysis sections, showcasing its strong presence in the post, whereas in post 1 and 2 it was only associated when specifically asked of, indicating that portraying nature in the picture strongly communicates the theme. *Finnish brand* was associated to all posts either in the *implicit* or *aided memory*-sections, only for post 1 in both of the two sections, demonstrating it to be an element was not as strongly present as the earlier themes, however still conveyed subtly in the content. The *picture & text combination* was associated to the posts in each of the analysis sections depending on the post, showcasing that its effect may be both direct and indirect, nevertheless showcasing the combination's importance to effective communications.

Another strong theme emerged from the posts was *macro perspective*, that was interpreted in all parts of the analysis from posts 2-4, but not in post 1 as it was seen to convey a strong *product* focus. The macro perspective to sustainability is clearly one of the strongest messages Lovia conveys in its communications. Similarly, to

utilizing a good combination of *picture and text*, Lovia strongly utilized *narrative* elements in its content as it is connected to three posts strongly. Other themes associated to majority of the post (3/4) were *design purpose*, *consumer perspective*, *consumers' power* and *sense of community*, demonstrating their importance to Lovia's communications. Lastly, particular themes strongly conveyed in individual posts, meaning they were associated to 1-2 posts in many sections of the analysis, were *purpose*, *product*, *functionality*, *trash*, *celebrity*, *transparency*, *changing the world* and *humanity*. Majority of these themes actually represent the *brand values* of Lovia, indicating that Lovia tends to convey its brand values separately in specific contents. *Consumer goods* was the weakest theme as it was associated only to one post in one analysis section, showcasing a low significance overall.

## **6.7 Influence on consumers' intention to behave sustainably**

To establish whether the social media content of a sustainable brand influences consumption behavior of consumers to be sustainable the interviewees were asked if the content affected their attitude towards the brand, attitude towards sustainable consumption, norms, self-efficacy in relation to consuming sustainably, and intention to consume in a sustainable manner in the future. These questions are based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and its definition by Ajzen (1991). Lastly, the interviewees were asked how they perceive the sustainability of the brand and what they perceive the values of the brand to be based on the social media content. These two questions were asked to gain data for supporting the theoretical model of the research, more precisely to "test" empirically whether the theorized model applies.

### 6.7.1 Attitude

#### *Attitude towards the brand*

The social media content of Lovia resulted in differing attitudes in the interviewees towards the brand. Overall, the interviewees attitudes towards the brand were the following after seeing the content; A and D's attitudes were neutral whereas B and C's attitudes were positive.

B's positive attitude was however hindered by the last post, post 4 (see Appendix 6), since according to B it had no real purpose. B thinks it is important for a brand to produce high-quality content and not content without a purpose which will hinder the brand's credibility and reliability. As C felt she gained new information of the brand and liked the *narrative*-style of the content, her attitude to the brand was positively affected. She found something both positive and negative in each post but the best ones according to her were posts 2 and 4, whereas post 3's picture should have been different and in posts 1 and 2 the pictures should have supported the text better so that they elements communicate the same message. A's attitude towards the brand was conflicted based on the content, since he felt there was two good posts (2 and 4) and two bad posts (1 and 3). A's attitude was not positively supported by the content, but he reports the attitude to change from positive to basic positive, apparently meaning neutral attitude. Lastly, D received a positive feeling towards the brand, but then again reports to having a neutral attitude towards the brand, the content did not evoke negative feelings, nor did it evoke especially strong positive feelings of insight, same is reported by A who stated the content not to live up to the expectations. D's favorite posts were 2 and 3. The best post according to the interviewees was post 2, also 4 and 3 were mentioned among the best.

The interviewees reported the content to be very generic and that they would have hoped more concrete content including more concrete information of the products (e.g. price, materials used), their production phase by phase, and concrete examples how to act sustainably in everyday life. Following this need for more concrete information A reported that he did not fully get into the brand since the information was very generic, however C reported that she received more information of the brand. Perhaps this difference is due as C was already beforehand familiar with the brand and its story, whereas A did not know any detailed background information of the brand. This would indicate that the current social media content of Lovia is better suited and perhaps also intentionally aimed for consumers who already are familiar with the brand's story and purpose. C still did hope for more pictures that would convey the Finnish nature and Finnish design aspect, this was mentioned especially regarding post 1, which had a very clinical photo. D did comment however, that *nature* was very well depicted in the posts and based on that it seems to be important

to the brand, giving an opposite view to C. D would have hoped the content to portray more *humans* to give a context to the brand and its users.

#### *Attitude towards sustainable consumption*

A, B and C all reported the content to positively affect their attitude towards sustainable consumption. D reported the content to make her criticize and to stop and think about her own choices and decisions, similarly, did A state the content to make him think about sustainable consumption behavior. A did report the content to give more awareness and information of sustainable consumption, whereas C reported not receiving any new information. Perhaps this division is again due to the interviewees' differing level of knowledge of the brand as well as probably their differing level of knowledge of sustainable consumption. B justified that her attitude was positively affected since the content gave justifications into what it communicated as well as made the interviewee

“understand on a practical level how one’s behavior has an effect” (Interviewee B)

D had a contradictory opinion since she hoped to have more concrete examples in the content to make the content more relatable to the everyday life of the consumers. D reports that sustainable consumption is not a clear concept to her even after knowing this content.

B and D stated that post 3 especially positively affected their attitude towards sustainable consumption. D justified this that the picture’s metaphor that supported the same idea as the text was especially appealing, showcasing the *narrative*-theme. Post 4 supported C’s attitude especially since it created *a sense of community*,

”to do this together” (Interviewee C).

#### 6.7.2 Norms

The interviewees were asked if they feel their social environment, be that friends, family, colleagues and so on, consume sustainably and all of the interviewees gave

the same answer. Some people do and some people do not. A and B both implicitly indicated that the division is seen in the geographical location inside Finland, friends and family in the capital area pay attention to sustainability in consumption somewhat a lot, whereas friends and family in other parts of Finland, outside the capital do not pay attention to sustainable consumption, B reports that behavior may even resemble hoarding. C notices that the differences depend on the age of the person; older people are not interested in sustainable consumption, but younger people of C's age are interested and have made changes in their behavior. Other thing C reports to have an effect is the life situation of the person, if the person has enough money to consume sustainably as sustainable consumption is more expensive according to C. D states the differences among people to depend on their personal interest towards sustainability, their belief that their own actions matter as well as on their knowledge of sustainability as some do not ever think about it nor are aware of it.

None of the interviewees recognized that their descriptive norms were changed based on the content, meaning none of them felt their perception of their social environment sustainable consumption changed. Merely, the content made the interviewees consider their own consumption and its sustainability, not to reconsider their social environment's consumption. For instance, post 3 encouraged D to dive deeper and find more information and post 1 encouraged D to focus on and in the future search multifunctional products.

### 6.7.3 Self-efficacy

Whether the content affected the interviewees' self-efficacy, that is trust in their own capability to consume sustainably, the interviewees gave differing answers. A and B answered that the content supported positively their self-efficacy, whereas C stated the content not having any effect, and D reported the content to weaken their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy was supported positively by the content as the brand was interpreted to be confident of its sustainability, as it could justify its sustainable choices and leave the decision to be sustainable in the hands of the consumer without trying to oversell

or push the idea but instead show trust to the consumers own consideration, showcasing *consumers' power*. The content acted as a supporting element to the consumers self-efficacy making them feel they want to continue to improve in sustainable consumption and reassuring them that they have made good decisions so far. The posts to best support this were 2 and 3. Self-efficacy was perceived not to be influence by the content as the content did not provide any new information of sustainability to the consumer. Self-efficacy was negatively influence by the content as it made the consumer feel she does not actually know so much about sustainability and does not always remember to consider her own choices enough. This was conveyed in post 3 by the encouragement to dive deeper and in pos 4 with the blameful advice to consider one's own consumption, making the consumer feel she is not doing enough. However, the interviewee did feel that it is good that brands are using sustainability in their branding and marketing.

D admits needing support and advice on an everyday level regarding sustainable consumption. A, C and D all highlight that they would have hoped for more concrete information of the products, the production and more concrete tips and advice on sustainable consumption and to what aspects one needs to pay attention to. They wished to get for instance comparisons on why Lovia's handbag is more sustainable than another handbag, how much more sustainable it is and why, also more concrete information of the value chain and production was hoped for. This description gives an impression that the interviewees would have hoped that the brand so-to-say would have taught them about sustainable consumption and to have educated them of sustainability. This is what C told in the beginning that some other brand had already done that to her and posed this as the reason why Lovia's content did not affect her self-efficacy, since it did not provide any new information that was not already known by them. Further, even A who did feel self-efficacy to increase did hope for more concrete information.

#### 6.7.4 Intention to behave sustainably

Next, the interviewees were asked if they intent to behave sustainably in the future and if the social media content affected their intention. All of the interviewees intended to behave sustainably in the future as well and reported that they have

consumed sustainably already before. A reported the content to encourage to even more pay attention to sustainability as purchasing something and overall whether to purchase something at all, meaning the content encouraged to decrease consumption. Similarly, B reported that the content may have supported the intention to consume sustainably also in the future, and that B intends to consume as little as possible. D reports the content to encourage to consume sustainably in the future as well and to encourage to dive deeper into the issue. C reports the content not to have an impact on the intention to behave sustainably, it has already been a priority in consumption, and it is not more or less important after this content.

The interviewees reported the content to have the differing effects on their consumption behavior. Possibly next time C is purchasing an expensive bag, she will look at Lovia's profile and website, whereas B stated that she will buy only high-quality and useful product for an actual need and if there is no actual need for the purchase, the purchased item needs to provide personal joy and feeling of wellbeing, to be useful in that way. B also would in the future look for sustainable options instead of purchasing for instance from fast fashion brands. The content made D understand that even small actions matter and have an impact. For even better effects on consumption behavior the interviewees hoped the content to be more concrete and provide more practical information related to the product, brand and sustainable consumption. Moreover, C points out that the product of a brand also affects to the brand's relevancy to consumers' lives. C feel a handbag is not as a strong contribution to sustainability as not eating meat

The interviewees were also asked if based on the social media content they would purchase Lovia's products and if there would be some obstacles for this potential purchase. This was asked to indicate the potential effect the content had on the interviewee's consumption behavior. Of course, the answers to this question do not depict actual behavior as it is impossible to research with this type of study, this study may only attempt to examine the intention to consume sustainably.

B, C and D gave a positive answer that they might buy the brand's products. B specified that based on the values of the brand, they would buy the brand's products. C would buy the products based on the social media content, C does not buy handbags

based on the brand but the entity of the product and if the values of the brand matches with her own values that is only a plus. D reports that she might buy, the content did not leave her with an especially eager attitude to get to know the brand more, but she did get a positive feeling of the brand. Both D and A said that the content made them consider even strongly each purchase they make and thus also discouraging the purchase of Lovia's products. Both C and D mention that they would need to know the price of the product as the content gives an impression that the brand is expensive, and this might be an obstacle for the purchasing of their products. This obstacle could have been prevented to some extent so that the brand would have communicated that information in the content as was hoped by the interviewees as well.

#### 6.7.5 Sustainable brand identity communications

The interviewees were asked what their perception of the brand's values is. The most mentioned values were closeness to nature and respecting *nature*, *sense of community* and respecting other *people*, these two values were mentioned by three of the four interviewees. Further, *multifunctionality* and *transparency* were mentioned by two of the interviewees. Additionally, the interviewees mentioned the following values; honesty, *sustainability*, *Finnish brand*, recycling trash and careful decision-making.

The brand values Lovia presents in their website are respect towards nature, people, honesty, and the purpose of their products. The company was founded to turn around the vicious cycle of producing and consuming fashion and Lovia wants to rethink four aspects of fashion: resources, value chain, transparency and purposeful design. (Lovia, 2020a.) According to the results the values most strongly perceived from the content were Respecting Nature and Closeness to Nature, Respecting Others and A Sense of Community, Multifunctionality and Transparency. This demonstrates that Lovia's social media content was able to convey and portray their core values regarding respect towards nature and people as well as the purpose of their products through multifunctionality and transparency, which are two of the aspects Lovia wants to rethink about fashion. Additionally, the following values were also perceived from the content: Sustainability, Honesty, Recycling Trash, Honesty and



Careful decision-making. Demonstrating that the core value of respecting honesty was portrayed as well as the other aspects of their business in rethinking fashion with Recycling trash as Resources aspect and Careful decision-making part of the Purposeful design-aspect of their business and the whole mission of the company as they encourage to consider one's consumption decisions.

Regarding the interviewees' perception of the brand's sustainability, overall, they had a positive image of the brand's sustainability. D believes that the brand is truly a sustainable company, the content proved the brand wants to show who has made the products, its believable and honest, and did not give any reason to doubt the brand's authenticity. C felt the brand is serious about its sustainability and that it is a part of their business. B feel the brand has communicated their own values very well and what is their reason for being sustainable, the content is easy to approach and does not try to oversell its ideas. The values the brand says it represents are interpreted from the content as well. A does not know for sure about the sustainability of the brand, post 3 gave A the feeling that Lovia is a sustainable actor since they encourage the consumer to dive deeper. However, since there was no concrete information in the post A is a bit conflicted of the brand's sustainability. A feels the actions are missing even though the content has a lot of good.

## **6.8 Perceptions of the theoretical framework**

To further test if the theoretical framework is applicable, at the end of the interview the interviewees were asked to freely comment the model and criticize it if needed. The framework was first thoroughly introduced to the interviewees and connected to the interview questions they were previously asked. All four interviewees had the same opinion that the framework seems logical and applicable, every interviewee also had their own comments and points of interest in the model.

A pointed out that for the framework to be applicable, the brand in question needs to have a strong brand identity and public value, for an average brand without a strong brand image the framework does not apply. Moreover, A feels that Lovia does not possess strong brand image but requires a lot work and clarity. In general, A recognizes that the perception of a brand and its sustainability does affect consumer's

three cognitions. D has a similar point that the brand in question needs to be somehow important to the consumer; the product or service needs to be interesting and the brand to have a touchpoint into the life of the consumer for the model to apply, otherwise the consumer would not follow the brand in social media to be exposed to its content and for it to be meaningful for the consumer.

B feels the first three parts of the model are easy to understand and that it is highly possible that the content affects one's behavior. B is not sure if the process is as straightforward as portrayed in the model or if there are some other influencing factors affecting the model. Following this same point of view, C has a strong opinion that the model lacks the other major influencers to consumer behavior: media, other consumers and their behavior. C feels these three actors, sustainable brands, media and other consumers, influence each other and this influence is lacking from the theorized model. C ponders who is the initiator of this current sustainability trend and believes the sustainability trend has started from consumers' needs and the media amplifying this need, which created a strong demand and even a need for companies to be sustainable to succeed. Further, B also pointed out that the social media content was the only concrete concept in the model and others were abstract, which is why the social media content was changed to exposure to social media content, which is also an abstract concept aligned with the rest of the model.

C feels these other external influencers should also be presented in the framework, since the sustainability knowledge consumers have is not solely based on what sustainable brands communicate but from other sources as well. D has the same opinion and points out that she is not sure how much of an influence one brand's sustainable content on social media has on consumer behavior in the end, D says that the content does influence attitudes and awaken thoughts. However, D feels that the norms and social environment of the consumers has a stronger effect on consumer behavior. D's view is that the attitude and way of thinking are first changed, which then change the norms and habits that affects also the social environment's habits. Even though, D is not sure how much influence the social media content has, she still explains that the content may influence the attitudes and self-efficacy of consumers and provide advice on how to be sustainable explaining how these then change

norms and behavior. Meaning the content is actually the initiator of the whole change towards more sustainable consumption.

Further, C points out that that perhaps all the communication of a sustainable brand should be included in the model not only the social media content, since the perception of a brand's sustainability is dependent on all of its communications according to C. This may be true; however, the present study specifically focuses on the usage of social media in communicating sustainability, which is why that is the focus also in the model. Overall, the social media content of Lovia affected C's perception of the brand but not of sustainable consumption, since no new information of sustainable consumption was received. Lastly, C pointed out that the model did work for her, it only worked so that she would not buy, which is a sort of behavior itself as well. Overall, both C and D highlight that it is definitely a good thing that brands communicate these values and use sustainability also as a marketing tool to influence consumers thoughts, attitudes and behavior.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

At the current rate of consumption, the equivalent of 1,75 Earths are needed to endure the level of consumption, and the number is steadily increasing (Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts, 2019a; 2019b), showcasing the level and patterns of consumption are not sustainable (Lim, 2017). The effects of consumption to the environment as well as the effect of marketing discipline to rising consumption have long been acknowledged by many researchers (Sheth et al., 2011; Kotler, 2011), but still consumption continues to rise (Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts, 2019b). The purpose of this research was to create an empirically validated framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably. The research problem focused on how to increase sustainable consumption and/or decrease overall consumption among consumers and if brands that have sustainability as their core value and a core of their business may be a solution to changing consumption behavior to be sustainable. The research was approached with a theoretical framework based on sustainability marketing and branding, sustainable consumption and the basic concept of communications theory as well as with the applied model of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to study the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably.

### 7.1 Theoretical contributions

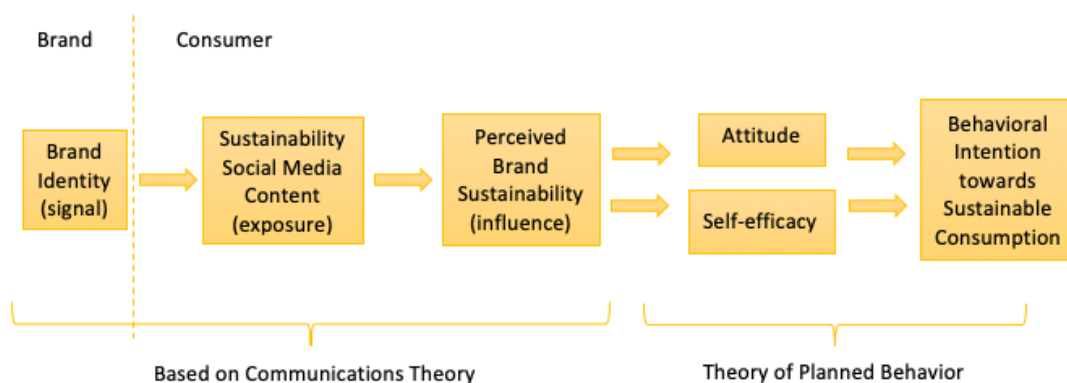
This research resulted in three main theoretical contributions. Firstly, the research created a theoretical framework for studying the influence of sustainable brand identity communication in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably. The theoretical framework applied sustainability branding research, a basic construct of communications theory, the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen (1991) and de Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017) application of the theory of planned behavior to create a theoretical framework to study sustainable brand identity communications in social media and its effects on behavioral intention. Secondly, the research contributed a framework for analysing brand communications of sustainability in social media content, which is presented in Appendix 9. The

framework is based on the synthesis of previous research in communicating sustainability (see appendix 7) and on the themes emerged from content and interview analysis (see Appendix 8). Thirdly, the research validated the two previously mentioned frameworks empirically. Even though, theory of planned behavior within the context of sustainable consumption, social media as a communications channel and communicating brand identity have been previously studied and empirically tested, a combination of these theoretical concepts as a framework have not been empirically validated previously.

## **7.2 Answers to the research questions**

### **7.2.1 How sustainable brand identity communication in social media may influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably?**

To answer to the research question; “How sustainable brand identity communication in social media may influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably?”, a theoretical framework was created and qualitative interviews conducted to see if the sustainability content by sustainable brands in social media would change consumers' intention to behave sustainably. The answer to this research questions is that sustainable brand identity communications in social media can influence consumers' intention to behave sustainably, both positively and negatively depending on the social media content, the consumers' preliminary knowledge and attitude towards sustainability and sustainable consumption, as well as the sustainable brands mission and industry. The empirically validated framework is presented again in Figure 3 after modifications based on the results and conclusions of this research.



**Figure 3** Empirically validated framework for the influence of sustainable brand identity communications in social media on consumers' intention to behave sustainably.

The results showcased that the brand's industry and sustainability mission have an impact into how much the sustainability issues influence the consumer. Whether the industry is by its nature closely connected to the everyday life of the consumer such as the meat industry, it automatically encourages more to make a change in the consumer's behavior as the impact of the industry is perceived larger with daily consumption, compared to for instance handbags that are bought more rarely. The sustainability mission of the brand should also resonate with the consumer and be impactful in the eyes of the consumer for it to have a stronger influence on the behavior of the consumer.

#### *Influence on attitudes and self-efficacy*

Regarding the three cognitive processes affecting the intention to behave, this research contributed that sustainable brand identity communications in social media can influence attitudes toward the brand and toward sustainable consumption, as well as self-efficacy but the research did not find an influence on consumers' descriptive norms. The results show that consumers' attitudes and self-efficacy are influenced by the sustainability related social media content both positively and negative. To positively affect consumers' attitudes toward a sustainable brand, the social media content should provide new information of the brand, live up to the expectations of consumers, use narrative-elements, be useful and have a purpose, as well as evoke feelings. To positively affect the consumers' attitudes toward sustainable consumption, the social media content should make the interviewees consider their

own consumption choices, raise consumers' awareness of the issues and provide new information of sustainable consumption, moreover the content should be well-justified and reliable. Whereas, consumers' self-efficacy can be increased with well-justified and confident communications of the brand' sustainability, and by trusting the consumer to themselves be sustainable without overselling or pushing the idea of sustainability, supporting the theory of Abitbol & Lee (2017) to avoid overselling, instead the content should show trust that the consumer can make the right decision. Self-efficacy can also be increased by providing the consumer with new information of sustainability but to do it so that the consumer does not feel like they do not know enough or do enough, which would decrease self-efficacy.

#### *Influence on descriptive norms*

However, according to the results consumers' descriptive norms are not influenced with social media content of sustainable brands', this might be a consequence of the content itself or of the target audience. Perhaps as the content did not convey what other consumers have done to support sustainability nor did it have much concrete examples of sustainable consumption behavior, the content is not able to create an association into the consumption behavior of one's social environment, instead the content focused on associations of one's own consumption and its consideration. Further research is needed if more strongly communicating what other consumers have already done for sustainability would have an effect on consumer descriptive norms or if more concrete communications, giving examples and for instance comparing the overall sustainability of similar products would have an influence on consumers' descriptive norms by drawing attention to specific behaviors or products and this way create associations to the social environment and their behavior on a concrete level.

Moreover, de Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017) were not able to demonstrate that exposure to the media content affected subjective norms, which is why subjective norms were not include in the present research, however de Lenne and Vandenbosch were indeed able to prove that descriptive norms were influenced by media exposure, contrary to the present study. Perhaps, the reason lies in the convenience sample of de Lenne and Vandenbosch that consisted only of young adults that are potentially

more subject to the influence of media exposure and to wondering what their social environment consumes, whereas the present study consisted of adults aged 26-28, who reported their social environment's consumption not to affect to their own consumption and also to not care what others think of their own consumption behavior, demonstrating the issue potentially to be of higher significance based on the age of the consumer. This provides a new avenue for research to examine whether the age of the consumer affects to his/her descriptive norms.

#### *Influence on intention to behave*

To positively influence the intention to behave sustainably, the social media content of sustainable brands should encourage to pay more attention to sustainability, support the intention to consume sustainably, make the consumers consider whether to consume or not, to consume as little as possible and to dive deeper into sustainability issues. These topics should therefore be portrayed in sustainability communications through social media content. Further, regarding intention to behave, if the brand's values and social media content resonates with the consumer, the consumers admit this influencing their behavior so that they might buy the brand's products. Furthermore, if the content emphasizes the aspect of decreasing consumption and considering consumption choices very much this might result in consumers not wanting to buy anything, including the said brand's products.

#### *Sustainable brand identity communications*

Another contribution of this research is that a sustainable brand's values can be portrayed with social media content and the brand values can resonate to the consumers through the content, demonstrating that the brand identity which is formatted around the brand's values acts as the context in which social media content is created. However, the brand values to resonate to consumers might require the brand identity to be strong, and that consumers are familiar with the brand to enable consumers to recognize the brand values from the content. The results showcased that the content was able to deepen knowledge of the brand, it created brand associations and brand awareness, all which according to Aaker (1991 via Yoo & Donthu, 2001) are effects of true core values.



Further, the research validated the theorized model and its presumption that *Perceived Brand Sustainability* can be conveyed and interpreted from social media content of that sustainable brand. Consumers do create a perception of the brand's sustainability based on sustainability related social media content, as demonstrated with the present research as the consumers gave their own perception and description of the brand's sustainability. Indeed, this is a perception of the brand's sustainability, since the perceptions differed among consumers and none of them exactly matched the brand's communications of their sustainability validating the theory that *Perceived Brand Sustainability* describes consumers' view and opinion, (i.e. perception) of the brand's sustainability, demonstrating a difference among communicated brand sustainability and perceived brand sustainability similarly as Urde defines the difference between the values defining the corporate brand and the values perceived by the consumers (Urde, 1997, 2003 via Urde 2009).

The *Perceived Brand Sustainability* based on the content was seen positive, due to the perception that the brand is truly sustainable and serious about its sustainability as the content was believable and honest, as indicated by Eggers et al. (2013), the values were communicated well, showcasing that brand authenticity and authentic communications are important in sustainability communications as suggested by Abitbol and Lee (2017), content was easy to approach, it did not oversell the ideas as prompted by Abitbol and Lee, and attempted to prove its values with concrete actions such as sharing the stories of the makers. However, more concreteness was hoped for to ever more support the reliability of the content.

Nevertheless, even after demonstrating the influence sustainable brand's social media content may have on consumers intention to behave sustainably, the social media content should be considered as the only influencer sustainable consumer behavior as other actors and content are available that contribute to consumers attitudes, norms, behavior and knowledge as indicated by the results. This is acknowledged by the study, even though it focuses on specifically examining sustainable brands and their social media content as one solution to changing consumer behavior to sustainable. Further research may examine the potential effect of media and other consumers' behavior to sustainable brand's identity formation and to consumers' intention to behave sustainably.

### 7.2.2 What kind of sustainable brand identity communications in social media is influential to consumers' intention to behave sustainably?

To answer the research question; “What kind of sustainable brand identity communications in social media is influential to consumers' intention to behave sustainably?”, a content analysis examining Lovia's Instagram content was conducted to reveal what kind of content the case company produces, and secondly qualitative interviews were conducted to examine what kind of content resonates to the consumers. The present study was able to contribute new knowledge to the research by de Lenne and Vandebosch (2017) by focusing on the content produced by a sustainable brand, specifically in social media. Contrary to de Lenne and Vandebosch who only define the content exposed to by “media message containing information about a particular behavior”, the present study vastly examined what kind of content in social media would be influential and resulted in various conclusions of influential social media content.

Influential social media content includes many elements of the theoretical framework, which support each other increasing the effect of the content in the eyes of the consumers. The research showcased that consumers interpretations and perceptions of social media content can and will have variations and differ from each other as they are indeed perceptions, however the perceptions did have strong commonalities enabling the formation of conclusions based on what kind of content resonates with consumers, thus providing answers to the research question.

The differences in interpretation became clear for instance so that some consumers mentioned a topic in the implicit section straightaway, whereas another consumer mentioned the same aspect in the aided memory section later on, after examining the content further, showcasing that some consumer might need more time to interpret content. The research also showcased that the creation of versatile content is beneficial for a brand to inflict change in consumers' consumption behavior as consumers are for instance motivated and empowered by different means. Using different means demonstrated effectively increases the influence of the content to as many consumers as possible. The research provided many conclusions and also additions to the theory related to communicating sustainability with content. The

conclusion and contribution related to content are also displayed in a summarized form in Appendix 11.

*Conclusions for the theoretical concepts of sustainable brand identity communications*

Firstly, *consumer perspective* was deemed important in sustainability communications by O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009), Williams et al., (2014) and Lee (2017), whereas this research was able to demonstrate that the consumer perspective can be created with a *macro-theme* by focusing on sustainability on a general level instead of merely the brand's perspective, with *consumers' power-theme* by emphasizing the power individual consumers have and the impact their decisions can have, with *chancing the world-theme* by emphasizing a larger purpose for the consumers and the brand, and with *product-theme* by utilizing *rational arguments* in telling about the product and tying it to the *everyday life and lifestyle of consumers*. The combination of *rational arguments* and *consumer perspective* can inspire consumers to rethink their consumption behavior to restrain from excessive consumption and instead change their mindset to care of themselves, the community and nature (Lee, 2017) and build a foundation for consumers' motivation to make a change (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), also linking *consumer perspective* combined with *rational arguments* to creating *empowerment* in consumers. Additionally, to creating *empowerment*, the consumer perspective may *stimulate sustainable mindset* and *encourage sustainable consumption* by connecting sustainability issues to the lifestyle of consumers, this provides support to Williams et al. (2014) and Lee's (2017) view of the importance of a consumer perspective in sustainability communications.

Secondly, Lee (2017) stated that sustainability communications should strive to *inspire a sustainable mindset and encourage sustainable consumption*. This research contributed several methods these two can be evoked, namely with the *consumer perspective*, with communicating the *consumers' power*, with *rational arguments* of sustainability and sustainable consumption, with communicating and evoking *a sense of community*, with transparency, utilizing celebrities in communications and with direct communications.

Thirdly, communicating the *aspects of sustainability and wellbeing* were stated important by Lee (2017). The present research concluded that the levels and aspects of wellbeing can be communicated well with having a *macro*-theme in the content, that is communicating of sustainability on a general level instead from the brand's perspective, such as communicating of decreasing consumption. This conclusion supports the theory by Williams et al., (2014) indicating that it is beneficial to communicate about real topics instead of the brand's marketing messages. Moreover, the research contributed that often the *wellbeing of individual and society* are interpreted from the same aspect, demonstrating a close connection between the two. *Environment's wellbeing* may be conveyed with *nature imagery* as suggested in addition to the imagery eliciting nature experiences and evoking affective responses towards nature (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012), thus contributing to theory another effect of utilizing nature imagery. Further, *environment's wellbeing* can be conveyed with *consumers' power* and *trash*-themes. Further, with the *humanity*-theme, the *individual's and society's wellbeing* may be conveyed as well as *economic sustainability*. The different levels and aspects of wellbeing can be interpreted and thus conveyed via both *picture and text*.

*Rational arguments* in sustainability communications help convey brand sustainability (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), and this research contributed different means to convey that brand sustainability via rational arguments. Rational arguments connected to the *Finnish nature of the brand* as well as arguments of the *celebrity* chosen to represent the brand, as these two were reported to evoke trust in consumers. The usage of celebrities is rather common in marketing and influencing consumer behavior (Solomon, 2015 p. 44), however, this method has not been examined particularly in the context of sustainability branding to the knowledge of the author. Furthermore, *rational arguments* of the product's *functionality*, brand's *sustainability* and of sustainable consumption were also demonstrated to *encourage sustainable consumption, inspire sustainable mindset* and create *warm glow* in consumers, providing new methods to the theory to evoke these feelings. Further, *rational arguments* are also used to communicate the *benefits from sustainable purchase* (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017), and this research demonstrated that the communicated benefits may be benefits related to the product itself or then brand, its values and sustainability mission. Also, moral satisfaction from contributing to

common good with the sustainable purchase is one type of benefit that positively influenced consumers.

Additionally, the research contributed many methods to evoke an emotional connection to the sustainable brand with the three psychological benefits; warm glow, self-expressive benefits and nature experiences. The research contributed new means to evoke Warm Glow feeling in consumers by communicating how the consumers are a part of something bigger if they purchase the brand's products, supporting Abitbol and Lee (2017) that to achieve full disclosure brands should convey a sense of belonging in consumers.

Further, by communicating of the brand's sustainability contributions in general, that are in fact *rational arguments* as suggested by Williams et al. (2014) to communicate the sustainability actions and good citizenship of the brand thus showing support to the theory. Also, *warm glow* can be evoked with *transparency*, by *humanizing the brand*, with conveying *a sense of community*, and by utilizing an inspiring *celebrity*, which can *empower* the consumer. To specifically receive *warm glow* towards the brand, a connection to the brand or its product might be necessary in the content. These methods are all new contributions to the theory on how to evoke the feeling of warm glow through content that is derived as a response from the moral satisfaction received from contributing to the common good with sustainable behavior (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992; Nunes & Schokkaert, 2003; Ritov & Kahneman, 1997 via Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Grubor & Milovanov, 2017).

The research also contributed methods to evoke *self-expressive benefits* in consumers that are the psychological benefits inferred from self-expressive and socially visible environmentally responsible consumption (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). The methods are to communicate the brand's *transparency*, by *humanizing the brand*, by conveying *a sense of community*, making consumers feel they are a part of a movement, also supporting Abitbol & Lee (2017) who highlight communicating *a sense of belonging* to be important for full disclosure and transparency, thus showcasing a connection between *transparent* communications evoking *self-expressive benefits*. Whereas, too high focus on the product was seen to discourage self-expressive benefits. Further, some consumers

may require that the brand is known by the public for self-expressive benefits to be evoked, providing support to the theory of Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) that some consumers receive self-expressive benefits from the status the brand is able to provide, thus *status motives* are one driver for also sustainable consumption. Lastly, it may be necessary for some consumers to overall care about what others think of their consumption for self-expressive benefits to arise.

Furthermore, this research supported Harmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez's (2011) theory by showcasing that *emotional connection towards nature* is interpreted from *nature imagery* and the nature imagery also created mental images of nature experiences, in other words the images ignite similar affective responses to genuine nature experiences, also being able to prove that nature imagery somewhat contributed into creating positive attitudes towards the brand and purchase intention as indicated by Harmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2011). Furthermore, the research also showcased that the combination of nature imagery with *nature related text* evokes the same associations of nature experiences providing a new contribution to the existing theory.

Next, the *feeling of empowerment* may be evoked with the *macro perspective* and *consumer perspective*, whereas a too high *product* focus can decrease the feeling of empowerment. The theme *consumers' power* was especially seen to evoke the feeling of empowerment as it represents both *macro and consumer perspectives*. Also, *chancing the world*-theme was seen to empower consumers. Furthermore, another important aspect of empowerment is whether the content has *a connection to the brand* or not. Seemingly if the consumers do not see a connection in the post to the brand itself, the feeling of empowerment also stays generic and is not connected to buying the brand's products, which from the brand's perspective is not beneficial. This conclusion brings further detail to Hartmann et al., (2018) theory, as they only state that feeling of empowerment should "give consumers the feeling that their decisions count and that they can change things through their consumption choices when purchasing a specific brand".

The usage of *fearful messages* was not reported in this research; however, negative emotions were evoked by confusion from the mismatch of content's *picture and text*,

the encouragement to investigate the competitors of the brand, and from posts without any clear purpose, leading to even the creation of demotivation. Hence, this sort of messages should be avoided in sustainability communications.

Further, creating *stakeholder engagement* with sustainability communications *transparency, authenticity and interactivity* were identified important aspects (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). Transparency is created with well-justified, consistent and clear content, validating the theory of LeCompte (2010 via Williams et al., 2014) to communicate openly and consistently of real topics as well as with Kent, Taylor & White (2003 via Abitbol & Lee, 2017) that transparency is convincing and sound communications. The *usage of language* affects transparency as the use of *metaphors* might cause confusion instead of transparency, however, *transparency* itself can also be communicated by using metaphors. Transparent information is not necessarily *useful information*, as having a *consumer perspective* does not necessarily translate into *useful information*, showcasing the importance of considering these three aspects separately as creating content. *Transparency* can be created with tagging relevant individuals to the content that contributed into making it, that is supporting the dialogic strategy of disclosure (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). *Transparency and openness* are further perceived from content that has a connection to the brand as suggested by Abitbol and Lee (2017) and provides concrete information of the brand's sustainability efforts as suggested by Williams et al. (2014), also showcasing how *rational arguments* increase *transparency and authenticity*.

*Brand authenticity* can be conveyed with social media content with *transparency*, indicating that *brand congruence* is beneficial in sustainability communications contradicting Abitbol and Lee's (2017) results. The differing results might be explained by the context of the study as Abitbol and Lee (2017) examine CSR dedicated Facebook pages and here we examine company pages in Instagram, where the audience probably is expecting company-related information as the page is not specifically dedicated to sustainability. Further, brand authenticity is conveyed with *explanatory and well-justified text*, a good combination of the *picture and text* that support each other, and further communicating the *brand's purpose* may support brand authenticity. Brand authenticity can also be conveyed with *tangible actions* that are aligned with the brand's values, and by directly stating and explaining the

*brand's values*, which can be considered *openness*, yet again showcasing how *transparency and open communications* may support authenticity. Furthermore, a content that is too sales oriented, trying to *oversell* its ideas is perceived to decrease brand authenticity contributing to Abitbol and Lee (2017) reason why overselling should be avoided in sustainability communications, rather *honest* and even *neutral-toned communications* are seen to support authenticity, showcasing yet a strong connection between transparency and openness to authenticity.

*Brand legitimacy* can be conveyed by making the brand's values *relatable* to consumers, whereas *brand consistency* is supported if the consumers are familiar with the brand beforehand, in other words demonstrating the importance of *consistent communications among channels*. Overall, the research supports the theories by Fritz et al. (2017) and Abitbol and Lee (2017), by demonstrating that brand legitimacy, consistency and congruence are all important in creating brand authenticity through social media content as all three aspect of brand authenticity were connected to the case company's authenticity by the interviewees.

The research contributed how *interactivity* may be encouraged, both *directly* but also in more *subtle way* so that the encouragement is interpreted from the content's message, meaning it did not specifically support Abitbol and Lee's (2017) conclusion that it is important to directly ask or encourage to interactivity. *Interactivity and building a relationship* with consumers may be encouraged for instance by *encouraging to follow* some relevant individuals in social media that are connected to the brand or by *encouraging to follow the brand* for content that will be shared later on, and by utilizing the *changing the world*-theme.

#### *Conclusions for new themes for communicating sustainable brand identity*

In addition to several contributions to existing theory, the research also contributed new themes to communicate of brands sustainability thus creating completely new contributions to the sustainability communications research. Communicating of the *consumers' power*, the impact they can have with each consumption decision, evokes both a *warm glow feeling, feeling of empowerment*, providing the theory with a new means to address both emotional responses towards sustainability content. Further,



the *consumers' power*-theme provides both *consumer and macro perceptive*, and it can also be used to *stimulate a sustainable mindset and encourage sustainable consumption* by connecting sustainability both to the everyday decision consumers make and how the decisions contribute to their lifestyle.

Another new theme is creating a *sense of community*, that communicates being part of something bigger and a sense of belonging as suggested by Abitbol & Lee (2017) for achieving full disclosure and thus transparency. Conveying a sense of community was one method of evoking *self-expressive benefits* and *warm glow*. The sense of community can *encourage sustainable consumption and stimulate sustainable mindset*, also the theme is closely connected to the *consumers' power* and *changing the world*-themes. This conclusion supports Williams et al., (2014) suggestion to create a community of brand enthusiasts who are transformed from loyal brand followers to influencers who want to share the brand and its message as indicated by A for post 3:

“this (post) has succeeded in communication how even a more meticulous consumer when examining the supply chain sees that it is pure and this way gives benefits to the consumer, this way I would maybe tell someone I know that this is a good thing and this way sustainable consumption would be increased, when (the brand) gets me and then I recommend it to my neighbor.”  
(Interviewee A)

These further demonstrate that it is worthwhile to communicate sustainability issues related to the brand values (i.e. *transparency*) as recommended by Abitbol and Lee (2017). A sense of community may also encourage to build a relationship with the consumer.

A new theme of *humanizing the brand / humanity* was established. Torelli et al. (2012) already established that by infusing brands with human values, goals and emotions a superior brand concept can be created. Infusing brands with human values allows the brand to convey meaningful benefits to the consumers' lives instead of only utilitarian benefits. This research contributed to Torelli et al. (2012) by demonstrating how humanizing the brand affects consumers and is perceived by consumers. Humanizing the brand evokes *warm glow* and *self-expressive benefits*, create positive associations towards the brand, it can communicate of the *sustainable*

*wellbeing of society and individuals*, as well as of *economic sustainability* through people. Lastly humanizing the brand may create *emotional connection towards people* in consumers and also *encourage sustainable consumption*.

Another new theme was *changing the world*, which conveys how together the brand and the consumer can change the world with their decisions, thus communicating also the *sense of community*. This theme showcased both the *customer perspective* but also the *macro perspective*. Changing the world was perceived to *encourage sustainable consumption and interactivity*, to *empower consumers* and to communicate of the *purpose and sustainable vision of the brand*. Contributing a new method to theory on how to communicate of brand sustainability in an influential way.

Further, the importance of *a good fit between the content's picture and text* was established. A good combination of elements that supported each other was seen to encourage *empowerment, authenticity, transparency* and the different *levels of sustainability*. Indicating the importance of choosing a valid picture that supports the text of the post and vice versa. Furthermore, the usage of different *narrative* elements was deemed beneficial in sustainability communications as the usage of story-like captions and metaphors were perceived positive, to give insights and mental images. However, a challenge lies in the utilization of narratives, as some metaphorical expressions may not resonate to consumers resulting in confusion instead of insight. Overall, the narrative-like communications of the brand enabled them to convey information to consumers "*between the lines*" as often reported by the interviewees. This enabled the content to feel more *authentic* and not too commercial. Thus, demonstrating that there are benefits but also potential downsides to using narrative elements in sustainability communications, highlighting the importance of consideration in using narratives. Narrative elements may be used to convey for instance *rational arguments*.

### **7.3 Managerial implications**

This research provided various methods and recommendations on how to create influential sustainable brand identity communications for social media. Sustainable

brands may use the conclusions of this research in improving their sustainability content in social media in order to strive to change consumer behavior to sustainable. Sustainable brands are recommended to convey the brand's sustainability and brand values through social media content. Other themes recommended for communicating sustainable brand identity are nature aspects, the domesticity of the brand, absorbing a macro and consumer perspective, dedicating content to convey in practice the brand's different values and communicating how the values are shown in the brand's operations. Means and methods recommended for sustainable brand identity communications based on the case company are the usage of narratives and utilizing picture and text that complement each other and convey the same message. Further, the usage of practical examples and concrete information is recommended for sustainable brands.

Furthermore, the research validated that the brand identity based on core values and brand sustainability can be resonated to consumers via social media content as suggested by communications theories. Further, the research validated that sustainable brand identity communications in social media can be utilized in influencing consumer's intention to behave sustainably by influencing the consumers' attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. This provides sustainable brands with the opportunity to have a larger purpose in their business in addition to being financially sustainable, and further showcasing a means to strive to change the practice of marketing.

#### **7.4 Validity and reliability of the research**

The combining of different theoretical concepts is seen valid as the theories are combined logically based on the previous theories. The empirically validated framework (Figure 3) is not isolated but has a causal relationship within the different concepts as validated empirically and supported by the previous theory, creating an applicable, causal process. Further, to ensure the reliability of this qualitative research, two research methods were chosen for the research to support each other and increase the reliability (Wilson, 2010, pp. 116-117). The qualitative interviews were used to validate the results of the content analysis and to avoid biased interpretations.

To increase the validity of the interviews, a test interview was conducted based on which the interview questions were modified, to reassure that the right questions were asked (Wilson, 2010, p. 119). To avoid social desirability in the interview responses (Fielding, 2016, p. 295), in other words giving answers the interviewee thinks others want to hear, in the beginning of the interview the interviewer explained how the interview strives to learn the perceptions and opinions of the interviewees and how there are no right or wrong answers, striving to eliminate the possibility for social desirability to diminish response validity. Further, the interviews benefitted from inquiring first implicitly from consumers of their perception of the social media content and then moving on to the aided memory section where specific aspects were inquired from the consumers, as the implicit section supported in decreasing biased answers from the interviewees as they were not informed of the theoretical aspects at first. Also, to avoid the interviewer's perception of the case company to influence the interviewees' perception, the interviewees were introduced to the case company based on solely information available on the company's website.

To ensure reliability of the research, a detailed description of the analysis processes was given with practical examples of for instance how the content analysis themes emerged from the analysis, in order to support other researchers to repeat the same research thus increasing inter-judgmental reliability (Wilson, 2010, pp 116-117). As the research is qualitative having a subjective view to the research it focuses on deepening knowledge in a specific context and rather asking why, challenging the statistical generalizability of the research (Wilson, 2010, pp. 9-11), however which particularly is not the objective of the research. The results of this research may be used as a foundation to build upon more knowledge on how to influence consumers behavior with sustainable brands' communications in social media. The author sees that the research succeeded in testing what kind of content resonates brand sustainability to consumers and what kind of content consumers see influential, also the research was able to provide concrete advice on how to create specific type of content. Lastly, the research succeeded in examining whether the social media content of a sustainable brand affects consumers intention to behave as intended in the purpose of the study.

## **7.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

The main limitation of the present research is that it is unable to research actual behavioral change with the chosen research methods, but only research intended behavioral change and effect. Further, the current state of sustainability branding research presents limitations to the study, challenging the formation of the theoretical framework. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the research can be considered one limitation as the research results are not statistically generalizable. Also, the absence of the theoretical framework for communications theories and social media marketing communications may be considered as limitations of this study.

In addition to the future research suggestion posed among the conclusions, more general research suggestions are presented here. Further research into sustainability branding and sustainability content is indeed needed. Future research may further research the theorized model presented in this study by testing the model quantitatively as the present study is of qualitative nature. Quantitative study could provide more generalizable results. However, this same qualitative study could be done in a different context to compare if the brand, industry or target audience change the results. Furthermore, the present study could be elaborated on by using social media marketing literature as the research framework and applying it to the context of sustainability branding to research whether sustainability branding in social media follows the best practices of social media marketing literature. Furthermore, this study calls further research into how the descriptive norms of consumers may be influenced through content or can they be influenced with content at all? Also, the usage of celebrities in sustainability branding is a new research topic arisen from the present study that should be elaborated on to reveal if the method is influential specifically when used in the context of sustainability branding.

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**Appendix 1****Outline of the semi-structured interview (in Finnish)****Taustatiedot:**

- Kerro lyhyesti kuka olet; nimi, ikä, paikkakunta, koulutus, ammatti
- Tiedätkö kyseisen brändin etukäteen? Miten tiedät brändin?
- Oletko ostanut brändin tuotteita aiemmin?
  - o Mikä tuote, mistä ja miksi?
  - o Kerro omia kokemuksia tuotteesta ja yrityksestä?
  - o Vaikuttiko some sisältö ostopäätökseesi?

**Kysymykset yksittäisistä postauksista:**Implicit

- Mitä brändi mielestäsi pyrkii viestimään postauksella? Miksi?
- Millaisen kuvan saat brändistä postauksen perusteella? / Miten kuvailisit kyseistä brändiä postauksen perusteella?
- Millaisia tunteita ja ajatuksia postaus herättää sinussa?
  - o Mitkä postauksen elementit aiheuttavat nämä tunteet / ajatukset?
  - o Miksi kyseiset elementit aiheuttavat tällaisia ajatuksia / tuntemuksia?
- Miten postaus viestii brändin vastuullisuudesta?
- Miten postauksen sisältöä voisi parantaa, jotta se kannustaisi kuluttajaa vastuulliseen kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen?

Aided Memory

- Viestiikö sisältö kuluttajia koskettavia vastuullisia asioita? Miten?
- Koskettaako sisältö kuluttajien jokapäiväistä elämää vastuullisuuden kannalta?
- Pyrkiikö sisältö sisällyttämään vastuullisuuden osaksi kuluttajien elämäntapaan? Miten?
- Stimuloiko sisältö vastuullista ajattelutapaa? Miten?
- Kannustaako sisältö vastuulliseen kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen? Miten?
- Inspiroiko sisältö ajattelemaan kulutuksen vaikutuksia omalle, yhteisön sekä luonnon hyvinvoinnille? Miten?
- Viestiikö sisältö vastuullisuuden kolmesta eri tasosta; henkilökohtainen hyvinvointi? Taloudellinen hyvinvointi? Ympäristön hyvinvointi?
- Onko sisältö mielestäsi uskottavaa ja luotettavaa?
- Viestiikö sisältö kuluttajalle hyötyjä tuotteen ostamisesta? Miten?
- Viestiikö sisältö taloudellista hyötyä tuotteen ostamisesta? Miten?
- Viestiikö sisältö hyödyllistä ja miellyttävää tietoa? Miten?
- Onko sisältö läpinäkyvää ja avointa?
- Viestiikö sisältö tuotteiden materiaaleista, valmistuksesta ja jakelusta? Miten?

- Viestiikö sisältö brändin visiota vastuullisuudesta? Brändin vastuullisia tekoja? Miten?
- Tämän sisällön perusteella, jos ostaisit tuotteen tuleeko sinulle sisäinen hyvinvointitunne siitä että brändi myötävaikuttaa ympäristön yhteiseen hyvään?
- Tämän sisällön perusteella, jos ostaisit tuotteen niin käyttäessäsi tuotetta kokisitko sisäisen hyvinvointitunteen tuotteen käyttämisestä näkyvästi?
- Välittykö sisällöstä sinulle vahva tunnereaktio luontoa kohtaan?
- Tukeeko sisältö henkilökohtaisen voimaantumisen tunnetta siitä, että omilla teoilla on merkitystä? Miksi?
- Viestiikö sisältö sitä, että ostamalla brändin tuotteita voit vaikuttaa vastuullisuuteen?
- Välittykö sisällöstä negatiivista tai epämotivoivaa tunnetta?
- Viestiikö sisältö sitä mitä muut kuluttajat ovat jo tehneet vastuullisuuden eteen?
- Pyrkiikö sisältö linjaamaan yrityksen arvot kuluttajien arvojen kanssa?
- Pyrkiikö sisältö linjaamaan brändin arvot, strategian ja vision brändin lupauksen kanssa?
- Sisällön perusteella viestiikö brändi omia arvojaan vai pyrkiikö se seuraamaan trendejä ja muokkaa arvojaan niiden mukaan?
- Pyrkiikö sisältö rakentamaan dialogia ja interaktiivisuutta?
- Pyrkiikö sisältö kannustamaan yhteistyötä kuluttajien kanssa? / Pyrkiikö sisältö rakentamaan suhteita kuluttajiin?
- Kannustaako sisältö vastuulliseen toimintaan digitaalisessa ympäristössä?

### **Kysymykset yhteisesti kaikista postauksista (TPB):**

#### Asenne:

- Miten nämä sisällöt vaikuttivat sinun asenteeseesi
  - o Brändiä kohtaan?
  - o vastuullista kulutusta kohtaan?
- Muuttiko sisältö asennettasi jollain tavalla? Miksi ja miten?
- Mitä sisältöön olisi voinut lisätä tai olla erilaista, jotta se olisi positiivisesti vaikuttanut asenteesi
  - o brändiä kohtaan?
  - o vastuullista kuluttamista kohtaan?

#### Normit:

- Kun ajattelet sosiaalista ympäristöäsi, tarkoittaen siis perhettä, ystäviä, kollegoita ja tuttuja, onko heidän kuluttajakäyttäytyminen mielestäsi vastuullista?
  - o Jos kyllä, ketä nämä ihmiset ovat?
- Vaikuttiko tämä sisältö näkemykseesi heidän kuluttajakäyttäytymisen vastuullisuudesta?
  - o Miten?
  - o Mikä osa sisällöstä erityisesti sai sinut tuntemaan näin?

Luottamus omiin kykyihin:

- Miten koet sen, että pystyt vastaisuudessa kuluttamaan vastuullisesti? / Kuinka vahvasti luotat omiin kykyihisi vastaisuudessa toimia vastuullisena kuluttajana?
  - o Vaikuttiko tämä sisältö näkemykseesi omista kyvyistäsi?
  - o Mikä osa sisällöstä erityisesti tuki näkemystäsi pystyä vastuulliseen kuluttamiseen? Mikä ei?
  - o Millainen sisältö olisi tukenut näkemystä?

Aikomus/tarkoitus kuluttaa vastuullisesti:

- Aiotko kuluttaa vastuullisesti jatkossa? / Onko sinun tarkoituksesi kuluttaa vastuullisesti jatkossa?
- Miten nämä sisällöt vaikuttivat aikeeseesi/tarkoitukseesi kuluttaa vastuullisesti jatkossa?
  - o Mikä osa sisällöstä erityisesti vaikutti tähän?
- Millainen sisältö olisi paremmin tukenut aiettasi kuluttaa vastuullisesti jatkossa?

Käytös:

- Ostaisitko brändin tuotteita?
  - o Millaiset olosuhteet (voi vaatia tarkennusta) olisivat tarpeen, jotta ostaisit brändin tuotteita?
  - o Onko jokin asia esteenä vastuulliselle kulutuksellesi?

Identiteetti ja arvot:

- Millaisia arvoja brändi mielestäsi ilmentää?
- Mikä postaus erityisesti tukee tätä näkemystä?

Perceived brand sustainability

- Millainen on mielipiteesi / näkemyksesi brändin vastuullisuudesta näiden sisältöjen perusteella?

Instagram

- Onko Instagram mielestäni käyttäjäystävällinen kanava, jossa sisältö on helposti saatavilla?

Yleisesti

- Onko sinulla mitään lisättävää?

**Prosessikaavio:**

- Vastaako tämä prosessi mielestäsi sitä kuinka sosiaalisen median sisältö voi vaikuttaa oikeeseen käyttäytymiseen vastuullisesti?
- Kommentoi kaaviota vapaasti.

**Appendix 2****Demographic information of the interviewees**

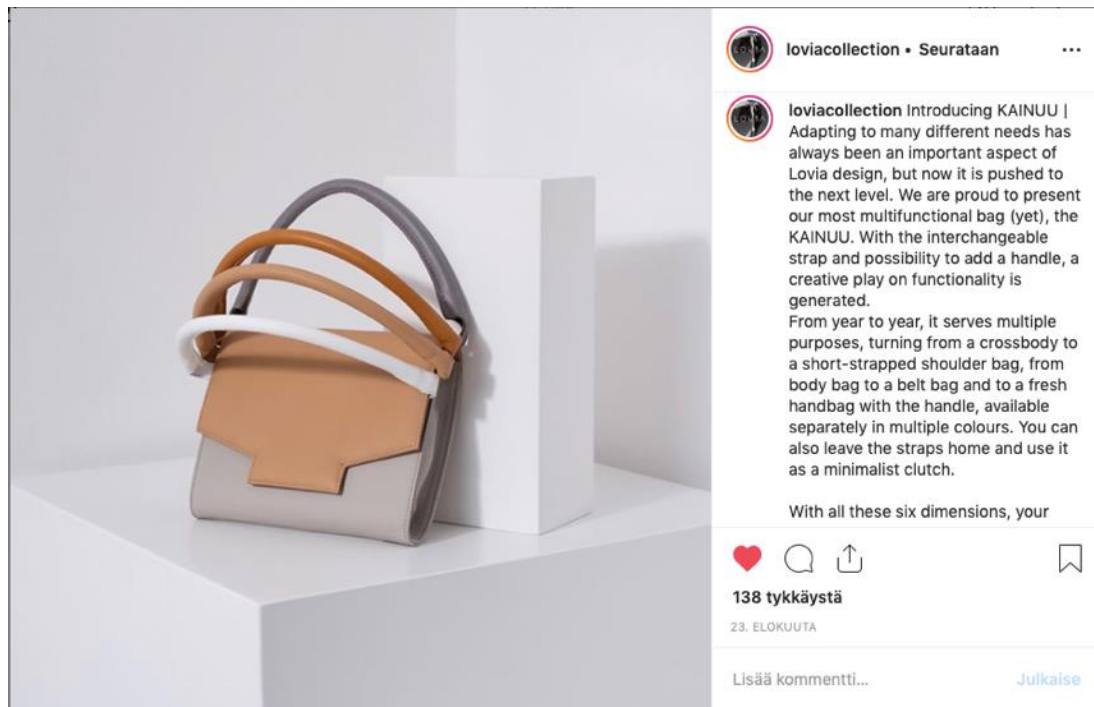
Interviewee A:	Interviewee B:	Interviewee C:	Interviewee D:
28-year-old male	26-year-old female	27-year-old female	27-year-old female
Helsinki	Helsinki	Helsinki	Helsinki
Sales manager of solar systems	Physiotherapist	Product Owner	Stockbroker
Highschool and vocational school education in business	Lower university degree from applied sciences	Master's Degree in International Business Management (KTM)	Lower university degree from applied sciences
Is familiar with the brand, his fiancée has told about the brand but has not bought brand's products	Is familiar with the brand and recognizes the logo but has not bought the brand's products	Is familiar with the brand, has seen their Instagram posts but has not bought brand's products	Is familiar with the brand, recognizes the brand name but would not have been able to name the brand if asked, recalls knowing the brand from an influencer campaign, but has not bought brand's products



## Appendix 3

## Social Media Post 1 (reprinted by permission of Lovia)

The first social media post of Lovia analyzed in the research.



## Appendix 4

## Social Media Post 2 (reprinted by permission of Lovia)

The second social media post from Lovia analyzed in the research.



loviacollection • Seurataan ...

loviacollection Our time is one of exaggerated abundance, forcing us to rethink and refine the definition of true purpose. We believe design can have societal responsibility. Through our own design we want to inspire on this journey to meaning. Our mission is to discover new purpose for abandoned resources, essentially trash.

This autumn, we focus on PURPOSE.

For us, this means furthering sustainable thinking especially through highlighting multifunctionality; increased versatility of a bag can limit the need to consume more and new inspiration can be found without a growing mountain of matter. These carrying thoughts link to the wider

133 tykkäystä

22. ELOKUUTA

Lisää kommentti... [Julkaise](#)

## Appendix 5

## Social Media Post 3 (reprinted by permission of Lovia)

The third social media post of Lovia analyzed in the research.



loviacollection • Seurataan

loviacollection What's behind the reflection? Instead of just taking in what the first layer offers, we always want to encourage you to dive deeper. This is one of the main reasons why our DNA transparency concept was created. We wish to share the stories of the skilled artisans making your bag to appreciate the human effort behind our products. So, look beyond the mere surface and you may be amazed by what you find.

This autumn we will be sharing more and more stories from our makers. We hope this way to generate love and respect for the things you own, the people around you, as well as our environment.

82 tykkäystä

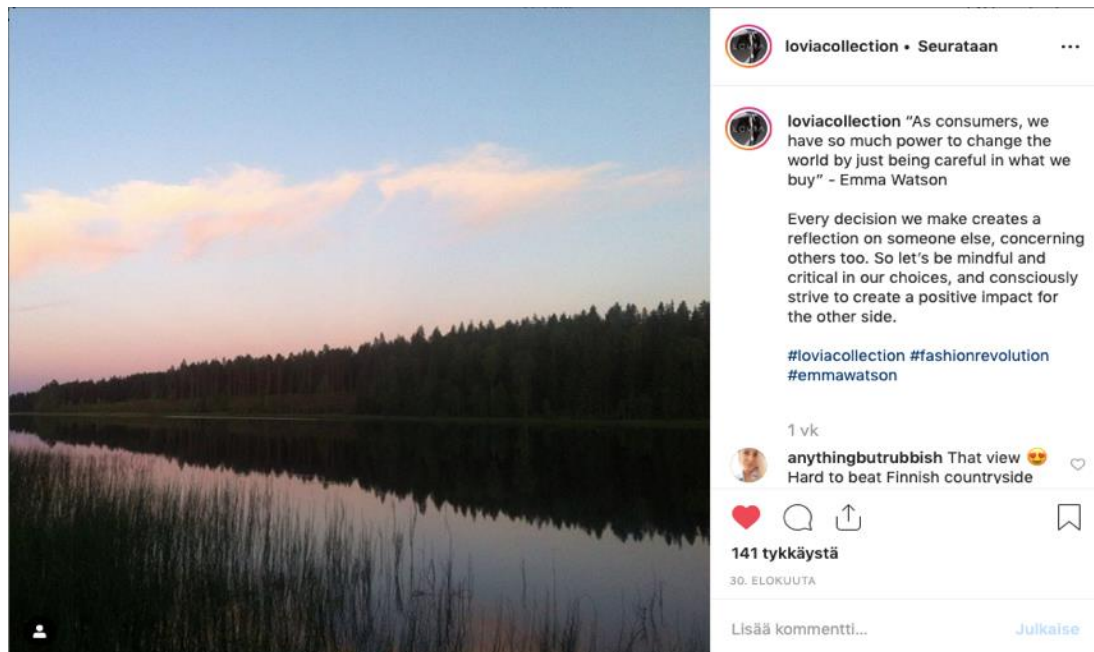
26. ELOKUUTA

Lisää kommentti... [Julkaise](#)

## Appendix 6

## Social Media Post 4 (reprinted by permission of Lovia)

The fourth social media post of Lovia analyzed in the research.



## Appendix 7

## Theoretical concepts of content in sustainability branding and communications

Themes	Theoretical Concepts
<b>Consumer perspective</b>	<p>Communicate sustainability issues of concern to consumers.</p> <p>Include a personal point of reference to the consumers.</p> <p>Be in touch with the everyday life of consumers.</p>
<b>Inspire sustainable mindset &amp; Encourage sustainable consumption</b>	<p>Stimulate a consideration for the results and influence of consumption on people, communities and nature.</p> <p>Encourage sustainable consumption to restrain from acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational consumption.</p>
<b>The aspects of sustainability and wellbeing</b>	<p>Inspire consumers to consider the effects of consumption to their own wellbeing, wellbeing of the community and wellbeing of nature.</p> <p>Inspire temperance instead of excessive consumption by making consumer care for themselves, the community and nature.</p>
<b>Rational arguments</b>	<p>Convincing and sound communications.</p> <p>Knowledge of a brand's sustainability vision and actions.</p> <p>Inform consumers of the benefits from sustainable purchase.</p> <p>Fit sustainability into consumers' lifestyle.</p> <p>Communicate the brand's good citizenship and sustainable actions.</p> <p>Communicate financial benefit from sustainable purchase.</p>
<b>Emotional appeal</b>	<p>Warm glow;</p> <p>Moral satisfaction from contributing to sustainable common good.</p> <p>Communicate the brand's contribution to sustainable common good.</p> <p>Self-expressive benefits;</p> <p>Psychological benefits from self-expressive sustainable consumption.</p> <p>Utilize status motives for sustainable consumption.</p> <p>Communicate what consumers can convey of themselves with the sustainable purchase.</p> <p>Nature experiences and imagery;</p> <p>Communicate nature experiences with nature imagery.</p> <p>Communicate care and concern for nature.</p>
<b>Feeling of empowerment</b>	<p>Increase consumers' subjective feeling of empowerment.</p> <p>Make consumers feel their consumption behavior and decisions matter.</p> <p>Convey that by buying the brand's products you can make a difference.</p> <p>Avoid fearful messages and negative vocabulary leading to disempowerment and demotivation.</p> <p>Communicate what other consumers have already done to increase empowerment.</p>
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	<p>Transparency &amp; Openness</p> <p>Disclosure: Provide useful and appealing information.</p> <p>Full disclosure with impactful content.</p> <p>Create a sense of belonging in consumers.</p> <p>Be transparent, open and consistent.</p> <p>Communicate of the sourcing, production and distribution of products.</p> <p>Communicate of real topics not marketing messages.</p> <p>Brand Authenticity</p> <p>Brand Legitimacy: Align brand values with consumer values.</p> <p>Brand Consistency: Have consistency among brand's values, strategy, vision and brand promise.</p> <p>Brand Congruence: Stay true to the brand's own values, do not follow trends.</p> <p>Interactivity &amp; Dialogue</p> <p>Create two-way communication.</p> <p>Facilitate and encourage interactivity.</p> <p>Give direct encouragement to online action for interactivity.</p> <p>Create conversation instead of overselling.</p> <p>Create relationships with mutual gain and trust.</p> <p>Create a community of brand influencers.</p>
<b>User-friendly message format</b>	<p>Easily accessible content.</p> <p>Multimedia content to create engagement.</p>

## Appendix 8

## The themes emerged from the content and interview analyses

Theme	Description
Purpose	Communicates the brand's purpose, its meaning and mission.
Design purpose	Portrays one of the main values of the company that is to have purpose with its designs and create meaningful products from excess material.
Product	Content somehow addresses brand's products.
Nature	Nature is portrayed in the content.
Narrative	Narrative-like elements are used in the text that are used to enrich it, such as metaphors and small stories.
Functionality	Different functions and multifunctionality of the product is portrayed.
Trash	Trash is portrayed as valuable material, recycling.
Macro perspective	perspective.
Consumer perspective	The content has a consumer perspective.
Brand values	The brand values are presented in the content.
Celebrity	A celebrity is used in the content to promote the brand.
Sustainability	The aspects of sustainability are addressed in the content.
Transparency	Transparency is addressed in the text.
Finnish brand	Finnish elements of the brand are discussed.
Consumer goods	The products are described as consumer goods, having long product lives, utility products.
Consumers' power	The decisions and consumption behavior of consumers is addressed, highlighting the impact each consumer may have with their consumption.
Sense of community	A sense of community, a movement, is addressed in the content.
Changing the world	The content describes how the brand and the consumer together may change the world with their decisions and consumption.
Humanity	Human aspects are described, alongside with effort to humanize the brand.
The combination of picture & text	The effects of good combination of picture and text is addressed in the content.

## Appendix 9

### Framework for analyzing sustainability aspects in social media content

List of concepts for analysis.

<b>Theoretical Concepts</b>
Consumer perspective
Inspire sustainable mindset & Encourage sustainable consumption
The aspects of sustainability and wellbeing
Rational arguments
Emotional appeal
Feeling of empowerment
Stakeholder engagement
User-friendly message format
<b>Empirical Analysis Concepts</b>
Purpose
Design purpose
Product
Nature
Narrative
Functionality
Trash
Macro perspective
Consumer perspective
Brand values
Celebrity
Sustainability
Transparency
Finnish brand
Consumer goods
Consumers' power
Sense of community
Changing the world
Humanity
The combination of picture & text

List of concepts and their descriptions for analysis.



Theoretical Concepts	Description
Consumer perspective	Communicate sustainability issues of concern to consumers. Include a personal point of reference to the consumers. Be in touch with the everyday life of consumers.
Inspire sustainable mindset & Encourage sustainable consumption	Stimulate a consideration for the results and influence of consumption on people, communities and nature. Encourage sustainable consumption to restrain from acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational consumption.
The aspects of sustainability and wellbeing	Inspire consumers to consider the effects of consumption to their own wellbeing, wellbeing of the community and wellbeing of nature. Inspire temperance instead of excessive consumption by making consumer care for themselves, the community and nature.
Rational arguments	Convincing and sound communications. Knowledge of a brand's sustainability vision and actions. Inform consumers of the benefits from sustainable purchase. Fit sustainability into consumers' lifestyle. Communicate the brand's good citizenship and sustainable actions. Communicate financial benefit from sustainable purchase.
Emotional appeal	Warm glow; Moral satisfaction from contributing to sustainable common good. Communicate the brand's contribution to sustainable common good.  Self-expressive benefits; Psychological benefits from self-expressive sustainable consumption. Utilize status motives for sustainable consumption. Communicate what consumers can convey of themselves with the sustainable purchase.  Nature experiences and imagery; Communicate nature experiences with nature imagery. Communicate care and concern for nature.
Feeling of empowerment	Increase consumers' subjective feeling of empowerment. Make consumers feel their consumption behavior and decisions matter. Convey that by buying the brand's products you can make a difference. Avoid fearful messages and negative vocabulary leading to disempowerment and demotivation. Communicate what other consumers have already done to increase empowerment.
Stakeholder engagement	Transparency & Openness Disclosure: Provide useful and appealing information. Full disclosure with impactful content. Create a sense of belonging in consumers. Be transparent, open and consistent. Communicate of the sourcing, production and distribution of products. Communicate of real topics not marketing messages.  Brand Authenticity Brand Legitimacy: Align brand values with consumer values. Brand Consistency: Have consistency among brand's values, strategy, vision and brand promise. Brand Congruence: Stay true to the brand's own values, do not follow trends.  Interactivity & Dialogue Create two-way communication. Facilitate and encourage interactivity. Give direct encouragement to online action for interactivity. Create conversation instead of overselling. Create relationships with mutual gain and trust. Create a community of brand influencers.
User-friendly message format	Easily accessible content. Multimedia content to create engagement.
Empirical Analysis Concepts	Description
Purpose	Communicates the brand's purpose, its meaning and mission.
Design purpose	Portrays one of the main values of the company that is to have purpose with its designs and create meaningful products from excess material.
Product	Communicates of the brand's products.
Nature	Nature is portrayed in the content.
Narrative	Narrative-like elements are used in the text, such as metaphors and small stories.
Functionality	Different functions and multifunctionality of the product is communicated
Trash	Trash is portrayed as valuable material, recycling.
Macro perspective	The content has a macro perspective to sustainability instead of the brand's perspective.
Consumer perspective	The content has a consumer perspective.
Brand values	The brand values are communicated in the content.
Celebrity	A celebrity is used in the content to promote the brand.
Sustainability	Sustainability is communicated in the content.
Transparency	Transparency is addressed in the text.
Finnish brand	Finnish elements of the brand are communicated.
Consumer goods	The products are described as consumer goods, having long product lives, utility products.
Consumers' power	The decisions and consumption behavior of consumers is addressed, highlighting the impact each consumer may have with their own consumption.
Sense of community	A sense of community, a movement, being part of something bigger, is addressed in the content.
Changing the world	The content describes how the brand and the consumer together may change the world with their decisions and consumption.
Humanity	Human aspects are described, alongside with effort to humanize the brand.
The combination of picture & text	The effects of good combination of picture and text is addressed in the content.



## Appendix 10

**Main themes of analysis associated with each social media post**

Results showcasing the main themes emerged from empirical analysis and associated to each social media post. Explanation of letters: C=content analysis, I=implicit-section of the interviews and A=aided memory-section of the interviews.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Post 1</b>	<b>Post 2</b>	<b>Post 3</b>	<b>Post 4</b>
<b>Purpose</b>		C, I, A		C, I
<b>Design Purpose</b>	C, A	C, I	C	
<b>Product</b>	C, I, A		C, I	
<b>Nature</b>	A	A	C, I, A	C, I, A
<b>Narrative</b>	C, A		C, I, A	C, I, A
<b>Functionality</b>	C, I, A	C, I, A		
<b>Trash</b>	I, A	I, A		
<b>Macro perspective</b>		C, I, A	C, I, A	C, I, A
<b>Consumer perspective</b>	C, A	C, A		A
<b>Brand values</b>	I, A	C, I, A	C, I	C, I, A
<b>Sustainability</b>	I, A	I, A	I, A	I, A
<b>Consumer Goods</b>	I			
<b>Finnish Brand</b>	I, A	A	I	A
<b>Celebrity</b>		C, I, A		C, I, A
<b>Transparency</b>		A	C, I, A	
<b>Consumers' power</b>		I, A	A	I, A
<b>Sense of community</b>	A	I, A		A
<b>Chancing the world</b>		C, I, A		A
<b>Humanity</b>			I, A	
<b>Picture &amp; text combo</b>	I, A	C, A	C	C, A

## Appendix 11

## Conclusions and theoretical contributions to sustainable brand identity communications in social media

Theoretical Concepts	Conclusions & Theoretical Contributions
<p><b>Consumer perspective</b></p>	<p>Different means to convey a consumer perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with communicating sustainability on a general level (macro-theme)</li> <li>-with emphasizing the power individual consumers have and the impact their decisions can have (consumers' power-theme)</li> <li>-with conveying what the consumer can do to change the world (changing the world-theme)</li> <li>-with using rational arguments of the product and tying it to everyday life of consumers (product-theme)</li> </ul> <p>Effects of consumer perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-consumer perspective combined with rational arguments can inspire consumers to rethink their consumption behavior to restrain from excessive consumption, to care for themselves, the community and nature, as well as empowering consumers</li> <li>-consumer perspective may also stimulate sustainable mindset and encourage sustainable consumption by connecting sustainability into the lifestyle of consumers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inspire sustainable mindset &amp; Encourage sustainable consumption</b></p>	<p>New methods to inspire sustainable mindset and encourage sustainable consumption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with a consumer perspective</li> <li>-communicating the power consumers have with their decisions</li> <li>-communicating rational arguments of sustainability and sustainable consumption</li> <li>-evoking a sense of community</li> <li>-with transparency</li> <li>-using celebrities in communications and to represent the brand</li> <li>-with direct communications</li> </ul>
<p><b>The aspects of sustainability and wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Methods to communicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-macro perspective to sustainability</li> <li>-with pictures and text</li> <li>-with humanizing the brand can convey individual's and society's wellbeing, and economic sustainability</li> </ul> <p>Other conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-wellbeing of the society and individual are closely connected</li> <li>-environments' wellbeing may be conveyed with nature imagery, consumers' power and trash-themes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rational arguments</b></p>	<p>Means to communicate that evoke trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-arguments related to finnish nature of the brand</li> <li>-arguments related to celebrity representing the brand</li> </ul> <p>Usage of rational arguments can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-encourage sustainable consumption</li> <li>-stimulate sustainable mindset</li> <li>-evoke warm glow</li> </ul> <p>Rational arguments as benefits to consumers may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-benefits of the product</li> <li>-benefits of supporting the brand and its values</li> <li>-benefits as the moral satisfaction from contributing to common good</li> </ul>

<p><b>Emotional appeal</b></p>	<p>Methods to evoke warm glow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-communicate sense of community, being part of something bigger</li> <li>-communicate brand's sustainability contributions</li> <li>-with transparency</li> <li>-with humanizing the brand</li> <li>-with sense of community</li> <li>-with using inspiring celebrities</li> </ul> <p>Warm glow towards the brand requires a connection to the brand in the sustainability content.</p> <p>Methods to evoke self-expressive benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with transparency</li> <li>-with humanizing the brand</li> <li>-communicating a sense of community, being part of something bigger</li> <li>-not to focus on the product too much</li> <li>-communicate the brand's status</li> </ul> <p>Nature imagery can evoke affective responses towards nature and create mental images of nature. Further, also text regarding nature can support nature imagery and together create an emotional connection to nature</p>
<p><b>Feeling of empowerment</b></p>	<p>Means to evoke a feeling of empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-macro perspective</li> <li>-consumer perspective</li> <li>-consumers power that combines both macro and consumer perspectives</li> <li>-changing the world-theme</li> <li>-connection to the brand in the content evokes particularly a feeling of empowerment towards the brand</li> </ul> <p>Avoid the creation of negative emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with a good combo of picture and text</li> <li>-with not drawing attention into mistakes of competitors</li> <li>-with meaningful post having a purpose</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p>	<p>Means to create transparency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-well-justified, consistent and clear content</li> <li>-with narrative elements such as metaphors, however usage of metaphors might cause confusion and diminish transparency</li> <li>-with tagging relevant individuals into the content</li> <li>-with content that has a connection to the brand</li> <li>-with concrete information of the brand's sustainability</li> </ul> <p>Means to convey brand authenticity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with transparency</li> <li>-with explanatory and well-justified text</li> <li>-with good combo of picture and text, supporting each other</li> <li>-with brand's purpose</li> <li>-with tangible actions aligned with the brand values</li> <li>-with directly stating and explaining the brand values (i.e. openness)</li> </ul> <p>Brand legitimacy may be created with making brand values relatable with the content. Brand consistency is more easily perceived if the consumers are familiar with the brand, demonstrating the importance of consistency among communications channels. Brand legitimacy, consistency and congruence are all important in creating brand authenticity through content.</p> <p>Means to create interactivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-with direct inquiry &amp; indirect encouragement interpreted from the content</li> <li>-with encouraging to follow other sustainable individuals for instance celebrities</li> <li>-with encouraging to follow the brand for more sustainability content later on</li> <li>-with changing the world-theme</li> </ul>

New Concepts	Conclusions & Theoretical Contributions
<b>Consumers' power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-communicate the impact consumers have with their consumption decisions and behavior</li> <li>-evokes warm glow and empowerment</li> <li>-gives both a macro and consumer perspective to sustainability.</li> <li>-encourages to sustainable consumption</li> <li>-stimulates sustainable mindset</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-communicate a sense of belonging, being part of something bigger</li> <li>-closely connected to the consumers' power-theme and changing the world-theme</li> <li>-evokes self-expressive benefits and warm glow</li> <li>-encourages sustainable consumption</li> <li>-stimulates sustainable mindset</li> <li>-creates a community of brand influencers</li> <li>-can be used to build relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Changing the world</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-communicate a larger purpose of changing the world together with the brand by supporting its mission</li> <li>-conveys both consumer and macro perspective as well as sense of community</li> <li>-encourages sustainable consumption</li> <li>-creates empowerment</li> <li>-encourages interactivity</li> <li>- communicates of brand's purpose and sustainability vision</li> </ul>
<b>Humanity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-evoke warm glow</li> <li>-evoke self-expressive benefits</li> <li>-cause emotional connection towards people</li> <li>-create positive associations towards the brand</li> <li>-encourage sustainable consumption</li> <li>- can convey individual and social wellbeing, and economic sustainability</li> </ul>
<b>Combination of picture and text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-choose a picture and text that support each other and convey the same message</li> <li>-created empowerment</li> <li>-conveyed brand authenticity</li> <li>-communicated transparency</li> <li>-conveyed the levels of sustainability</li> </ul>
<b>Narratives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the usage of story-like elements and metaphors, interpretation between the lines</li> <li>-is perceived positive, to give insight and produce mental images</li> <li>-if the narrative does not resonate to consumers can create confusion and negative emotions</li> <li>-enables interpretation "between the lines"</li> <li>-supports brand authenticity</li> <li>-can convey rational arguments</li> </ul>

## Appendix 12

### Example of the three-level coding process from content analysis

Let's look at the process of an initial code, purpose, changing through the three-level coding process into main themes brand values and design purpose. In the first level of coding, purpose was interpreted from the post 2 from the text:

” Our time is one of exaggerated abundance, forcing us to rethink and refine the definition of true purpose. We believe design can have societal responsibility. Through our own design we want to inspire on this journey to meaning. Our mission is to discover new purpose for abandoned resources, essentially trash.”

In the second level, the initial code purpose was divided into new categories. Purpose code was seen to represent in the content the company values, the company roots, the company purpose and specifically the company's design purpose. Whereas in the third level, the themes associated from initial code purpose were combined to two main themes; brand values and design purpose. This specific caption of post two is also connected to other themes associated to the post such as macro perspective. This example of the coding process is also illustrated below.

