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Influencing Ethical Fashion Consumer Behaviour

A Study of UK High Street Retailers

A M James

PhD

2015

Influencing Ethical Fashion Consumer Behaviour

A Study of UK High Street Retailers

Alana Maree James

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the
Faculty of Arts, Design & Social Sciences

March 2015

Abstract

This thesis explores the process of ethical fashion purchasing through a qualitative research approach, to find insights to improve the provision and purchasing of socially responsible fashion on the UK high street. This was achieved through the investigation of both the consumers that purchase womens wear at a mid-market level, but also the retailers who provide the merchandise. The relationship between these two parties was explored, with the communication methods also being investigated. Furthermore, the influence the communication of retailer Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) messages had on the final purchasing behaviour was also a key research area. This distinctive two-sided perspective was utilised to contribute to the creation of new knowledge in the area of ethical fashion purchasing behaviour, and consequently provide new perceptions of how positive, social changes can occur in the fashion industry.

Much of the previous ethical fashion purchasing research has been criticized for several reasons including methodological weaknesses, survey instruments potentially overstating the importance of ethical issues, as well as participants having little to no incentive to answer truthfully (Auger and Devinney, 2007). As a result, researchers in this field have suggested that broader, more rigorous data collection tools need to be developed in order to advance this area of research (Dickson, 2011). With this in mind, a mixed method or *bricolage* approach (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004) was used to not only overcome the methodological issues identified, but to also address the knowledge gaps in a creative and innovative way (Bremner and Yee, 2011). As a consequence of using this approach, the interplay of data collection and analysis has resulted in an iterative process throughout the research undertaken. This iterative nature facilitated a five-stage data collection process, which included an ethnographic style case study with a major high street retailer, a consumer focus group and additional retailer, semi-structured interviews. Between each of the five research stages, analysis and reflection took place, facilitating the development of the next data collection method.

When addressing the study's over-arching question: what influences ethical fashion purchasing, several factors were identified from both a consumer and a retailer perspective. It was found that whilst consumers do have a certain level of knowledge regarding social issues in the garment supply chain, they rarely implement this

knowledge during their purchasing behaviour. The retailers surveyed, being evidenced in several of the additional interviews with CSR representatives, also identified this. However this lack of cohesion between consumer intentions and actual behaviour was found to be heavily influenced by the communication of CSR information from retailers to their customers. As a result, consumers were found to have a lack of understanding of social issues within the garment supply chain. Thus, it was concluded that the contribution to knowledge that this work makes is that an increase of retailer CSR communication, will aid in the development of a relationship between the consumer and supplier to increase connectivity, understanding and empathy, in order to influence ethical fashion purchasing. However, it is paramount that this CSR information is delivered in a simple way, in order for it to be understood by consumers. This was identified as an important factor due to a fundamental misunderstanding found in consumer understanding of the term ethical, and distinguishing this from closely related sustainable connotations.

The approach and methodology utilised in this study was designed to address the problems identified in a new and innovative way, in order to lead to a series of new insights. The study of both the retailer and consumer simultaneously and the utilisation of creative methods attempted to provide a unique approach in dealing with the methodological issues previously mentioned. Due to the nature of the research, it has in the past been approached from a business or marketing perspective, however this study used creative skills and tools commonly used in design research. The value of this research has been evidenced in a results table, where the problems identified were addressed through a series of incremental stages towards change. These have been broken down into long and short-term changes, with the aim to gradually move the industry towards a more socially responsible future.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank my principal supervisor, Professor Paul Rodgers who has seen me through the journey of this PhD. Without his design knowledge and expertise, patience and support, this would never have been possible. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Emeritus Professor Doug Miller who has dedicated time from his retirement to continue this path with me, again his vast knowledge in the subject area, contacts in the industry and many coffee meetings have been invaluable.

I would like to express my gratitude to many friends and colleagues who have been a huge help and support across the four years; Laura for her practical advice and sober dancing, Lizette for the calm coffee breaks with special Dutch cups, Mersha for her PhD advice and tequila parties, Camilla for the encouragement and inspiration, Angela for her many after-work drinks and Bruce for keeping me sane in the final few months. Without the many roles they have played, this journey would have been a lonely one.

Special thanks must go to my Mum, who has been a continuous support not only during my PhD but throughout my education, being the calm voice of reason when my studies have become stressful and chaotic. And finally, I would like to thank my partner Dominic for being a continuous rock during the good times and the bad. The assurance of his love and support has got me through.

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee on 20th February 2012.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 71,457 words

Name: Alana Maree James

Signature:

Date: 2nd March 2015

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

On 24th April 2013, arguably the worst social disaster to occur in the garment production industry happened in Dhaka, Bangladesh (BBC, 2013a). An eight storey commercial building in the region of Savar collapsed, containing several clothing factories, apartments and shops. The garment factories within the complex employed approximately 5,000 people (Zain Al-Mahmood and Smithers, 2013), producing fast fashion garments for UK high street brands such as Mango, Matalan, Primark and Walmart (Nelson and Bergman, 2013). During the investigation into why the factory may have collapsed, several factors were discovered leading up to the event that could have prevented the 1,129 fatalities and a further 2,515 injuries (Butler, 2013). Historically, the upper four floors of the complex were built without a permit (Ali Manik and Yardley, 2013), with the architect of the original build commenting that the structure of the building was not strong enough to bear either the weight of the additional floors, nor the weight and vibrations of the machinery required during garment production (Bergman and Blair, 2013). This advice however was ignored and the companies continued to use the building for garment manufacture. In addition to this warning, the day prior to the collapse saw building inspectors discover cracks in the infrastructure of the building, requesting immediate evacuation and closure. While this warning prompted the shops and banks within the complex to close, one of the garment factories, Ether-Text, declared the building safe, threatening workers that a months wages would be docked if they did not show up to work (Devnath and Srivastava, 2013). The collapse of the Rana Plaza complex is just one example of the social compromise that can occur during the production of cheap, mass-market fashion. It is this type of social compromise that prompted this investigation, with the aim of the insights found to contribute to social change and development in the production of fashion garments.

The scale of the Rana Plaza disaster has lead the collapse to be considered as not only the deadliest garment factory accident in history but also the deadliest accidental structure failure in modern human history (BBC, 2013b). As a consequence, it was thought that sales of fast fashion, high street retailers such as Primark would be affected, with the large-scale media coverage having an influence on consumer purchasing choice and behaviour. However this was quite the opposite, Primark annual profits for November 2013 saw a 44% increase to £514 billion, with a revenue increase to £4.3 billion equating to £11.7 million per trading day (Hawkes, 2013). Many thought that Rana Plaza would be the turning point of the consumption of cheap

fashion, with consumers seeing the effects of the production of such clothing further down the supply chain, however it can be seen in Primark's profits alone, that consumer priorities when purchasing fashion appear to be elsewhere.

Despite the scale of the collapse of Rana Plaza, it is far from the only incident that has occurred in recent years. From late 1990 to the present day, there have been 28 reported incidents in garment factories, with 22 of these having fatalities. During this time, almost 2,000 factory workers have lost their lives, with this figure being from only the incidents that have been reported (Bhuiyan, 2012). Other recent disasters include the Tazreen Factory fire and the Spectrum Sweater Factory collapse, accounting collectively for a further 200 worker deaths (Butler, 2013; Miller, 2013).

On 24th November 2012, a fire broke out at the Tazreen garment factory, on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh (BBC, 2012). The fire killed 124 garment workers and injured a further 200 (Ahmed, 2012). These fatalities however were again due to breaches in building safety standards, where in this case there was a severe lack of fire exits, with existing exits being very narrow and all leading to the source of the fire on the ground floor rather than to outside the building (Alam, 2012). Tazreen produced garments for brands such as the Edinburgh Woollen Mill, C&A and Walmart (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2012), however it was Walmart that flagged this factory in 2011 to have violations and/or conditions which were deemed to be high risk. Highlighted almost a year prior to the fire break out, the incident could again have potentially been avoided (Bajaj, 2012).

On 11th April 2005 the Spectrum Sweater factory collapsed in Savar, Dhaka, killing 62 garment workers and injuring a further 84. After investigation, it was found that the factory floors that collapsed causing this incident, had been illegally built and therefore did not meet building standards and regulations (Miller, 2013). It has been incidents such as Rana Plaza and Spectrum that have prompted initiatives in the clothing industry to be developed in hope that this will prevent further occurrences.

It can be highlighted that the three factory disasters discussed have all occurred in Bangladesh, perhaps due to it being the second largest garment manufacturing country in the world (Paul and Quadir, 2013). Since the Rana Plaza disaster, over 100 apparel corporations have signed and agreed to the Bangladesh Accord, an independent agreement designed to make all garment factories in Bangladesh, safe work places. UK high street retailers such as M&S, Next and Primark have all agreed to the Accord

(Accord, 2014) however it has come under heavy criticism due to the agreement only covering standards of fire and building safety. It could be argued that whilst a building may be safe to work in, the workers may endure other issues of working conditions such as illegal, long hours and wages not meeting minimum wage standards.

This type of agreement has been seen before in the garment production industry with the Asian Floor Wage initiative developed over a number of years and launched in 2009, where trade unions and labour activists across Asia came to an agreement. This was to ensure that garment workers across Asia receive a fair living wage in accordance to the living costs of their specific home country (Asia Floor Wage, 2009). This initiative was again agreed to by a number of high street fashion retailers, however again this faced criticism due to its restrictive nature of addressing multiple social issues.

The full extent of purpose of this research will be discussed later in the chapter (1.2 Purpose of the Research), however it is disasters such as the ones discussed at Rana Plaza, Tazreen Fashions and the Spectrum Sweater factory that has prompted investigations along similar lines of enquiry to this body of research. The consumers wanting fast fashion products available on the UK high street and the retailers who provide such products are the protagonists of this research, with the social compromise occurring in the production of the cheap, mass-market garments being the prominent rationale.

1.1 Setting the Scene

The past 20 years has also witnessed a gradual growth in society's awareness and concern for ethical and sustainable issues and is said to be due to academic interest, increased media levels and a greater choice of green products available (Newholm and Shaw, 2007) and as a reflection, much has been written both in academia and the media leading to the debate of some key issues within the fashion market sector. In addition to increased levels of ethical awareness, on the contrary there have been a series of dramatic changes within the fashion industry that have impacted both consumers and retailers. The growth of the value sector has spread into the fashion market with the fast fashion movement emerging, which has given consumers a taste for trend-led products, in large quantities at a very cheap price. This has resulted in consumers now preferring large quantities of cheap clothing in preference to a lower

number of higher quality items. Possible reasoning behind this change in purchasing responsibility has in the past been suggested, although the rationales have appeared to be quite vague and predictable. Ideas such as price, accessibility and aesthetics have been put forward, yet the depths of consumer behaviour and purchasing hierarchies have been left out of the debate. It has been suggested that consumers harbour feelings of low perceived effectiveness, believing that their change in buying action alone would not make a difference to the wider picture (Ellen, 1994), while it has also been suggested that ethical consumerism in general is an overlooked and under-researched area (Preez, 2003).

The growing awareness of ethical issues can also be directly related to pressure group support, media interest and increased corporate responsibility action on part of the retailers (Strong, 1996). However this change in consumer attitudes cannot be used as an indicator for a change in behaviour. The response that the industry has had in reaction to consumer demand has been labelled as chasing the ethical pound, with funded projects such as Fashioning an Ethical Industry (Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010) and fashion events such as Esthetica (British Fashion Council, 2013). However despite numerous positive schemes the ethical fashion market remains at just 1% of the overall apparel market (Niinimäki, 2010). With this in mind, change in terms of both consumer and retailer behaviour in an ethical fashion context is paramount.

The emergence of the ethically aware consumer can be traced back to the 1960's, which has since forced retailers to take a pro-active approach to the provision of ethical produce (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). This awareness and recognition of retailer action has since escalated with half of the population said to have bought a product or recommended a company due to their ethical credentials (Cowe and Williams, 2001). However it is this consumer intended behaviour translating into actual behaviour that in recent years has been identified as a prominent issue in ethical fashion purchasing. Previous research has identified a distinct disparity in what consumers say and do, which has consequently been labelled the intention-behaviour gap (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Bray et al., 2010; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005; Belk et al., 2005; Auger and Devinney, 2007; Carrington et al., 2010). Whilst this has been investigated previously, no definite solution has been identified and consequently ethical research continues to identify such a gap. This disparity was one research area for this study, where it also aimed to investigate the intervening period between consumer intentions and actual behaviour exploring potential reasoning and influential factors.

1.1.1 The Fashion High Street

The generic UK high street has also been through a number of recent changes. Extensive research investigating these additional changes was commissioned by the UK Government in 2011 and carried out by industry expert Mary Portas. In recent years, Portas has been active in her study of high street retailers often concentrating on small, privately run stores and British made goods. In her 2011 report she begins to untangle the reasoning behind recent changes on the high street and the potential steps that need to be taken in order to save the traditional high street. These contributing factors include the growth of out of town retail parks draining traffic away from the high street, major supermarkets and malls offering convenient, needs-based retailing and the issue of high streets not keeping up with the changing needs of consumers (Portas, 2011). The presence of this investigation emphasises not only the identification of changes within consumer shopping habits, but also the need for further research and a strategy for how these issues can be solved.

The rise of supermarkets is another major concern for the well-being of the high street, with every £1 being spent in shops, 50 pence of that being spent on food and groceries in supermarkets (Portas, 2011). The services that supermarkets are offering is also growing with opticians, tanning centres and travel agents not looking out of place in the average supermarket. It is this element of convenience that the high street is no longer offering to consumers. This is also true in terms of ethical produce, with supermarkets now offering Fairtrade and organic options in a range of goods. Literature relates this to the clothing industry stating that supermarkets have been forced through consumer demand to provide ethical alternatives and question if the high street could go the same way (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). This idea of consumers controlling the goods a retailer sells, shows that the awareness levels of consumers are growing. In support of this argument it can be questioned if it is the retail giants that dictate how we shop, or the other way around (Fox, 2005). However, it is also believed that brands with a strong vision, USP (unique selling point) and ethos are said to be the most successful, not those who extend and adapt their range of supplied goods to fit a market (Arnold, 2009).

In the past concern has been placed on the idea that all UK high streets were beginning to look the same. The term *monoculture* has been coined by researchers (Fox, 2005), while other suggestions have included *clone town Britain* (Portas, 2011). This issue suggested that no high street was individual, but played host to the same brands up and

down the country. However it could be argued that this repetition is no longer relevant, with the number of town centre stores falling by almost 15,000 between 2000 and 2009 with an estimated further 10,000 losses over the coming years. That equates to approximately one in six shops standing vacant (Genecon LLP and Partners, 2011). However this loss is not limited to small and local businesses, the closure of long-standing UK retailer Woolworths in 2009 is a prime example that these changing behaviours can influence even large retailers. Another example of this is the recent announcement from Arcadia boss Sir Philip Green to be reducing the number of stores across the country, whilst he continues to extend the number of Topshop stores abroad (Portas, 2011). This business decision is a direct reflection of the current UK market and the acknowledgement that business may be more successful elsewhere.

This research acknowledges dramatic changes on the UK high streets in recent years, yet leans towards the idea that it is simply the high streets that are not keeping up to date with consumers changing shopping habits. It appears the fashion customer wants convenience when shopping and it is the out-of-town retail shopping centres and supermarkets that appear to be offering this. Free parking, public facilities, warmth and shelter are just some of the convenient advantages that large retail outlets have over the high street. In addition to these, supermarkets also offer value goods at cheap prices whilst being able to be purchased during the weekly shop. In order to compete with these attractive factors, the high street needs to become more diverse and user friendly, offering features such as ethical and organic alternatives. The UK high street ultimately needs to be innovative in their approach to encouraging consumers to return to the traditional town shopping areas.

The change in consumer purchasing behaviour and the need for quantity in preference to quality has consequently resulted in a dramatic change in the traditional fashion cycle. The 2010 WGSN (World Global Sourcing Network) Report (WGSN, 2010) states that new seasonal phasing is increasingly on its way and shoppers should be prepared for up to 12 constant-rolling collections per year. This indicates that the traditional fashion cycle is moving from that of a more traditional two seasons per year to a fast fashion business model, which delivers new trends to consumers on a regular basis. This drip-feed of trends throughout a season would naturally encourage further consumption as consumers feel the need to be up to date with trends and peers.

The WGSN report suggests that pressure on designers to produce extra collections will only intensify, with stores looking for newness, exclusives and more commercial lines

away from what the catwalk currently offers (WGSN, 2010). In addition to the high street brands, luxury designers are also feeling the pressure for an increased number of collections. The introduction of pre-collections is ultimately encouraging the move towards transitional seasons. Ethically conscious designer Stella McCartney has started working to four seasons per annum, introducing her additional Pure Summer & Winter collections. Professor Wendy Dagworthy, then Head of Fashion & Textiles at Royal Collage of Art defended this change of delivery describing it as just one collection but designed with staggered delivery in mind to meet the need for fresh designs (WGSN, 2010).

These highlighted changes in the fashion industry as a whole, continue to reflect the shift in consumer behaviour previously discussed. The high street, and increasingly high-end designers, are acknowledging the consumer thirst for a continuous stream of trends being leaked into stores. It is this element of adaptability and flexibility that the traditional high street needs to also mirror. Where perhaps consumption can be kept to a minimum reflecting Dagworthy's approach, keeping the size of the collection the same but changing the delivery schedules in order to satisfy the consumer needs and wants from fashion.

1.1.2 Fast Fashion

Fast fashion aims to bring catwalk inspired fashion to the masses as quickly and cheaply as possible. This has resulted in a change in fabric and manufacturing quality of clothing, and human compromise in the supply chain (Fletcher, 2008). Spanish multinational Zara are said to be a pioneer in the development of the fast fashion movement. However, Zara originally achieved this by using local production and sourcing strategies, allowing them to deliver up to two shipments per week to store, averaging up to 12 times faster than other retailers. This method is said to have set the bar for other retailers to follow. However, where Zara was once changing the industry, the industry is now changing Zara, as other retailers have adopted alternative methods to meet the consumer demands of cheap fashion delivered quickly (Tokatli, 2007). Despite Zara initially thinking this was an effective business strategy to take, it was also thought that fast fashion goes against the very premise of the fashion industry and is merely a copy and paste exercise, not creative excellence (Barrie, 2009).

The consumer demand for fast fashion has seen a change of consumer attitudes and values moving to a preference of quantity not quality when seeking their next

purchase. However this appeal is described as a basic human need to belong to a specific group of society, which consequently encourages over consumption due to the traditional bi-annual changing fashion trends (Brosdahl, 2007). Young consumers are said to be the most active group of society interested in keeping up with fashion trends and consequently are the biggest consumers of fast fashion (Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009). On the other hand, it has also been highlighted that there has been a change in experience when purchasing fast fashion, moving from that of a high-involvement, pleasurable experience to low-involvement and disposable (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). It is this change in both experience and purchasing behaviour that this research will concentrate on, attempting to outline the rationales behind these changes and providing potential solutions for the reverse of current behaviour.

The current high street leaders in providing fast fashion goods to consumers is Primark, whilst being associated with social supply chain disasters such as Rana Plaza have reported profits for November 2013 up by 44%, with an increase to £514 billion (Hawkes, 2013). With this in mind, it has been highlighted that the fast fashion speed to market (fewer pieces, more often) has resulted in retailers collecting a higher net margin of the retail sale value (Tokatli, 2007). However, when taking into consideration that a fast fashion item is manufactured to be worn only 10 times (Shields, 2008), it is not surprising that the fast fashion customer needs to continue consuming clothing at a rapid pace. This constant turnover of goods has been labelled the Primark Effect (Shields, 2008), with the fast fashion movement being compared to McDonalds; cheap, fast, mass produced, hassle free and reliant on social or environmental exploitation (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). Many academics acknowledge this speed of consumption ((Brosdahl, 2007; Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009; Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Shields, 2008; Tokatli, 2007), other literature however focuses on change stating that the age of frivolous consumption should come to and end in preference for the right behaviour (Singer, 1997).

The production of fast fashion often requires a social compromise within the supply chain in order to meet demanding lead times (Fletcher, 2008), with consequences of this being discussed previously at the beginning of the chapter. These range from not only large scale disasters such as the collapse of Rana Plaza, but also factory working conditions, level of wages paid to workers and the amount of hours worked per week. It is said that the production of fast fashion products has a huge number of costs, the scale and details of which are not yet widely acknowledged. From extensive media coverage the term *sweatshop* is now widely used in relation to the production of

garments. This term reflects the often less than satisfactory working conditions which are subject to the 100 million garment workers worldwide (Lee, 2007, p. 139). These factories are categorised and specially formulated in order to pass audits set in place by even the most ethical of high street names. An audited 5-star factory for example, maybe the shining representative of several poorer shadow factories where the majority of the real labour takes place (Harney, 2008, p. 46).

Along with poor working conditions and long working hours, poor pay can also be an issue. On average a garment worker receives only 0.5% on the retail cost of a garment (Lee and Sevier, 2007). Putting this amount into perspective, a £2.50 basic coloured t-shirt bought on the high-street would result in the workers receiving just over £0.01 per garment, a shocking statistic that the majority of society are unaware of. Former Chief Executive of Marks & Spencer's Stuart Rose, commented on this in the labour Behind the Label 2009 report; 'How can you sell a t-shirt for £2 and pay the rents and pay the rates and pay the buyer and pay the poor boy or girl who is making a living wage? You Cant' (Mcmullen and Maher, 2009). Although production in such factories may be fast, the quality and efficiency of manufacture is questionable, contributing to the lack of productivity (Hawkins, 2006).

1.1.3 Quantity Not Quality

As previously mentioned, the value market sector has made an increased appearance on the UK high street, with sales reporting a growth of 6%, taking its value up to a huge £8.1 billion. Consumers now prefer to buy quantity over quality, which has consequently had a large impact on the high-end luxury sector of the market. The ultimate advantage the value stores have over the luxury brands is that due to an increased number of range deliveries they can stay more up to date on trends whilst remaining competitive on price. Research shows 36% of all adults now shop at the cheaper end of the market, with Primark being their store of preference (Mintel, 2009).

It has been argued that an increased number of offers in-store such as BOGOF (buy one get one free) are seen as an excuse to inflate prices and promote excessive consumption (Arnold, 2009). Recently there has been a growth of the pound shop and the preference value-conscious consumers are paying to this market share in preference to offers being provided by the more traditional store (Portas, 2011). It is this bargain-hunting hunger that allows consumers to feel they are still able to purchase goods, (often a larger quantity) despite the effect the recession may be having on their financial situation. It has been suggested that the actual experience of purchasing is

often the reason a consumer buys goods, with thrill of the buy often being more important than the purchase itself. The increased use of credit is also said to have had an effect on excessive consumption and lack of values. This is due to people no longer having to diligently save in order to be able to afford goods. However it can be argued that the real value clothing sector lies in stores such as TK Maxx, who offer designer goods at a much lower retail price. Thus, purchasing a higher quality garment for often, a fast fashion price (Arnold, 2009).

A further factor that must be considered in the exploration of ethical fashion purchasing would be the impact that the recession has had on consumer purchasing behaviour. Consumers are naturally spending less and reverting back to basics rather than consuming products that have ethical or sustainable credentials. It has been suggested that due to the recession the clothing market is not being properly represented and may be in a temporary state of flux due to the impact effecting individuals differently. Acknowledging this however, could have both a positive or negative effect. On one hand consumers could refer to value stores and look for quantity as a substitute for quality, yet on the other hand a lack of finances could encourage a shift to investment purchasing, buying less overall for a higher quality. In addition to this, research shows that women appear to be hooked on fast fashion and that the recession does not appear to be changing their attitudes (Mintel, 2009).

It has been well recognised that since the economic downturn in 2001, ethical consideration on the part of the consumer has dropped considerably (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005) with more important factors replacing ethical considerations as Arnold (2009) reiterates, 'People start from self, spread to family and community and only then to planet, we are programmed to protect ourselves and others close to us'. This is reflected in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which aims to categorize the varied level of needs a human requires in five key stages; *physiological*, *safety needs*, *social needs*, *esteem* status and *self-actualization* (in ascending order). Research shows that a small sector of better educated, well-off society are moving to the top of Maslow's hierarchy into the self actualization sector (Soloman and Rabolt, 2004). This is where consumers have a need to be involved in something outside of themselves, something precious and almost spiritual. When considering Maslow's theory in relation to purchasing behavior, consumers must reach this final category in order to consciously purchase clothing responsibly. However, a further argument can be highlighted, with research suggesting that ethical consumers can be classified as wealthier and more educated than those who do not purchase ethically (Wehrmeyer, 1992).

1.2 Purpose of the Research

This chapter has described not only the changing attitudes and purchasing behaviour of consumers but also the social consequences of the demand for cheap, poor quality fashion garments in high quantities. The Rana Plaza and Spectrum Sweater factory collapse along with the Tazreen factory fire are a very small proportion of the incidents occurring during the manufacture of fashion products. The ultimate purpose of this research was to highlight these direct supply chain consequences to fast fashion consumers with the hope that large-scale change can be developed with both consumers and retailers alike.

Despite the recognition of the drive behind this research, the catalyst for such behaviour is more deeply rooted in habitual actions and changing attitudes. The need for the investigation of both the consumer and retailer has never been more relevant, with the consumer purchasing process being so closely associated with intervening factors on the part of the retailers (i.e. marketing, advertisement and store ambiance). The continuing production of fast fashion garments consequently means that there remains two distinct markets within fashion; garments which are produced under fair working conditions and those which are not. This instinctively highlights the ethical fashion market and differentiates this with mainstream, high street fashion. The incorporation of ethics into the core business strategy of retailers is the approach that this research takes, with the aim for mainstream fashion to be produced under working condition standards for a fair price. A lack of terminology often allows ethical and sustainable issues to be grouped together, this research will focus specifically on ethical and social issues. Although sustainability will be a consideration due to the terms being very closely interrelated, the purchasing of socially responsible fashion will be the focused area.

Although there has been previous research into many areas this investigation covers, it is the approach the study will take that is unique and consequently provide new insights into previously unresolved issues. There are two key strands of relevant previous research; consumer behaviour and ethical consumption. Whilst this study overlaps with these areas, studying the consumer and the retailer simultaneously in an ethical fashion context provides a new perspective to existing research. Similarly areas such as the intention-behaviour gap have also been explored, where research shows that despite 30% of consumers having the intention of purchasing responsibly, this intention translates into only 3% of actual behaviour, resulting in a disparity between

intentions and behaviour (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Bray et al., 2010; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005; Belk et al., 2005; Auger and Devinney, 2007; Carrington et al., 2010). The research into this area however can be questioned in terms of depths of investigation, where potential solutions have been vague and areas of future action not offered. The study of both the consumer and the retailer has provided crucial results in this avenue of investigation, with the communication of CSR (corporate social responsibility) messages and activities exploring the relationship between the two parties.

The approach taken by this research is influenced by the authors background in design, which may have been a contributing factor towards the new knowledge and insights created. Traditionally, consumer behaviour research has roots from psychology, corporate social responsibility stems from a business context and the ethical fashion market is often explored using a social science approach. The application of design knowledge and a design methodology looks at the previously identified issues within the fashion industry from a new perspective. Previous ethical research has been heavily criticised for the use of a weak and constraint methodology, thus producing a similar set of results each time. A creative methodological approach along with design thinking techniques aimed to take a new, innovative approach to the research.

The relevance of the research from a design perspective could be questioned, however it is not just a creative methodology or a new discipline approach that emphasises the need for development in ethical fashion. The values and philosophy of ethics touches on many areas within fashion design, from the production of garments to the level of consumer consumption and purchasing behaviour. When designing a garment or collection, it is vital that the practitioner is aware of issues surrounding sourcing and manufacture and the implications of such activity. It could be argued that the key understanding of ethics and sustainability in the clothing industry are critical to the successful design and production of fashion garments.

1.3 Research Approach

Through the study of the consumer and the retailer simultaneously, this twofold inquiry provided a platform for cross-checking development strategies for the ethical market and through the study of five key high street retailers (Company A, B, C, D and E) produced a research overview that encompassed the high street clothing sector as a

whole. In order for the key issues or problems identified to be addressed a series of research questions were formulated which remained the focus throughout the duration of the investigation. Five key research questions were formulated and a methodology designed to answer or provide insights into these questions posed. These were as follows:

1. What influences ethical fashion purchasing?
2. Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in the ethical fashion purchasing process?
3. How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?
4. How do retailers implement their corporate social responsibility (CSR) philosophy throughout their business?
5. What methods are utilised by retailers to communicate their CSR messages/actions to consumers?

A combination of primary and secondary research was conducted to again address the research questions set. The primary data was collected using a mixed-method or bricolage approach (Yee and Bremner, 2011) with this mix of qualitative and quantitative tools also being reflected in the analysis techniques used. Research methods such as interviews and creative focus group activities were utilised, while interpretation methods such as content analysis and coding techniques were predominantly applied. However where quantitative values were being compared, theories such as Pearson's Coefficient theory was used to allow numeric data to be analysed for patterns and correlations.

The methodology used was structured in a five-stage process, with each stage being conducted, analysed and preliminary conclusions reached before moving on to the next. This iterative process allowed for each consequential stage of work to be influenced and constructed in light of the results from the previous. The five-stage methodological process was conducted as follows:

- Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group
A series of creative activities carried out to explore the purchasing behaviour of an ethically aware consumer group
- Stage 2 – Initial Retailer Case Study (Company A)
A three-week period spent working with Company A, where a series of observations and interviews took place.
- Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey
A wide spread online survey, exploring consumer opinion of the CSR communication currently being used by retailers, and how this could be improved to better meet their needs.
- Stage 4 – In-store and online Communication Study
A secondary observation study, where the CSR communication of the five surveyed retailer was analysed in-store and online from the perspective of a customer.
- Stage 5 – Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)
The final four semi-structured interviews with CSR representatives from the remaining retailers, looking at CSR communication and moving the industry forward.

The consumer sample participants used were predominantly individuals that possessed a prerequisite level of ethical knowledge. This was due to the intention-behaviour gap (as defined in section 1.2 of this chapter) being explored in the addressing of Research Question 2, where the existing awareness levels are paramount. The issue of consumer sampling will be discussed later in more detail in Chapter 3, however it is to be acknowledged at this stage that previous consumer investigations have also come under heavy criticism as they often look at the extreme typologies of consumers (Szmigin et al., 2009). This is due to these groups of consumers being either heavily engaged with ethical issues or the contrary, not engaged at all. This research required a sample of consumers who had an existing level of consumer awareness, neither extreme group of consumers were studied. This approach again made this research unique in its approach when compared to previous lines of enquiry. The five retailers used were chosen due to their presence on the UK high street and their provision of mid-market fashion to the masses. All five companies were comparative in nature, with

the provision of women's wear being essential. For full company profiles, see page 156, table 6.1.

1.4 Conclusion

The primary aim of this thesis was to explore further the consumer purchasing process through a predominantly qualitative research approach, taking the insights found with the aim of improving the provision and purchasing of socially responsible fashion on the UK high street. This was achieved through the investigation of both the consumers that shop at the mid-market, high street level, but also the retailers who provide the merchandise. This relationship was further explored with the communication between the two also being investigated. Furthermore, the methods and techniques used to share the knowledge within this relationship and the influence this has on the final purchasing behaviour was also a key research area. This distinctive dual focused approach has contributed to the creation of new knowledge in the area of ethical fashion purchasing behaviour and consequently provided new perspectives of how positive changes can occur through the incorporation of social responsibility on the UK high street.

Recent dramatic changes in society have further made this area of research more complex, with several consequential changes becoming involved. However the fast fashion movement has been the key change for the fashion industry, where the fast delivery of cheap, trend-led product has resulted in social compromise within the garment supply chain. It is this compromise alongside changing consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour that has formed the focus of this study.

This thesis acknowledges that the ethical purchasing process is not one of a linear course and that there are many factors on a macro and micro level that will affect a consumer's behaviour. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these factors can range from a social level such as the recession or a shift in the provisions of high street stores, to elements implemented by the retailers themselves such as advertising or promotional offers. The other side of the argument recognises more positive views, questioning if the recession has had a positive effect on ethical purchasing as moral values are being adjusted. It has also been seen as a catalyst in encouraging consumer to consider purchases more carefully, which may result in an increase in ethical purchasing (Arnold, 2009).

It is also to be acknowledged that the exploration of ethical fashion purchasing is complex, with previous research failing to reach firm conclusions to push the industry forward. Methodological approach has often been the criticised area, however the study of the retailer and consumer simultaneously through a creative process, aimed to overcome previously difficulties found.

The remainder of this thesis will elaborate on many of the issues touched upon during the chapter, through the thorough exploration of secondary literature, the conceptual framework of the investigation will be discussed. Acknowledging previous methodological difficulties, Chapter 3 will provide a succinct overview of the approach taken to the study and the way this study overcame these difficulties in order to address the research questions set. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will delve deeper into the details of the research, chronologically detailing the iterative process undertaken, leading to the presentation of results and the implications this data has on the study overall. The thesis will conclude with a discussion of the conclusions which were drawn from the research results and how the research questions have been addressed and answered. The contribution of new knowledge is presented, framing this within the context of existing literature and finally concluding how this research could be taken further for future research activities.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2. Introduction

Ethical considerations in the fashion industry are a complex and often misunderstood area of knowledge (Preez, 2003) with terminology such as ethical fashion often being described as an oxymoron due to many contradictory factors (Egan, 2011). The varied scope of literature utilised throughout this investigation intended to offer a broad and diverse viewpoint, with the aim to create a greater level of understanding and clarity surrounding social implications in the production of fashion garments. This review contributed to the creation of a conceptual framework within the context of the study, which was drawn upon in the approach taken to the collection of primary data. The literature explored has come from a number of sources including academic journal articles, non-government organisation (NGO) literature, specific brand and retailer publications, a range of subject specific books, blogs and newspapers.

The outline of the conceptual framework has been illustrated in Figure 2.1, showing the three focus areas within the investigation: the consumer, the retailer and ethical values. The focus on these areas is in direct relation to the research questions established, as previously discussed in Chapter 1 (1.3 Research Approach). When applying the context of the problem being addressed, within the three key areas there are a number of interrelationships that needed to also be considered and explored. These sub-areas of investigation not only provided a connection between the main focus areas of the study, but were again a direct response to the research questions set. To further explore the relationship between the consumer and retailer, the communication of CSR messages and activities was introduced in connection with Research Question 5. Awareness and knowledge is the connecting area of research between consumer and ethical values, further exploring the perceptions of the terminology used and how this knowledge influences a consumer's purchasing behaviour. This would again be as a direct response to Research Questions 1, 2 and 3. The final sub-area of investigation would be corporate social responsibility (CSR), further exploring the relationship between ethical values and the retailer. This again aimed to address Research Questions 1 and 4. The red, hatched area within Figure 2.1, indicates the positioning of this research in the context of the key and sub-areas of investigation.

This chapter aimed to explore the complexities of ethical fashion research, providing a structured argument from existing literature concepts. The review has been considered using the research questions and conceptual framework as direction for the body of

secondary research. In addition to existing literature, previous research was considered in the context of research methods and approaches that have been utilised, with a critical perspective of how this research overcame methodological issues previously identified. Literature helped establish a working definition for the term ethical, taking into consideration existing terminology and the implications such clarity could have on future consumer and retailer actions. The consumer purchasing process was also contextualised, taking into consideration influential factors and justification strategies that the consumer may often use. The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential solutions previously proposed and the position this research takes in view of this literature discussion.

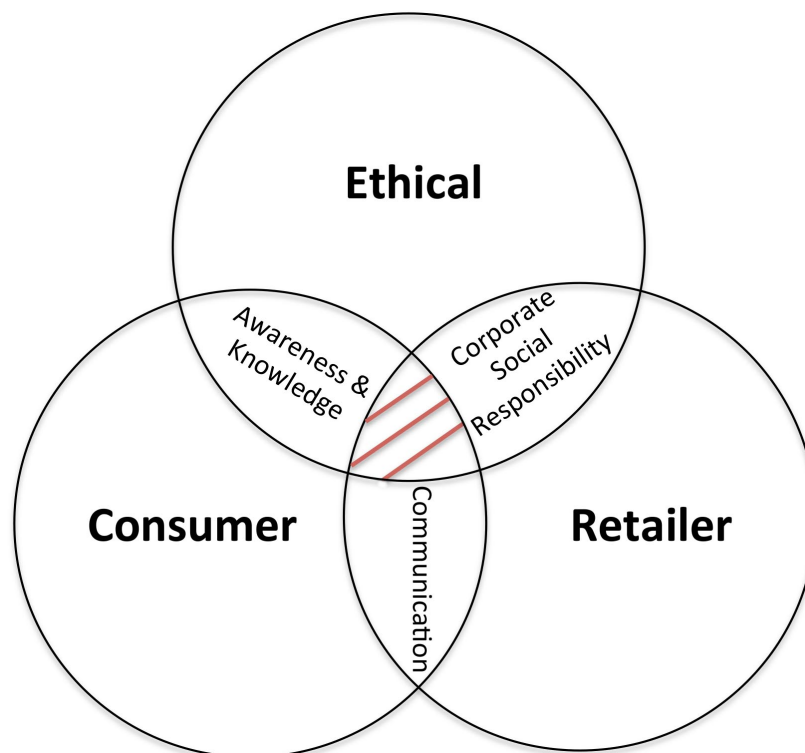


Figure 2.1 – Conceptual Framework

2.1 Defining Ethical

Defining ethical as an understandable term has proven difficult for researchers and academics alike. There is currently no industry standard or working definition for the term and consequently is often a misunderstood and confused area. It has been said that the definition has become an issue with factors often being subjective or situational (Bray et al., 2010). The lack of precision in defining this area has resulted in an array of inter-related terminology being used (Szmigin et al., 2009). It has been utilised to

cover a range of activities in the clothing industry including; worker rights, transport, chemicals used and the actual processing of the garment (dying, finishing etc.). However this raises an argument that if a garment is ethically compliant in terms of raw material, for example, but then is produced in a factory that does not meet regulation, is the garment ethical or not ethical? This argument could also be reflected in the brand of Fairtrade. This certification currently only refers to the raw material, in the case of the clothing industry this can only be applied to cotton. It has therefore been suggested that due to the whole of the supply chain not being covered the application of a certification can be contradictory and misleading for the consumer (Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010).

To refer to the origins of the term ethical, it derives from the meaning *arising from character*, the Greek *ethikos* or *ethike* and the Latin *moralis*. They also carry the connotation of arising from habit or custom (Baggini and Fosl, 2007). These definitions however rely on the subconscious of the individuals being aware of what may be wrong or right behaviour. This appears again to be a very hard area to define and could be described as far too subjective to be relied upon.

Aristotle described human beings as rational animals, implying that humans begin to reason using techniques of logic, science and analysis (Baggini and Fosl, 2007). This assumption of humans being rational again is potentially flawed, as it relies on the specific individuals use of their rational sense when making decisions. A further issue is that this theory depends on the individual initially having this ethical knowledge and implementing this awareness level when making relevant purchases. How attitudes and intentions translate into actual behaviour shall be discussed in more detail later in the chapter (section 2.2.3 – The Intention Behaviour Gap).

Taking quite a realistic viewpoint when discussing ethics, it has been suggested that the term ethical is far too broad in its definition, too loose in its operations and too moralistic in its stance (Devinney et al., 2010). They continue to reiterate an earlier point, leading them to the conclusion that ethical consumption is therefore a myth. This argument again raises the issue of ethical awareness levels amongst consumers. The individuals perception and understanding of the term could also be an issue. It is acknowledged that consumers do not currently have enough information and understanding of the term ethical to make a fully informed purchasing decision (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). Another practical line of reasoning would be the idea of a moral relativist, who believes that all people do not hold or obey by the same morals and

ethics during their day-to-day lives (Baggini and Fosl, 2007). Again this reflects an earlier point, into the different ways individuals will choose to use their own ethical values and ultimately how these attitudes are translated into actions. This research aimed to take a more realistic approach to this line of enquiry, trying to acknowledge that individual consumers are different in their attitudes and behaviour and that large grouped assumptions are impractical.

2.1.1 The Ethical Fashion Market

As previously mentioned the ethical clothing market remains at just 1% of the overall apparel market (Niinimäki, 2010), however it can be argued if this 1% market share meet the needs of ethically aware consumers. There has been much literature published regarding the high street not offering adequate amount of ethical alternatives or options (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). However this raises a much larger discussion regarding the ethical market segmentation, in the way the majority of research in this area observes ethical alternatives or concessional ranges. This research aims to look to potential solutions with the objective of integration and adaptation of traditional ranges, targeting the fundamental business strategy behind the production of such garments, in preference to offering ethical alternatives. This also raises a further question; if there are ethical ranges in store, under what conditions have the other ranges been produced? The savvy high street consumer should be asking such questions. Niinimäki (2010) raises the issue of value in clothing, and suggests that this can be created when meeting the need of consumers, consequentially extending the lifecycle of garments.

The low percentage of ethical market segmentation in the apparel market has also been blamed on ethical produce often costing more, or in the case of fair trade, a premium being added. Although the logical argument would be, if value sector garments are produced in less than satisfactory conditions, then in comparison ethical produce will cost more. However it is well recognised in previous research that consumers would make more ethical choices if they did not have to pay more for these options (Bray et al., 2010). In addition to a price reduction consumers would also like further information and more choice in the range of clothing available (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). Devinney et al., (2010) however argue that the most successful ethical products, are those that are not only ethically compliant but those that also fulfil a market niche. This approach reflects that being taken by this investigation, acknowledging that to develop the ethical market, a more mainstream attitude needs to be taken. The idea of

integration is also highlighted by Niinimäki (2010) where it is questioned why there appears to be two separate markets, ethical and non ethical, and why this gap remains so.

2.1.2 High Street Availability

The high street in recent years has undertaken a number of large changes, with not only the consumer needs changing but also the type of stores available. Earlier, as detailed in chapter 1, Portas (2011) highlighted that the high street has not kept up with these changes and as a consequence many shops now stand vacant. This is also true for the facilitation of the ethical market, with ethical food produce being readily available but not fashion garments. Ritch and Schroder (2009) also concur with this point, stating that the ethical food and cosmetic market appear to be catered for, but fashion remains lagging behind. On the generic UK high street brands such as Lush and the Body Shop, who offer organic, non-animal tested products are readily available, whilst individual stores and supermarkets facilitate the ethical food market. It is this inconvenience of ethical fashion availability that may be to blame again for the current small market segment. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) believe that consumers do not need to be inconvenienced and that ethical fashion products need to be readily available for purchase. This disparity in the availability of food and cosmetics in comparison to clothing has been blamed on the clothing supply chain being more complex and therefore less transparent. It is thought that more details need to be provided, such as country and grade of manufacture for the apparel industry (Niinimäki, 2010), which would only make the auditing process more lengthy and complex. A further argument is the social status that ethical produce currently has, with organic or Fairtrade food thought to be quite fashionable and trendy (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). This shift to social acceptance of ethical fashion could be the key to raising not only the consumer awareness of ethical issues but also increase the overall market segmentation in the apparel sector.

In recent years high street brands have begun to either house ethical or sustainable brands or produce small in-house ranges that take on an ethical angle. Examples of these would be fair trade fashion pioneer People Tree in Topshop and H&M's production of the recycled fibre range Eco-conscious. Allanna McAspurn, UK manager of Made By (A European not-for-profit organisation with a mission to make sustainable fashion common practice and improve environmental and social conditions in the fashion industry) believed that such inclusion of ethical ranges on the high street

is a positive step forward for the fashion industry. She thinks that they will be beneficial in terms of raising consumer awareness levels and raising the ethical fashion profile. Whilst brands such as People Tree work towards extending their socially aware policy throughout their supply chain, it could be questioned that if H&M's Eco-conscious range claims to affect only the raw material, are they aware of the conditions these garments are produced under? This again reiterates an earlier argument of ethical policies only complying with one element of the overall supply chain.

2.2 The Ethical Consumer

Devinney et al., (2010) believe that the term *ethical consumer* needs to be approached with caution as there are many influential factors that can effect the decision making process. Whilst Wehrmeyer (1992) goes as far as narrowing down the ethical consumer profile said to be educated, urban, AB socio-economic and often married with double incomes. Although this research acknowledges Wehrmeyer's point of view, this study recognises that this level of clarity and precision cannot be relied upon. Through the research process and the literature search it can be identified that there are many contributing elements to the consumer and their attitudes and behaviours, and that such a linear approach to the ethical consumer profile cannot be taken.

It is to be acknowledged that every consumer is individual regardless of their background and interests, and therefore the key is to identify their specific needs (Barrie, 2009). However previous research has tended to group consumers together in creating a typology (Clouder and Harrison, 2005; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Szmigin et al., 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009; Mintel, 2007), where realistically there is little consistency in demographics and consequential behaviour (Devinney et al., (2010)). These typologies aim to categorise consumers into generalised groups ranging from the non-ethical to the super-ethical. For example, Clouder and Harrison (2005) divide consumers into three key groups; distancing, integrated and rationalising. Brands and retailers also adopt this approach with Company A for example, producing groups of consumer tribes including: no consideration, don't believe they can help, average, willing but don't know how and green consumers.

It is believed that the lack of connectivity and therefore compassion towards the social factors in the garment supply chain can often lead to non-ethical purchasing. Carrigan

and Attalla (2001) believe that the consumer importance of self continues to emerge, where if unethical behaviour affected them personally, they may care more. Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) has also been said to have an influential impact on ethical purchasing. This is the extent to which a consumer feels that their individual contribution will make a difference (Ellen, 1994). This relates directly back to consumers wanting to feel like they are part of a group or tribe (Brosdahl, 2007), which is where a consumer typology has the potential to have a positive influence on ethical consumer behaviour.

It has been found that there are more ethically conscious consumers than previously thought (Szmigin et al., 2009) with 57% of consumers claiming that they would not shop somewhere if the store or brand had affiliations with child labour (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). However it can be argued that this expression of ethical concern does not reflect the current statistics of the 1% ethical market segment (Niinimäki, 2010). The more realistic viewpoint perhaps comes from Devinney et al., (2010) where the actual existence of the ethical consumer is questioned, stating that the ethical consumer is a myth due to it representing a role model that does not currently exist. This ideology is recognized in this research, acknowledging that consumer behaviour could be described as fickle and very unpredictable. In preference to the term ethical consumer, it has been suggested that consumer social responsibility is used, which can be defined as the deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices based on personal and ethical beliefs. This approach describes ethical consumption in a more real-time manner, suggesting it to not yet be habitual but however possible depending on the individual.

Plato and Aristotle once stated that life should be based on a series of good actions and that we should strive to be good and virtuous in those actions. This can be directly applied in the process of ethical consumption, implying that individuals should take a more in-depth view of, in this case the clothing supply chain, prior to making a purchasing decision. However it is said that well-informed consumers are challenging retailers in their ethics (Strong, 1996), taking a much more hands-on approach to demanding the availability of ethical goods. On the other hand, consumers are said to care more about the colour of a trainer, for example, than the conditions in which it had been produced (Devinney et al., 2010). The exact typology of the consumer cannot be pinpointed, whereas the behaviour of an individual also cannot be categorised. Where a consumer may purchase in an ethical manner one day, the next day the behaviour may be completely different. There are too many influential factors intervening in the

consumers purchasing process for future or habitual behaviour able to be predicted. These intervening attributes and the consumer purchasing process shall be discussed in more detail later in the chapter (section 2.2.2 – The Purchasing Process).

2.2.1 Awareness and Knowledge

A lack of ethical behaviour is said to often be due to low awareness levels and an overall lack of knowledge (Ellen, 1994). However, 52% of consumers in the UK admit to be ethically aware but are currently not actively purchasing ethically (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005). This relationship between the knowledge/awareness levels and actual behaviour is an area that this research explored further as a well informed consumer is said to be the key in understanding the ethical decision making process (Newholm and Shaw, 2007).

An underlying argument within the debate of ethical awareness levels is the idea of consumers having enough knowledge (or not) in order to make a well-informed decision. Whilst Ritch and Schroder (2009) believe that a fully informed consumer is unattainable, it is also thought that growing levels of ethical awareness is due to academic interest, increased media levels and a greater choice of ethical products (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). However, researchers believe that consumers think more ethically than they actually do. This is said to be due to weak research methods being used, leading to inflated measure of intentions (Carrington et al., 2010). Ellen (1994) reiterates this point, as consumers are not as knowledgeable as originally thought, and not aware enough to make an informed decision.

As previously mentioned, previous research has seen many consumer typologies developed, however these typologies can also be developed as an indication of a consumer's awareness and knowledge levels of ethical issues in the fashion industry (Clouder and Harrison, 2005; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Szmigin et al., 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009; Mintel, 2007). These provide categories or levels where consumers can be grouped together in terms of their ethical knowledge and behaviour. Example typology categories include; not noticed an issue, aware but not greatly concerned, aware and concerned but have not taken action, concerned and intended to take action, concerned and taken minor action and concerned and taken major action (Freestone and Mcgoldrick, 2007).

Whilst methods of better informing consumers of ethical issues, have in the past been criticised due to the true underlying message being hidden in an attempt to make ethical issues more popular (Devinney et al., 2010), a direct link to the amount of knowledge a consumers has and the method used to inform has been found. These methods of communication will be discussed later in more detail later in this chapter (Section 2.3.2 – Communication Methods)

Niinimäki (2010) believes that there is a direct correlation between the quantity of information provided and more well-informed, educated decisions being made. It has been proven that it is easier to educate consumers outside of a store situation and have in-store advertisement as a confirmation of knowledge (Berry and McEachern, 2005). It is this level of information delivery that needs to be considered from a social marketing perspective, which will again be discussed in more detail later in the chapter (Section 2.3.2a – Social Marketing).

To refer to an earlier point, despite the levels of knowledge and ethical awareness, it comes down to the individual to use this information to inform their decision making process and purchasing behaviour. The 2010 Co-operative Ethical Consumerism report states that consumers are highly aware of ethical issues and are ready to put their money where their mouths are (Cowe and Williams, 2001). However it is thought that the awareness of an issue will only come if consumers think it is sufficiently important compared to other imperatives in their lives (Foxall, 2005).

Organisations such as Traidcraft and Café Direct have been persistent in their delivery of both products and information in past years, with a large proportion of consumers now being aware of such brands. It is this persistence and consequently awareness levels that have changed consumer's issue focus from environmental to social (Strong, 1996). McAspurn from Made-By believes this shift in awareness focus to be true, with more consumers now having a firm ethical awareness in preference to just green environmental knowledge. This research has concentrated on consumer awareness levels of ethical issues, working to the definition and conceptual framework formulated through the study. Whilst a large proportion of consumers do not have a knowledge level that would account as an informed decision, the use of this knowledge remains subjective and individual to each consumer. Innovative and forward-thinking methods need to be adopted to inform consumers, with these methods relating directly to the knowledge and how this can be applied to future behaviour.

2.2.2 Ethical Purchasing Behaviour

During the purchasing process there are many opportunities for the consumer to be influenced through a number of different channels. These influential factors range from advertising and price promotions, to the weather and even the mood of the individual. All these intervening elements have the chance to change and persuade the consumer to alter their intended behaviour, differing from what they had initially set out to do. In addition to situational factors there are also fixed factors that cannot be altered by chance, but may play a huge role in effecting the consumer's final purchasing decision. Examples of these factors are price, availability, size and design, all of which are out of control by the consumer yet can affect them in the same way as the situational factors.

Existing literature focuses heavily on price being a key influential element during the purchasing process. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the recession has had a significant impact on consumers and their purchasing behaviour, with a large proportion of consumers now favouring the value end of the fashion market (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). The Financial Times highlights this comparison of price to other influential aspects; 'the decision to buy an ethical brand over a conventional alternative is also influenced by a number of other factors including; brand awareness, the importance of other product criteria, the extent to which buying and ethical product implies an inconvenience or product compromise, if at all, and of course price' (Davies, 2007). Cowe and Williams (2001) also question this trade-off of ethics for price asking are ethics overwhelmed by value for money, as price dominates most shopping decisions. Both these arguments presume that people are forsaking ethical choices for a more value product and whilst consumers shop on a budget, ethical purchasing cannot be achieved. Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that the most important purchasing criteria is price, value, quality and brand familiarity. The fact that ethical is not one of the purchasing priorities indicates that consumers will look for all or some of these factors in a product before ethics is even considered. In addition to socio-economic positioning, it is thought that culture also plays a role within the purchasing hierarchy (Belk et al., 2005).

A further issue that is often said to impede further ethical behaviour is the lack of choice and availability (Bray et al., 2010; Niinimäki, 2010; Arnold, 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). As mentioned earlier, whilst ethical food and cosmetics are readily available on the UK high street, clothing remains virtually unattainable. Niinimäki (2010) believes that the lack of trend-led ethical clothing is responsible for the limited

consumer interest in ethical issues. This idea of compromise arises again, as if the consumer is wanting to purchase ethically they have to renounce trend led fashion for that which is ethically compliant. Arnold (2009) claims that the fashion market needs to combine ethical values with key trend aesthetics in order to be successful. However a more realistic view of this compromise situation is to acknowledge that for the majority of consumers ethics is not a high priority when purchasing clothing. McAspurn reiterated this point recognising that ethics adds value to clothing, however it is not the sole choice for consumers during the purchasing process.

In addition to the issues previously discussed, scepticism of product labelling on the part of the consumer could also be an influential factor (Bray et al., 2010). As mentioned earlier, there is existing doubt surrounding the effectiveness of an ethical label in terms of delivering an overdose of information to the consumer. This cynicism has also been said to extend towards the brand or retailer behind the ethical claims, with Cowe and Williams (2001) believing that corporate cynicism, consumer disillusionment and the disinterested generation of consumers could kill off the ethical movement. Whilst negativity towards labelling and fashion retailers is acknowledged, to influence ethical fashion purchasing, this research worked to explore further the idea of combining ethical values with mainstream trend led fashion. This also refers back to the idea of there being two separate markets opposed to one inclusive ethical industry (Niinimäki, 2010). However in order to move towards a more mainstream ethical industry, further research and enquiry must first take place

Ethical purchasing is often related to the trade off or compromise of factors such as price, style of choice in order to be able to purchase ethical goods. The term flexibility has been applied to ethical purchasing, as the need for balancing ethical ethics and values with the practicality of everyday life is needed (Szmigin et al., 2009). It is when this balance of ethics and everyday practicalities cannot be balanced that the consumer may enforce justification strategies. This is almost a rationalisation with their own ethical values as they consciously carry out what they know to be unethical behaviour. This has been described as consumers justifying decisions through the attachment of logic and meaning (Auger and Devinney, 2007). This theory does however again rely on the consumer being informed prior to this strategy being implemented. Other justification strategies includes consumer purchasing goods produced in the UK or second hand mass-produced items as a substitute for actual ethical purchasing. These techniques have been referred to as neutralisation, where consumers justify or dilute

their unethical behaviour through strategies, whilst denying all responsibility of negative, consequential effects (Chatzidakis et al., 2007).

This leads to the argument of consumers often feeling no connection or compassion with the social impacts on the supply chain. This can therefore again lead to the justification of unethical behaviour as consumers are not aware (or ignore) the negative implications their purchasing behaviour can lead to. Niinimäki (2010) reiterates this point claiming that people subconsciously make decisions benefitting either their individual or collective needs. This lack of connectivity also has a reverse argument where consumers feel that their contribution towards ethical behaviour will have little to no positive effect. Ellen (1994) coined the term *perceived consumer effectiveness* (PCE), which describes the extent to which a consumer's contribution is thought to make a difference. This is related directly to *low perceived consumer effectiveness* (LPCE) describing the degree to which a person feels they have control over their behaviour. When a consumer feels they have little control or effect in their behaviour, it has been proven to reduce behavioural intentions and consequently actual behaviour. Reassurance strategies of consumer effectiveness could be one approach that could overcome this issue.

2.2.3 The Purchasing Process

Throughout this chapter, the notion of a consumer purchasing criteria has become a reoccurring discussion. This is the idea that a consumer has a hierarchy or priority factors that they specifically look for prior to purchasing goods. Ritch and Schroder (2009) highlight the fact that it is not only in ethical fashion purchasing that this complexity of conflicting values within the purchasing criteria occurs. This relates to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it reflects the gradual increased needs from (in this case) clothing and how this can relate to the various stages of the purchasing criteria. Freestone and McGoldrick (2007) believe that UK and USA consumers are beginning to show signs of reaching the self actualisation stage that Maslow describes, indicating that they are beginning to consider ethics in their purchasing behaviour. To use a more specific example, it has been indicated that humans require three key elements from fashion; psychological, to be seen as fashionable, physical, body shape or functional purpose and externally elicited work or occasion dress code (Ming et al., 2004). This is loosely modelled considering practical elements that consumers need from clothing, without considering specifics in relation to context or the individual at hand.

Whilst working within a purchasing criteria a series of trade offs occur, deciding what factors are compromised for others (Freestone and McGoldrick, 2007). This has been described as a decisional balance scale, where trade offs between anticipated gains and losses associated with behaviour are decided (Carey et al., 2008). However due to this purchasing criteria being very personal and subjective it would be very difficult to categorise or model such a detailed process. Szmigin et al., (2009) reflect this individual approach recognizing that a flexible decision making process needs to be utilised, treating each case as individual whilst considering the contextual and social factors effecting different situations. Recognition of an individual and personal approach to the understanding of the purchasing criteria is widely acknowledged during this research, allowing for a more flexible and adaptable attitude towards the data collection series.

The understanding of the consumer purchasing process, is vital for this area of research as it will help gain insights into not only the previously discussed intention behaviour gap but also the ethical purchasing debate overall and the influential factors behind such behaviour. The purchasing process has been described as a three stage process; input, where factors that effect the purchasing decision are considered, process, where the need recognition of a product is recognised, competitor analysis carried out and a decision takes place and output, where the purchase of an actual product and post-purchase evaluations are conducted (Schiffman et al., 2008). However this process has also been considered in terms of an ethical decision process where it moves to a four stage process; recognition, application of ethical judgement, putting ethical actions before that of others and finally, ethical action (Rest, 1986). This additional stage in the purchasing process is that of ethical consideration, where a moral or value element from existing attitudes may infiltrate the decision of the consumer and effect the final product selection made. Whilst this model clearly categorises a time when ethical considerations should take place, it is also thought that ethical consideration can take place at any point of the product life cycle. For example, ethical contributions can also occur during the product disposal in terms of recycling and/or appropriate disposal. This arguably could also be perceived as ethical behaviour as a moral attitude needs to be implemented in order to achieve the behaviour. Newholm and Shaw (2007) consider however a different fourth stage of the process; perceive needs, gather information, the utilisation of their perceptions of the social context and finally develop behavioural intentions. The majority of the decision making process, in their opinion, occurs prior to the development of a behavioural intention, which is not considered by the previous models of the purchasing process discussed.

Whilst ethical purchasing behaviour can be described as the expression of an individual's judgement in their decision process, this can also be expressed in the choice to not purchase a specific product, due to disagreeing with a company's ethics (Smith, 1995). This way of thinking can also be implemented in purchasing behaviour models, where the majority of models demonstrate ideal ethical behaviour in preference to unethical behaviour. However, this again reflects the point of Devinney et al., (2010) where they argue that the ethical consumer is merely a myth due to the model ethical behaviour used to describe such a consumer does not actually exist. This approach could be applied to the ethical purchasing process and perhaps a model of seemingly perfect ethical behaviour also does not exist, and that behaviour can be a much more unpredictable and irregular process.

The majority of purchasing behaviour models are heavily influenced by The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), where it is thought that behaviour as a theory of attitudes and that behavioural relationships seek to provide an explanation, linking attitudes with subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, intentions and behaviour in a fixed casual sequence. However researchers have since adapted and changed this theory due to results from further research carried out. For example, further areas for consideration includes implementation intention, situational context and actual behaviour control. It is thought that the utilisation of these additional elements can not only be used to demonstrate the purchasing process but also be used to encourage consumers to purchase in a more ethical manner.

2.2.4 The Intention Behaviour (IB) Gap

As touched upon throughout this chapter, recent research exploring consumer ethical attitudes and behaviour, has lead to the identification of a distinct disparity in the individual's purchasing intentions and the translation of these intentions into actual behaviour (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Bray et al., 2010; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005; Belk et al., 2005; Auger and Devinney, 2007; Carrington et al., 2010). This is more commonly known as the intention behaviour gap, however it has also been known as the 30:3 syndrome (Cowe and Williams, 2001). The numeric reference indicates that 30% of consumers claim to have ethical purchasing intentions, whilst only 3% of consumers actually purchase ethically (Bray et al., 2010). It has been said that the ethical claims of consumers by far outreaches their actual behaviour, which may be due to social desirability (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005).

This idea of consumers providing socially acceptable answers during research has come up as a reoccurring issue in ethical purchasing research, with methodologies being explored in order to avoid this (Dickson, 2013; Auger and Devinney, 2007). Previous research indicates that 52% of the British public claim to be concerned with ethical issues but admit to not following these concerns up with appropriate purchasing behaviour (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005). These statistics confirm that an intention-behaviour gap exists, yet the acknowledgement of this disparity is not enough, the reasoning behind this could indicate how intentions could be translated into behaviour. However on the contrary, the intention behaviour theory needs to be considered, where consumers may go shopping with the intention of not purchasing ethically, but end up purchasing a product that is ethical. In literature this has previously been unconsidered and could again be an area for future research, providing potential insights into the existing intention-behaviour gap.

The reasoning behind the intention-behaviour gap has been the focus of recent research in the area of ethical purchasing. Carrigan and Atalla (2001) believe that ethical behaviour is not part of an individual's purchase decision criteria, whilst Scholl et al. (2010) thinks that there is not enough information provided and therefore the consumer cannot make informed decisions. On the other hand, the depth and methods of data collected is blamed, with Preez (2003) thinking that the intention behaviour gap is an overlooked and under researched area and Auger and Deviney (2007) blaming the research methods and strategies undertaken. However another angle within the intention-behaviour gap debate reflects that it is the fault of the retailers, with Scholl et al., (2010) believing that the high street provides a lack of ethically friendly products and Niinimäki (2010) thinking that ethical clothing is not trend focused enough. However to take a much more human centred approach, it has been suggested that the lack of ethical obligation is responsible for the intention behaviour gap (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006). This is due to ethical obligation requiring a more emotive and connected approach on the part of the consumer/ product relationship. However this research recognises that there is no one focus of blame for the intention behaviour gap and it is a number of factors, along with a shift in consumer and retailer behaviour that ultimately contributes towards the identified disparity.

A further emerging debate within the area of attitudes and behaviours is the reliability of using intentions to indicate future behaviour (Papaoikonomou et al., 2010). This argument could potentially flaw the theory of the intention behaviour gap, again reflecting the point of Carrington et al. (2010), where inflated intentions are

considered. While it is thought that intentions do not indicate behaviour, it is thought that beliefs determine attitudes, attitudes lead to intentions and intentions inform behaviour. The use of *inform* during this theory is crucial, reflecting a far more subjective approach to the intention-behaviour gap debate. Whilst the previous point highlights the need for further understanding into the relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviours, it is also thought that consumer rationales may also bridge the gap between beliefs and behaviours (Belk et al., 2005). However there remains researchers who believe that intention's directly indicate future behaviour. For example, Ozcalgar-Toulouse et al., (2006) believe that behaviour is a direct function of an individuals intention, whilst intentions are a function of attitude and that attitudes are a direct representation of an individual's beliefs. This research aimed to explore further the intentions and behaviour of consumers when purchasing fashion and the intervening factors which may impact on these decisions.

2.3 The High Street Retailer

When considering the fashion purchasing process, there are a number of different stages that can ultimately be influenced by external parties. To refer back to the three stage process of purchasing mentioned previously, the first stage of input, is the positioning of influential factors that can ultimately affect the decisions made or the final stage of the process: output (Schiffman et al., 2008). The input stage is where this research believes that the retailer can come in to play, with the application of various different methods to encourage behaviour change. This adjustment of final purchasing decisions made can be caused by a number of factors imposed by retailers such as promotions and marketing materials, to store ambiance and price. While these methods are generally applied to encourage further consumption and therefore profit for the retailer, there are several ways that companies can encourage behaviour changes for that of more socially responsible purchasing behaviour. It is for this reason that the retailer and the consumer have been studied simultaneously in the further exploration of the ethical fashion purchasing process.

As with consumers, retailers can be categorised in a structured way to form various typologies, a process which is carried out by both researchers and academics but also the retailers themselves. It can be said that there are predominantly two types of brand/retailer in terms of ethics, those who have deep-rooted ethics within their

business and those who have adapted their business strategy in order to include ethical and sustainable action. To accompany this with examples, brands such as People Tree or the Ethical Superstore could be considered to have based their core business strategy purely on ethics or sustainability, using this as their unique selling point (USP). However companies such as Gap and Nike have adjusted their business ethics over time according to consumer demand and changes in the industry. This however could be argued as the more challenging of the two approaches as it entails not only changing their business ethics but also the perceptions of their consumers. Nike is a good example of this as since their child labour allegations in the 1990's (Kenyon, 2000) they have had to work hard as a company to ensure not only that there is no further connections with child labour, but also in attempting to transform the opinions of their consumers.

There remains an on-going argument regarding who has the ultimate power to change practices within the fashion industry, with one side of the debate believing in the power of the consumer, however the contrary believes that it is retailers who hold the power to change. This can then be extended to responsibility of demanding ethics within products available. Literature believes that socially responsible consumers are driving retailers to change their production practices to that of a more ethical business (Burchell, 2008, p. 254). Research conducted by the research company Mintel (2009) questions if retailers are custodians of the consumer's conscience. This idea questions if retailers are in fact in control of a consumer's attitudes and behaviour. Conversely, there is evidence that consumer demand has prompted several initiatives to be setup including; The Soil association, The Fairtrade Foundation and The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). Devinney et al., (2010) highlight that the shift retailers are making to Fairtrade or organic goods does not indicate consumer choice but illustrates that it is ultimately the retailer's decision to make this change. With this in mind, it can then be argued that if the choice lies with the retailers then it may be on their part to only provide ethical choices to consumers (Szmigin et al., 2009). This would not only eradicate this element of consumer decision but also deliver ethical produce to a mass audience. This again relates to a different discussion point debating the effectiveness of consumer demand on improving worker rights (Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010). This improvement is thought to be fairly low due to the key ethical message not reaching the consumers. Delivering ethical fashion to a mass audience would aim to address this social issue in addition to eliminating the trade-off decisions consumers currently face.

In comparison to other production industries, the production of clothing carries a significant amount of social risk due to the complexities of supply chains and routes of manufacture (Burchell, 2008, p. 104). While in theory, retailers should hold control over their supply chains, it has been questioned if retailers alone have the power and skills in order to develop and adapt the production of clothing to a more ethical business model. It has been suggested that partnerships with groups such as non-governmental organisations can drive forward change through collaboration, however conflicting literature also suggests that it is a strong direction from governments that is needed for rapid change in ethical development (Wales et al., 2010). There has been a lot of previous exploration into the amount of influence retailers have over the behaviour of their customers, however when considering the intention-behaviour gap, it is thought that consumers are over stressing what they believe to be socially responsible behaviour consequently having implications of the plausibility of this influence (Cowe and Williams, 2001).

2.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined as the process of assessing an organisations impact on society and evaluating their responsibilities. CSR begins with an assessment of a business and their customers, suppliers, the environment, communities and employees (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). It has been suggested that CSR should be viewed as an umbrella term for a variety of concepts and theories (Blowfield and Frynas, 2005). This point of view is due to the complexities of defining CSR to be interpreted by all companies in the same way. The diverse concepts and broad array of definitions reflect the differing approaches and activities that come under the umbrella of CSR (Burchell, 2010, p. 79). Just as with the term ethical, CSR is often ill-defined and misunderstood. Some companies, as an alternative to the term CSR, use terms such as sustainable business practice, corporate citizenship and corporate accountability. These alternative terms however take away the social meaning behind CSR, in order to encompass more sustainable connotations to the term (Vogel, 2005; McWilliams et al., 2006; Lockett et al., 2006). As mentioned previously, within the context of this research, the term corporate social responsibility will concentrate specifically on the social elements, whilst acknowledging that sustainability can be incorporated when considering this in a broader sense.

CSR is defined as a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices, however it has been suggested that there are issues

with the use of the word discretionary, as this again suggest an element of flexibility in the interpretation (Kotler and Lee, 2005). Again comparisons can be drawn here with terminology, as neither ethical nor corporate social responsibility have one definition or industry standard to work to (Ihlen et al., 2011). This therefore indicating that the commitment or the level of activity from a retailer in terms of CSR is questionable. Discretionary practices are also highlighted by other authors, suggesting that it is expected that companies should engage in discretionary and philanthropic activities (Kotler and Lee, 2005). Others however define CSR as being about conducting business in a manner that meets high social and environmental standards (Fisher and Lovell, 2009).

As consumers begin to become not only more aware of social issues effecting the fashion supply chain but to also care about such factors, retailers need to see the benefits behind the application of ethical values through their CSR programmes (Wales et al., 2010). It is thought that there is a relationship between CSR and financial performance of a company (Zadek and Chapman, 1998). Perspectives are said to have changed with regards to retailers adopting CSR activities, from that of profit sacrifice to profit benefit (Burchell, 2008, p.81), with companies now said to be seeing social and environmental challenges as an opportunity to drive innovation (Wales et al., 2010). Other benefits of the incorporation of CSR activities into business include reducing financial costs, gaining competitive advantage, developing the reputation and legitimacy of the company, in addition to creating value (Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Porter and Kramer, 2006). The application of CSR to a business has in the past been described as long-term profit maximizing (Carroll, 1999; Davis, 1973). Alongside the benefits of CSR, also comes the critical perspectives of CSR implementation. It is thought that the market does not currently reward companies that outperform others in terms of CSR, however this would not be the case if consumers were to shop by their morals as this would be reflected in increased sales and profits for responsible businesses (Devinney, 2009). Vogel (2005) believes that CSR could be seen as a niche strategy and not a one fits all approach. He believes that CSR can work for some companies, in some sectors under some circumstances. Due to the umbrella nature of the term CSR, concerns have been raised regarding companies purposely targeting cheaper-to-implement strategies opposed to those which are of real concern to society (Lee and Kotler, 2011). Sceptics also highlight that business trust and transparency of their activities varies from sector to sector, with society often mistrusting retailers and what they say they are doing (Waddock and Googins, 2011). This difference in intention and behaviour has also ben highlighted by sceptics who actively highlight the

differences between the action and what is being said (Aras and Crowther, 2009; Cerin, 2002; Wagner et al., 2009). This prominent gap between corporate rhetoric and corporate practice has been called corporate hypocrisy, with perceived hypocrisy said to be negatively effecting consumer attitudes towards companies (Wagner et al., 2009).

There are various methods utilised to inform the public of the CSR activities being carried out by a retailer or company, however the prominent one used would be CSR reporting. It is common practice that large companies now produce an annual report on their CSR activities, progress and future commitments. These are often widely available online for the public and stakeholders to read. Annual CSR Reports are said to often be of benefit to the company and their external relations as it creates trust in the company as people can see social and environmental concerns being addressed. Public communication also promotes corporate accountability, avoiding assumed PR (public relations) stunts through external verified reporting (Burchell, 2010, p. 187). This type of false reporting in a sustainable context is often referred to as green-washing, where companies use CSR reporting to their financial or reputational benefit. However, whilst there are said to be benefits to companies reporting their CSR activities and intentions, this method of communication has come under scrutiny, with critics saying that it encourages the focus to be on dissemination and not engagement. Furthermore, whilst it raises the amount of information available, it has been said to be a poor form of engagement. Additional criticisms suggest that there is doubt over what is being reported, the varied styles of reporting make it hard to compare across companies and that it does not provide the reader with an honest, unbiased picture. The fear is also that companies feel that through reporting that they are behaving responsibly, i.e. we report, therefore we are good (Burchell, 2010, p. 187).

The implementation of the reported CSR commitments is crucial in not only terms of execution but also following through with the social and environmental promises the company have made to customers and stakeholders. However, not all methods of implementation are as successful as others, as some retailers choose to apply certain values from their CSR report to a selection of specific highlighted ranges (Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010). An example of this would be a retailer who offers a range of Fairtrade cotton basic t-shirts alongside their other basic collections. This approach may create more visibility in terms of ethical awareness levels, however it could be argued that if the highlighted range of garments are labelled as ethical, what ethical status do other non-highlighted ranges have? This is indicating that products being produced responsibly are remaining the niche rather than the mainstream. However,

the alternative discussion are retailers that apply their CSR commitments throughout their whole business practice and therefore do not need to separate clothing lines or ranges in order to communicate their ethical philosophy. If this approach is taken it is then the choice of the retailer how they communicate, if at all, their ethical message and actions to their consumers.

2.3.2 Communication Methods

CSR has become a highly fashionable topic, however CSR communication is rarely focused on and often relegated to the periphery of the subject (Ihlen et al., 2011). As the emphasis on CSR has grown, increased pressure has been put on retailers to disclose more and more information to stakeholders and the public, in the fear that active NGO's could disclose the information before the company themselves (Burchell, 2010, p. 185). It is believed that with CSR the trust consumers put in companies and their activities, has moved from a *trust me* world to one that demands to be shown (Holme and Watts, 1999). It is thought that change is needed in making information available to decisions makers and the public, in order to gain more transparency in the supply chain (Wales et al., 2010). It is believed that it is persuasive communications that is causing this consumer pressure on companies to disclose further information and in turn create greater awareness levels. However there are major concerns regarding the increase of communications from companies to consumers, which include the use of paper based materials not being sustainable and that tracking a return on investments in greater communications is almost impossible (Kotler and Lee, 2005). It is also thought that CSR communication is not always beneficial as it may lead to scepticism (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). Despite this, a huge number of companies are actively seeking ways of improving their image through communicating their involvement in a variety of activities (Waddock and Googin, 2013).

On the contrary, it is believed that CSR awareness levels of the average UK consumer remain fairly low (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005), although with a quarter of the population having investigated a companies CSR commitments at least once, this debate continues (Cowe and Williams, 2001). Effective CSR communication is said to have an effect on a consumers perception of a certain brand or retailer (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005). However, bad or negative CSR can also have an adverse effect, with consumers consciously choosing not to shop somewhere due to a companies negative ethics reports (Smith, 1999). It is believed that companies need to approach the

communication of CSR activities with as much, or even more care than management tasks (Waddock and Googin, 2013). This reflects the suggested relationship between a companies ethical credentials and a product being purchased from the store on the part of the consumer (Viriyavidhayavongs and Yothmontree, 2002). This has been seen to have a positive effect on consumer behaviour, with one in six shoppers saying that they would boycott a store if their ethics were not up to standard (Cowe and Williams, 2001).

Research shows that consumers want clear, simple ethical messages from retailer marketing and that an overload of information could cause consumers to switch off and ignore the potential messages (Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010). Foxall (2005) agrees with this point, recognising that consumers are subject to so many advertisements every day that the majority are filtered out and have no impact on their decision making process. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) believe that consumers react better to negative information in preference to those of a positive nature, whilst Arnold (2009) thinks that clever positioning of advertising could be a more effective technique. Taking a different approach, Worcester and Dawkins (2005) think that educating in-store retail staff in company ethics in order to spread the word amongst customers could be more effective. This is thought to be due to consumers trusting retail staff as a third party, in preference to the claims made by the company themselves.

The idea of an ethical labelling scheme within the apparel industry is under a lot of debate from researchers and academics (Black, 2008; Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Berry and McEachern, 2005; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Devinney et al., 2010). This discussion stems from the idea of a garment label informing consumers of social issues and if this type of approach could aid in increasing consumer awareness levels. However there are two key issues when considering labelling as a viable communication method; the authenticity of a label and the consumer recognition and understanding of the issues being communicated. The Fairtrade label is a good example of a successful labelling initiative, with the logo said to be recognisable and understood with this being reflected in an increased sale of goods (Ritch and Schroder, 2009). Black (2008) believes that labels communicate product ethics and increase consumer knowledge and engagement with the topic. However, with a number of labels currently being implemented with each one communicating a different message, consumers may find it hard to absorb the knowledge and to know which label to trust. Berry and McEachern (2005) reiterate this point through the acknowledgement that

voluntary labels can be questioned on their reliability and authenticity as there are too many labels to rely on just one. Each label variety communicates a different message and is produced from a different company. With this in mind it is easy to recognise why consumers may find it hard to trust any specific one label.

McAspurn from Made By, raises a further issue of labelling often being transported from the food industry to the fashion market, and how these methods are generally unsuitable for this change. An example of this would be the traffic light scheme, which in food indicates salt, calorific content, fat and sugar, a system which has been applied to highlight the ethical and sustainable levels in garment production. In addition to Fairtrade, Made By are implementing an innovative labelling system currently being used by many high street brands. They have two key areas of labelling; the Blue Button and the Track and Trace swing tag. The Blue Button is sewn into the garment label of clothing to indicate that the brand manufacturing the garment are taking steps towards a more ethically conscious and sustainable future. Meanwhile the Track and Trace label allows the consumer to use a garment specific code to see the supply chain behind the clothing item. These innovative techniques are pushing the boundaries of current labelling methods, using technology and easy recognition to communicate their core messages.

However diverse the labelling debate, most researchers, academics and other parties are in agreement that there needs to be dramatic changes and advancements in the garment labelling sector (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Fashioning an Ethical Industry, 2010; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Berry and Meecham, 2005). It is also thought that cooperation from NGO's (non-government organisations) is needed to develop an effective labelling and advertising campaign (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). Ritch and Schroder (2009) also believe that one universal label regarding ethical measures needs to be introduced. A further counter argument for labelling techniques comes from Deviney et al., (2010) who believe that for an ethical market to take shape, consumers need to be knowledgeable participants, not just label readers. This feeling is extended with Wales et al., (2010) believing that consumers do not need labels to inform them but they need a broader understanding of critical issues and how they interact. This research recognises that further development of traditional labelling techniques would prove ineffective in its execution with consumers already feeling confused. With trust also being quite a difficult area, it could be suggested that one universal label extended throughout the supply chain is what is needed for labelling to be an effective communication technique. Consumer trust in a brand is an issue actively discussed

where it is believed that trust in brands has been damaged due to irresponsible behaviour being exposed and that it is the rise in consumer awareness of such issues that is weakening the consumer image of brands (Klein, 2009).

2.3.2a Social Marketing

As briefly mentioned earlier, not only can CSR communication be vital in a consumers perception of a brand or retailer, but the marketing element conducted by the retailers could also heavily influence their decision purchases. Preez (2003) believes that in order for consumers to be successful they must have an understanding of consumer behaviour and the variables affecting their behaviour. Traditionally this communication between a consumer and a retailer comes in the form of marketing principles, where retailers can deliver (often subliminal) messages regarding in-store purchasing. A variation of marketing principles is social marketing where behaviour is influenced for the good of society (Kotler and Lee, 2008). However it could be argued that marketing in its very nature is to encourage levels of consumption and materialism and thus going against the philosophy of ethics and sustainability in clothing (Miller, 2009). It is thought however that the application of these principles could prompt an adaptation in fashion purchasing behaviour, significantly reducing levels of clothing consumption and consequently decreasing environmental impact and the social pressures in the fashion supply chain.

Social marketing can be defined as a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate and deliver value in order to influence a target audience behaviours, that benefit society as well as the target audience (Kotler and Lee, 2006). Literature agrees with this, however adds that benefits should be without financial profit to the marketer (Smith and Ward, 2007). It is also thought that marketing should influence the voluntary behaviour (Andreasen, 1995), whilst it is also thought that these principles should be applied to achieve specific behavioural goals (French and Blair-Stevens, 2005). All of these definitions of social marketing could be applied to increase the ethical purchasing behaviour of high street consumers. As discussed previously, retailers are already applying various communication methods in order to inform their customers of their social or environmental activities and intentions. Whilst marketing principles are applied in-store everyday, this communication method could be utilized to influence the consumer behaviour for the good of society, whilst also practicing good business and remaining profitable.

2.4 Existing Research Approach

As previously mentioned, in addition to background knowledge and context leading to the development of the conceptual framework, literature has also been referred to in order to structure a methodological approach for this research. Past academic work has been consulted in order to also overcome previous difficulties or criticisms in terms of data collection methods used and general approach taken in primary data collection and analysis methods. This scope of existing research has then been used to influence the way the methodology of the project was structured and designed to ensure that difficulties were overcome and avoided.

2.4.1 Research Criticism

In addition to ethical fashion issues being an often difficult and complex area of research (Preez, 2003), it has been argued that it is very difficult to study consumer attitudes regarding ethicality (Lea-Greenwood, 1999). This is said to be due to participants often giving answers which favour them in a more positive light, in preference to what may be considered as the truth. Auger and Devinney (2007) also acknowledge this, and refer to the issue encountered as social desirability, where participants are wanting to give the right answer in preference to what they actually believe. They also think this to often be caused by the use of simple rating scales during research data collection and also for there being no incentive to answer truthfully and no penalty for not doing so. Other researchers have also found that weak methodological approaches can lead to social desirability bias, with Cowe and Williams (2001) believing that this could also be the rationale behind the disparity in consumer intentions and consequential behaviour, thus resulting in the intention-behaviour gap. Through acknowledgement, some researchers believe they may have overcome the participants' fear for answering in an untruthful way, an example of this Bray et al., (2010) designed and utilised a focus group in order to overcome this happening.

The use of simple rating scales in ethical fashion research is fairly common, with many being criticised for using such systems when involving participant opinion. An example of this would be Viriyavidhayavongs and Yothmontree (2002), who used a seven point scale from agree completely to disagree completely in the investigation of the impact of ethical considerations in purchasing behaviour. This research saw the

testing of 11 hypotheses through a self-administered questionnaire to a sample of 385 participants. This research could again be potentially criticised however as whilst the data collection methods used were purely qualitative, the analysis methods used relied only on quantitative techniques to interpret the data. Although online surveys are commonly used in order to collect data, with low cost and effort implications (Bryman, 2001, pp. 42) and large quantities of data often being generated, the way the survey had been administered remains very impersonal. This could effect the quality of data collected, with the lack of personal interaction between the researcher and the participant providing no incentive for the truth to be given as an answer.

A further example of the use of rating scales would be the utilisation of a five point Likert scale for an online survey contributing to the exploration of the relationship between consumer values and their ethical beliefs (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). Again however, this work could come up against further criticism due to their participant selection process. This saw an advertisement for the participation of the survey in a nationwide newspaper, where it could be argued that this selection is far too wide and not focused enough. In comparison to this, Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., (2006) conducted research into ethical consumer decision making and selected their participants through an advertisement in ethical publications and websites. This targeted method of selection resulted in participants with much more specific knowledge and it could be argued, produced more reliable data as a consequence.

Further criticism common within this field, is that sample groups are often too small and narrow in participants (Dickson, 2013). A number of studies in recent years have stated a contribution to new knowledge whilst relying on small sample groups to base this knowledge upon. An example of this would be a study that explored transparent business practices in relation to consumer purchasing intention (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2011). However their data collection for this research was based on 13 participants who all worked at the same academic institute. Similarly, Bray et al., (2010) investigated the factors impeding ethical consumption and based their knowledge contribution on only 18 UK consumers. Dickson (2013) went on to further criticise existing research within this area for making limited connections between current and existing research. Auger and Devinney (2007) have also found existing research to have illogical relationships in the correlation of responses to simple survey items with more constrained measures.

2.4.2 The Future of Ethical Research

To improve the future validity of results produce in the field of ethical fashion research, Dickson (2013) suggests that more advanced methods are needed, requiring greater concurrence in results or more investigation of individual claims. An example of this would be Auger et al., (2006), who in Dickson's opinion used an innovative survey method that forced consumer participants to choose issues that were of most importance to them when purchasing fashion. The results from this study showed that human rights, child labour, safe working conditions and good living conditions were the most important issues to the participants surveyed. This approach has been reflected during this study and will be discussed in detail later (section 3.7.1 – Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group). In addition to innovative survey methods, existing research has seen these approaches teamed with statistical techniques in order to offer a new approach to a common, qualitative method. Numerous authors have used survey methods with techniques such as path analysis, discriminant analysis and structural equation modelling to examine the influence of and relationships between values, attitudes and consumer purchasing intentions (Dickson, 2001; Dickson and Littrell, 1996; Kim et al., 1999). A further study used a similar approach, using structural equation modelling to investigate the social issues surrounding the working conditions in the manufacture of university apparel (Pookulangara et al., 2011).

A further type of research being seen in the recent investigation of ethical fashion is experimental or quasi-experimental work, which looks at how participants will behave in a controlled environment. An example of this would be a study carried out where a t-shirt auction took place to determine if consumers were willing to pay more for a garment made under socially responsible conditions (Hustvedt and Bernard, 2010). It is this type of experimental research methods being used that can ensure that criticism for simple rating scales or narrow, small sample groups is overcome.

It is believed that there is a new, emerging approach being taken to research within the field of ethical fashion, which has been labelled as transformative consumer research (Dickson, 2013). This research approach is closely linked to that used in Action Research and is conducted in partnership with stakeholders. It is this approach that has been adopted by this study, with the investigation of both retailers and consumers in the ethical fashion purchasing process. It is also believed that this approach enables the researcher to determine the extent of change and therefore the success of the research

method carried out, as a result of the process of assessment and reflection (Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

2.5 Conclusion

There are many issues within the current fashion industry as discussed within this chapter that are unable to be sustained for future practice. The past 20 years have illustrated that NGO and campaign action alone has not impacted operational business enough to ensure that responsible behaviour is implemented in the manufacture of fashion goods. It has in the past been thought that campaign groups along with active consumers could apply the pressure needed to make significant changes (Cowe and Williams, 2001), however with several recent events such as the collapse of Rana Plaza, as discussed in chapter 1, it demonstrates that a more innovative and proactive approach is needed for change to occur. Within the context of the fashion supply chain, there are many contributing factors currently impeding on future change. As detailed in a wider discussion in this chapter, factors such as the recession have had a huge impact on the purchasing behaviour of consumers but consequentially also on the way that retailers have responded to this growth in demand for cheaper items. The growth of the fast fashion business model and the value supply chain has seen many consumers now wanting larger quantities of garments and a cheaper price. It is the negative effects these adaptations in purchasing behaviour are having from both a social and environmental perspective that has reinforced the need for change going forward.

The study research questions that have guided the scope of literature highlight issues that are either under researched or paramount in the development of many of the problems touched upon. It is this acknowledgement and development of knowledge that has consequently directed the pathway this investigation has taken and aided in the construction of the conceptual framework. The approach adopted aims to not only generate new knowledge in terms of an on-going academic debate but to also construct suggestions for the industry as a whole to instigate change and progression. It is this level of industry change and development that has been a key driving force within the investigation.

Whilst some researchers take a very linear approach in their potential solutions for change, this research acknowledges that a much more multifaceted argument must be constructed and managed before realistic suggestions can be made. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) believe that further education and awareness must take place and that retailers must convince their consumers of their ethical integrity. Whilst Cowe and Williams (2001) believe that tax incentives and community support activities could aid in ethical adoption and sector growth. As previously mentioned, in order to address such complex, multi-layered issues, not one focused solution will suffice.

During discussion of existing research, data collection methods and approaches taken by previous researchers was also discussed. This was carried out to enable an innovative methodology to be formulated and to overcome any previously difficulties found. Ethical research in the past has come under heavy criticism for the methods used, with narrow, small samples often being relied upon for the contribution to new knowledge. As with all research that involves a person's opinion, it has been identified that the truth is often difficult to obtain. While this has been acknowledged by authors in the past, this factor has also been recognised within this work and innovative measures put in place to avoid this situation.

Through the better understanding of this complex relationship between consumers and retailers, this research aimed to approach the issue of ethical fashion purchasing on the high street in an innovative way. Whilst looking at this issue from a multiple perspective, it has acknowledged previous research and the short falls of existing studies. The problems within this area of knowledge have been discussed and have been put into context within this chapter, providing an initial broad overview and situational positioning, the approach that the study has taken has also been rationalised and will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3. Introduction

With the growth of ethical purchasing research, academics have begun to question the methodological approach taken whilst undertaking such work. It has been suggested that studies have been utilising similar research methods and are therefore producing a series of comparable results. Auger and Devinney (2007) suggest that the use of similar survey instruments may overstate the importance of ethical issues as the participants have little to no incentive to answer truthfully. The methods used are accused of often restraining answers and of using simple rating scales, giving inaccurate and undetailed answers. It has also been questioned if the survey methods used during ethical purchasing research are adequate, suggesting that more rigorous methods are needed if consumers are to behave ethically. Consumers are said to not only have little reason to answer truthfully but are also under no pressure to reveal their true attitudes and behaviours due to weaknesses in survey design (Dickson, 2013).

These methodological issues in ethical purchasing research are also said to be responsible for the identification of the intention-behaviour gap (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001), with inflated intentions (Carrington et al., 2010) often causing the disparity between consumer intentions to purchase ethically and their actual purchasing behaviour. The questioning of such a gap between attitudes and behaviours has led some researchers to believe that ethical purchasing studies are generally unreliable (Ulrich and Sarasin, 1995). A further issue that has been considered whilst carrying out ethical research is the discussion of sensitive topics such as child labour and poor working conditions (Auger and Devinney, 2007). These controversial issues may encourage participants to answer questions in what they deem as a more socially acceptable manner. Once again this poses issues in ethical purchasing research in obtaining a true account with the survey methods utilised.

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, five key research questions were formulated, with the methodology designed in such a way that these questions were directly addressed. The colour-coded boxes below (Figure 3.1) have been used to create recognition and reference throughout the chapter, illustrating that each stage of the methodological journey has aimed to directly answer each question posed.



Figure 3.1 – Research Questions

This research recognises the methodological issues that have been identified as common problems during research of this nature. With this in mind, a mixed methods approach has been utilised, trying to minimise issues that have been previously identified that could potentially be questioned for their rigor at a later date. By challenging the academic norm of using an established methodology, a more selective approach has been taken in order to use the most appropriate methods to address the problem space. This mixed method or *bricolage* approach was utilised to not only overcome methodological issues identified in previous research but to also address the gaps in knowledge in a creative and innovative way (Bremner and Yee, 2011). This style of methodology has also seen the interplay of data collection and analysis, resulting in an iterative approach in the interpretation of the conclusions.

This chapter presents the overall methodological approach the study undertook. The research structure will be discussed, with the distinct two-sided perspective explained and mapped to provide clarity. Key tools and analysis methods utilised will be described in detail, along with the rationale of why these were the most effective in collecting and examining the data. External limitations and delimitations imposed by the researcher will be discussed with the way these factors have affected the final results detailed. Finally a summary of the key points in the chapter will be presented, alongside the influence these factors will have on future chapters of the thesis.

3.1 Data Collection Stages

In order to address the five research questions previously discussed, a methodology was designed in a five stage process. This allowed for a range of methods to be utilised, where the interplay of data collection, analysis and reflection allowed for iterations throughout.

The five stages of the data collection process have been discussed below:

- **Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group**

For the investigation of the consumer, a focus group approach was taken, gathering groups of fashion consumers to explore their thoughts and behaviour when purchasing fashion items on the UK high street. The way the groups were formulated allowed for a series of creative activities to take place, each focusing on a range of project aims. This approach also allowed for discussion between the group participants, providing further rich data to the primary questions asked. The details of this research stage will be discussed in full in Chapter 4.

- **Stage 2 – Principal Retailer Case Study (Company A)**

When investigating retailers, a case study approach was adopted. An ethnographic style approach was used during the principal case study, where a period of three weeks was spent with the Ethical Trade team in Company A. This allowed for observations and interviews to take place, but also allowed time for company operations and CSR strategies to be studied. Further details of this case study will be detailed in Chapter 5.

- **Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey**

Prior to Stage 4 of the research process, Stage 3 provided an opportunity for the exploration criterion of the communication study to be determined through an online consumer survey. This method was taken in order for the study to be fair and rigorous in its approach, with the criterion ultimately being decided by consumers. The research process and results from this survey will be detailed later in Chapter 6.

- **Stage 4 – In-store and online Communication Study** (Company A, B, C, D and E)

In order to study the relationship between the consumer and the retailer, an exploration into the channels of communication used both in-store and online was conducted. This was carried out from the perspective of the consumer, assessing the methods of communication used and the types of information made available by retailers regarding their CSR strategies. The results and implications of this study will be discussed in Chapter 6.

- **Stage 5 – Additional Retailer Case Studies** (Company B, C, D and E)

Building on the work carried out with Company A, at Stage 2 of the methodological process, a series of additional retailer case studies occurred, where interviews with company B, C, D and E took place. This then allowed for a comparison across all five retailers to be formulated and later analysed using content analysis. This cross-comparative retailer study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The diagram below (Figure 3.2) illustrates the step-by-step methodological process that this chapter will discuss in detail, along with the colour-coded indication of the research questions addressed at each stage. The large green arrows show the flow and sequence in which the research was carried out, with the smaller green arrows illustrating the iterative nature between data collection, analysis and the development of the next methodological stage.

It can be noted however that research question 2 was only directly addressed during Stage 1 of the data collection process. This was due to this question being absorbed into research question 1 during consequential stages of the methodology. Research question 1; *What influences ethical fashion purchasing?* is very broad in nature and covers many aspects of influential behaviour. Figure 3.2 demonstrates this point, highlighting that research question 2 was only directly addressed during the consumer focus group. It can be seen however during the discussion of results in chapter 7, that research question 2 was addressed and a conclusion successfully reached.

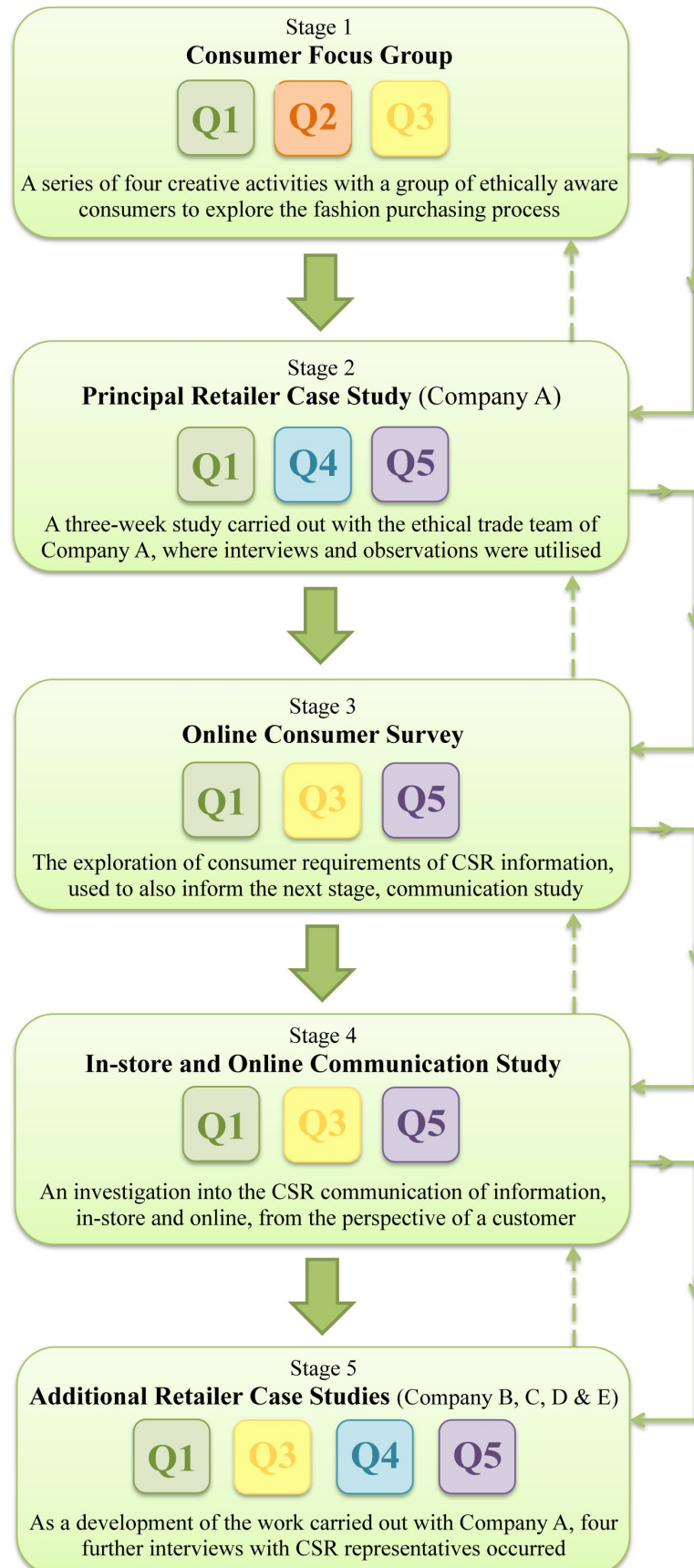


Figure 3.2 – Methodological Process

3.2 Key Areas of investigation

When framing the overarching problem taking into consideration the research questions discussed, emerging key areas of investigation were identified. These areas along with the aims of the project began to form the basis of the methodological approach adopted. The individual areas of investigation have been discussed below:

- **Ethical Fashion Market** – This was investigated through both primary and secondary data collection in order to keep abreast with new and existing literature and to also frame the current ethical market as a whole. This was investigated in terms of both the retailer and the consumers in direct relation to the context in which the study was positioned.
- **Consumer Purchasing Behaviour** – This area of research framed the overarching question posed within the investigation: *what influences ethical fashion purchasing?* Through the exploration of the consumer purchasing process, the factors imposed on consumers to influence their consequential purchasing behaviour have also been considered. From the consumer point of view, this has been explored through both the focus group activities and the online consumer survey. Furthermore this issue has been addressed from a retailer perspective through the semi-structured interviews conducted with the five retailer CSR representatives.
- **CSR Action & Implementation** – This area has again been investigated in terms of primary and secondary research methods. Through the case studies formulated, the exploration of CSR strategies and implementation within the company was addressed through semi-structured interviews with the individual retailer CSR representatives. Meanwhile, from a consumer perspective, the in-store/online communication study allowed for the secondary analysis of CSR strategies.
- **Retailer to Consumer Communication** - Explored through a number of different channels, with how retailers communicate their key messages and the way consumers perceive and utilise these messages having been investigated. The methods used by retailers when communicating these actions was explored

in a secondary data format through the analysis of company websites and visits made in-store.

3.3 Purpose of the Research

The area of ethical purchasing has in the past been previously explored (Bray et al., 2010; Brosdahl, 2007; Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Cowe and Williams, 2001), however the lines of investigation in this area are generally non-fashion related and tend to either refer to the topic in more general terms, or focus on the area of food. Similarly, there has been research conducted involving both the consumer and the retailer, but again not in an ethical fashion context. This research positioned its focus within ethical fashion purchasing, whilst taking a two-sided perspective from both consumers who purchase fashion on the high street but also the retailers who provide such clothing, selling to the mass market nationwide (Figure 3.3).

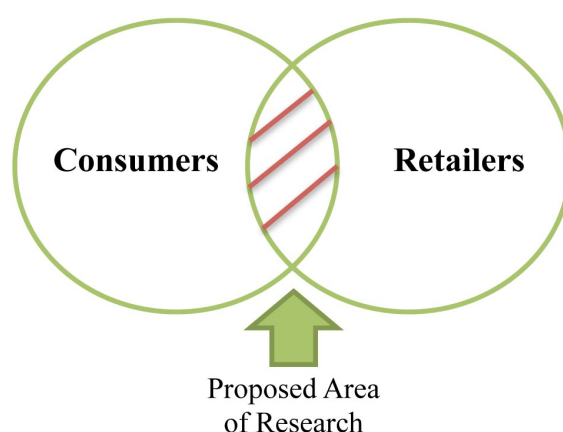


Figure 3.3 – Research Positioning

When investigating the consumer in an ethical fashion context, this study delved deeper into the decision-making process leading to consequential purchasing behaviour. It considered all intervening elements that could influence the final outcome of the purchasing process, predominantly controlled by the retailer affecting the consumer on their journey from initial thought, to the final bought product. Examples of these could be store lighting, advertisement and promotions, all of which could promote or inhibit ethical purchasing behaviour. The development for further understanding of the consumer purchasing process has dramatic future implications for the presence of ethical fashion on the UK high street. The understanding of which has provided a

platform for recommendations and a change in approach for retailers in the provision of responsibly sourced clothing.

A qualitative approach has been utilised throughout this research, in order to investigate both consumers and retailers and address the research questions set. From the consumer perspective, awareness levels and implementation of this knowledge on buying behaviour has been explored further. When considering the retailers' role within the purchasing process, the CSR strategies adopted and the implementation of such values throughout the company has been explored using a principal retailer case study investigation, where the research carried out spanned a three week period, followed by four additional retailer case studies, where interviews were the data collection method used. This distinctive two-sided perspective was designed to contribute to new knowledge in the area of ethical fashion purchasing behaviour, providing new perceptions of how positive changes can occur on the average UK fashion high street.

3.4 Research Approach

This research takes a pragmatic approach, believing that knowledge arises out of a series of actions and consequences (Bryman, 2001). This indicates that a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools and analysis methods have been used in order to creatively address the issues posed by the study. It is the research questions posed that have determined the methods used throughout the investigation (Krathwohl, 1998), whilst the over arching problem involving ethical fashion purchasing has remained the focus during the study.

A series of mixed methods have been utilised to answer the research questions proposed, with rigour. This approach has also been named *bricolage*, being introduced in the sixties as a way of acquiring knowledge (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Whilst Strauss approached this term from an anthropological perspective, in cultural studies it is thought to be more of a reflection of a choice of practice that is pragmatic, strategic and self reflexive ((Nelson et al., 1992). It is also thought that bricolage techniques offer insights into new forms of rigour and complexity in social research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). A *bricoleur* is thought to be a direct reflection of a designer in nature, one who out of necessity works with available materials to create new objects from existing ones (Yee and Bremner, 2011). In the context of research, this comparison to

the characteristics of a designer refers to the mixed methods approach used in this investigation, where tools from multiple disciplines have been utilised. It is thought that it is not only the use of mixed methods but also multiple perspectives, applying methods from many different disciplines that encompasses the use of bricolage (Kincheloe, 2004). Yee and Bremner (2011) see bricolage as a reflection of designerly ways of researching, making a comparison to designerly ways of knowing identified in previous research (Cross, 1982).

This mixed method approach was also adopted due to the nature of both the retailer and consumers being studied simultaneously, aiming to encompass the range of participants utilised. The data collected throughout was predominantly qualitative, however some data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, utilising the data to its full potential. An example of this would be the principal and additional retailer interviews, where qualitative analysis methods were used in the form of content analysis, however when a cross-comparison was being made, the cumulative number of retailers agreeing to the regularities found was also analysed using quantitative methods. The majority of methods applied also relied on the participation of consumers and retailer employees, therefore a mixed methods strategy was deemed as the most appropriate.

This methodological strategy also allowed the data collection methods to adapt as a direct consequence of data collected. The process of data collection, analysis and reflection allowed the researcher to create a series of iterations during the data collection process, building on the methodology throughout. Where needed, this allowed for the methods and tools to evolve and develop overtime. It was the constant reference to the over-arching problem and the research questions posed that has formulated the methodology for the study. Through taking a pragmatic approach, the structure for the methodological approach has been iterative in nature, allowing for the data and analysis relationship to aid in the development of emerging findings and new knowledge.

3.5 Methodological Rationale

Prior to the design of the research methodology, a full scope of possible data collection methods that could be utilised to address the research question in the study, was carried out. Literature regarding social research methods and qualitative approaches to data

collection were covered, alongside the analysis of previous studies and their research approach, where various methods were considered before the final methodology was formulated. The methods chosen were deemed to provide not only the most appropriate set of data but also the richest quality of data collected. This will now be discussed by methodological stage.

Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group (Company A)

By taking a pragmatic approach, the consumer data collection methods utilised a multiple channel approach, applying methods and tools where literature had been found to support such activities. During the early stages of the research, a broad consumer data collection took place in the form of a focus group. This allowed the research to be carried out with groups of between 17-35 participants at the same time, where discussions and prompts from the researcher acting as facilitator could occur. This range and breadth of participants can be seen as an advantage during a focus group activity, however it can also be seen as a disadvantage due to the researcher having less control over the participants as individuals, when compared to interviews for example (Bryman, 2001, p. 336). Through the design of the research methodology, interviews were considered in order to obtain the information needed, however due to the early stage of the research a broader, more contextual data was needed. Interviews at this stage would not have been appropriate due to the number of people needed to take an overview of consumer thoughts and behaviour. This process would have been enormously time consuming, and would not have allowed for the rich discussions between individuals to take place (Greenfield, 2002, p. 210). Although there are further limitations with the use of focus groups to be acknowledged such as difficulty of organisation, conflicting relationships between participants and large amounts of data being generated, it was thought that due to the nature of the information needed, a focus group was the most appropriate method to apply at this stage.

Stage 2 and 5 – Initial and Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company A, B, C, D and E)

The rationale for the approach used for Stage 2 and 5 will be discussed together, as the same methods were utilised for the work carried out with each retailer, just at different stages of the methodological journey. For the principal retailer case study (Company A), a series of four semi-structured interviews took place, where four additional case

study interviews followed (Company B, C, D and E). This was selected as the most appropriate method to be utilised in order to derive specific information from people with particular knowledge and expertise. The semi-structured interview allowed for additional questioning and flexibility in content (Bryman, 2001, p. 318), it also facilitated a cross-case comparison to be made between the different retailers. Although direct questions could be asked to the right people during the interviews, the recording method used created lengthy audio files that needed to be transcribed. The process of transcription was time consuming, however the accurate text document allowed for thorough analysis and a comparison to be drawn. The presence of the researcher however, also has to be considered, with the possibility of a negative effect on the way the interviewee responds to the questions asked. This relates back to obtaining a true account during data collection and the complexities of eliminating the effect the presence of the researcher has on the data collected (Bryman, 2001, p. 125). Despite other methods of obtaining data being considered, the flexibility for further discussion and questioning that a semi-structured interview offers was selected as the best method to be used.

Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey

A further consumer data collection method applied during the research process was an online consumer survey. This method was used to generate a large number of responses, where other methods such as an interview or focus group would not have been appropriate. The advantages to applying this method were that it was not only cheap and quick to administer but it was also convenient for the consumer to participate. In addition to this, the method eliminates any effect the presence of an interviewer might have had. This aims to overcome the issues of obtaining the true opinion of the participant, as previously discussed. However, the ease of using this method is seen as a positive during this research, where the application of surveys as a data collection tool can often be seen as a negative. With the absence of the researcher, there is no ability to prompt or question further, and the collection of additional data is not possible. Also, it can be difficult to gain answers for a lot of questions, as the participant is able to see the number of questions to be asked and can make a decision not to participate as a consequence (Bryman, 2001, p. 42). Both of these difficulties were overcome during the online consumer survey by limiting the number of questions to six, and also having a step-by-step approach, where the participant can only see one question at a time. The survey was administered to a large amount of people, as the participation rates for this kind of questioning are notoriously low. The response of 111

consumers from approximately 6,000 targeted is a very small percentage response rate, it was however seen as adequate for the data to be used and applied within the study. When considering alternative methods of data collection for this size of sample, a survey was the quickest and most effective tool possible within the constraints of the investigation.

Stage 4 – Retailer to Consumer Communication Study (Company A, B, C, D and E)

Further to the semi-structured interviews conducted with retailer CSR representatives, a secondary data collection study was carried out to determine the existing communication between consumers and retailers. This was secondary data due to it being from the point of view of the consumer, yet carried out by the researcher, with each retailer website and in-store experience analysed. Alternative primary methods of data collection such as interviews or questionnaires were considered, however it was decided that the nature of the scoping exercise could be an analysis of secondary data only, determining the type of information that is made available to consumers by retailers.

3.6 Research Sample & Data Sources

The importance of the chosen sample of participatory individuals or organisations was paramount in addressing the research questions posed. For each stage of the methodology, the ideal candidates were carefully selected as the most informed or idealistic choices to provide the richest, most useful information. This can again be predominantly broken down into retailers and consumers and will be discussed in this format below.

3.6.1 Consumer Participants

During the focus group activities, a controlled group of participants were targeted through an ethical fashion symposium organised by Fashioning an Ethical Industry, an organisation to aid students and tutors in fashion related courses. The participants were predominantly academics and students who had an interest in ethical issues surrounding the fashion industry. This was deemed an appropriate research sample due to participants needing a certain level of knowledge regarding these issues in order for

the ethical purchasing process to be explored. This criteria was also specifically needed when investigating the intention-behaviour gap, as detailed in Research Question 2:

Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in ethical fashion purchasing?

The majority of participants were enrolled on undergraduate courses from various universities and colleges in the UK. Consequently a large proportion of participants were aged between 15-24. However, there were a number of academics and tutors that participated who fell within the age bracket of 35-44 or 45+. This wide range of participants posed several interesting areas of inquiry, including if age and salary influenced the type of garments purchased and the retailer those items were bought from. Although the reliability of participants could be questioned due to the majority of participants having similar backgrounds and interests, this was originally used as a initial scope of the field. However, again due to a shift in methodological approach and also the success of the study itself, it remained the primary consumer study. This will be discussed in detail later in the chapter (Section 3.8.1a)

During the focus group a total of four creative activities were carried out, each had a slight variation in participant numbers of between 17 and 35, however for the full duration of each individual activity the participant numbers remained the same. Whilst these numbers are considerably larger than a traditional focus group study, the activities were designed in such a way that allowed for a larger group to participate, resulting in a broader spectrum of data.

When considering the sample of participants for the online consumer survey, again a group with an active interest in ethical issues within the fashion industry was needed. These were therefore targeted through a relevant organisation. The Ethical Fashion Forum, a global platform for ethical and sustainable fashion, facilitated in the dissemination of the online survey. The broadcast promotion was sent directly to the email account of their database, spanning members over 100 countries worldwide. The email gave a short summary of the broader research topic and described the nature of the online survey. The survey was active for a period of one month and received 111 responses from a possible 6,000 people contacted, from 15 different countries across the world. Due to the size of the sample, the demographics also spanned a broad range, with participants aged 19 to 57, with occupations including academics, entrepreneurs, CSR workers and the unemployed. However the gender range was not so evenly split, 108 of the sample were female, with only three male participants. This factor however was not limited by the researcher in anyway, with the database accessed having both

male and female subscribers. This demonstrates females to be either more likely to respond to a call for participation or that they are more concerned with both fashion and ethical and sustainable issues in the clothing industry.

3.6.2 Retailer Participants

During the retailer data collection, a principal case study was selected. Company A was carefully chosen due to their rigorous CSR strategy and the unique way that they communicate this to their customers. The researcher spent a three-week period within the head offices of Company A, where several individuals were approached for semi-structured, informal interviews due to their expertise in the varying lines of questioning. An example of this would be to explore the communication between the company and their customers, a CSR marketer was chosen as the person most informed to provide such answers. Other employees interviewed within Company A included; Head of Sustainable Business, Head of Lingerie Technology and an Assistant Buyer.

For the remaining case studies a sample of fashion stores on an average UK high street were selected. Companies B, C, D and E are all providers of womens wear, mid-market, major fashion stores that trade on a generic town or city high street, all of which have between 700 and 200 stores nationwide. These similarities allowed for direct comparisons to be made with regards to their CSR strategy, implementation and retailer to consumer communication.

Within the subsequent case studies (Companies B, C, D and E) a single semi-structured, informal interview took place. Again with this approach an appropriate employee of each retailer was carefully chosen and approached for a meeting. Each of these participants held an equivalent position, so again direct comparisons could be made between interviewees answers.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Despite the primary data collection directly involving human participants, the assurance of complete anonymisation and diligent data management insured that the

project was passed through the university's ethical approval committee in order for the study to proceed.

The investigation of retailers posed potentially difficult issues in terms of ethical approval. The information given during the interviews could be classed as commercially sensitive, especially with the ethnographic approach taken with Company A. These issues have been dealt with through the use of complete anonymisation; both the company employees interviewed and the company identification was anonymised throughout the study. All participants were informed of this information prior to the investigation through an informed consent form. The participants were given the time to read and consider the information provided within the ethical consent documentation, and only when happy with these conditions and a signature given, could the interview continue. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at anytime if they wished to.

A similar approach was taken with the consumer studies that took place. Each participant was briefed on the potential uses of the data collected and given the option to proceed or leave, agreeing that participation meant that they were happy for the information to be used in such a way.

For the participants contributing to the online survey, a compulsory question was posed prior to the start of the survey, explaining the data utilisation and the assurance of complete anonymisation. Only participants that agreed to this ethics statement were able to proceed to the remaining survey questions.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

As detailed earlier in the chapter, a five-stage data collection process took place, with each stage aiding in the design and development of the consequential stage. This process of data collection, analysis and reflection facilitated iterations in the methodology to take place.

3.8.1 Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group

The focus group was formulated to address a number of the research questions established, aiming to investigate in more depth the attitudes and consequential behaviour of high street consumers. It was decided that a focus group would be the most effective method to target a large section of consumers (Bryman, 2001, p. 338). This method was also chosen due to its informal and flexible nature, where discussions could be incorporated into the structure of the session. In addressing these initial aims, a series of creative activities were devised in order to successfully obtain the information needed.

There were several key areas of questioning that the study focused on:

- The consumer purchasing process
- Factors influencing purchasing behaviour
- The intention-behaviour gap
- Consumer ethical awareness levels

These key areas of investigation were directly targeted through four design activities, that were undertaken by a group of consumers, with the data recorded through both visual, paper-based responses, audio recording and photographs. The 90-minute session was facilitated by the researcher throughout, who prompted and directed the participants during the data collection process. Each activity used a variety of tools and creative instruments including a large, visual ethical scale, a mind mapping platform (Buzan, 1993) and iconographic stickers.

A short summary of the four creative activities is detailed below:

Activity 1 – Define Ethical

The first activity was used as a warm up exercise facilitated by the researcher, getting participants to start thinking in the correct space and also to encourage and promote discussion between the group. Participants were asked to suggest terms, brands, phrases, events etc. to define their own perception of the word *ethical*.

This was then developed into a mapping activity where suggestions were written on Post-it notes and brainstormed onto a large piece of paper. This visual technique worked well amongst the large group as they could start to collate and make

connections between the definitions suggested. The aim of this exercise was to also get a feel for the participants' level of awareness and knowledge surrounding their understanding of the term ethical in relation to the fashion industry.

Activity 2 – Ethical Scale

Following on from the definition exercise, this exercise predominantly asked participants to ethically rate their own items of clothing through the perceptions of what they personally classified as ethical. Whilst the researcher played the role as the facilitator, once the activity was explained, the participants carried out the exercise unaided. As well as a small amount of personal data, they were asked to disclose specific information about the garment; garment type, where it was bought from, the approximate price and how they would rate the garment on a scale of 1-10, where 10 was *very ethical* and 1 being *not ethical at all*. This exercise made participants not only reflect on their own perceptions of the term ethical, but also allowed them to make the connection between clothing and its manufacturing process.

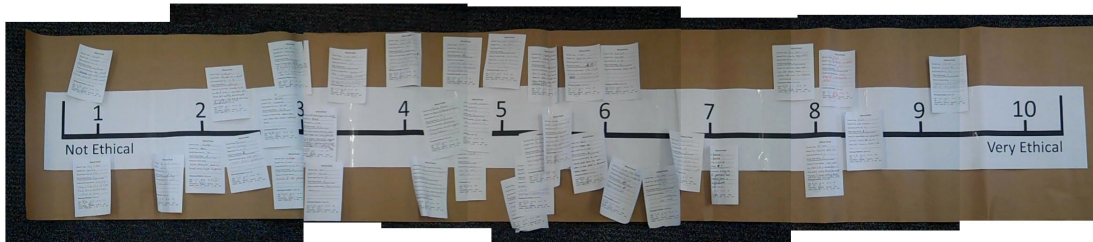


Figure 3.4 – Ethical Scale

These classifications were then visually displayed on a large ethical scale creating a visual piece of data where correlations and patterns of data could be identified (Figure 3.4). Further analysis also took place through the relationship between the varying factors. For example, ethical rating in relation to the store of purchase could give further information on the participants' awareness and knowledge of ethical or non-ethical clothing.

Activity 3 – Garment Requirements

Participants were given eight possible factors (not exclusively ethical issues) that they may look for in a garment prior to purchase. These options were as follows:

- Hand-made
- Organic
- Fairtrade
- Price
- Aesthetics
- locally sourced
- Material
- Washing instructions

They were then asked to rank the top five most important factors in descending order from the most important to the least important. These factors were given as examples to determine the type of things consumers prioritise when purchasing. These results were recorded using a number of visual representation stickers and a paper form (Figure 3.5), making the exercise informal and fun.

Task 2
Garment Requirements

From the stickers attached to the sheet, select the most 5 important factors when purchasing a garment and prioritise them 1 -5. Briefly Explain your choice.

Most Important	Why is this important?
Least Important	

Logo Key:

Hand made	Organic	Fairtrade	Price	Aesthetics	Locally Sourced	Material	Washing Instructions

Figure 3.5 – Example Garment Requirements Record Sheet

In addition to the top five factors when purchasing clothing, participants were asked to provide reasoning behind their decisions, giving more insight into the purchasing decisions of the participants.

Activity 4 – Questionnaire

To conclude the workshop investigation, participants were finally asked to fill out a short questionnaire. This consisted of five key questions focusing specifically on what factors they think effect their choice when purchasing fashion and what could be done to boost ethical fashion sales (Figure 3.6). The questions posed were a combination of multiple choice and free entry answers, where groupings and categories could be developed when analysing the data.


<div>northumbria UNIVERSITY</div> <div>Alana James Postgraduate Researcher Northumbria University</div> <div>Task 4 Ethical Fashion Research Questionnaire</div> <div>Section 1 - Ethical Consumerism In your opinion, what promotes or inhibits consumers to purchase ethically? <i>(List as many as apply)</i></div> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Promotes</th><th>Inhibits</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr></tbody></table> <div>Which 3 shops do you mostly shop of the high street?</div> <div>1 _____ 2 _____</div> <div>3 _____</div> <div>Do you think that the high street or online stores offer the best ethical ranges? <i>(circle one)</i></div> <div>High Street Online</div>	Promotes	Inhibits	 	 	<div>During your shopping experience what in-store factors effect your purchasing behaviour? <i>(circle as many as apply)</i></div> <div>Announcements Special Offers Swing tags</div> <div>Visual Boards Celebrity Endorsement Lighting</div> <div>Advertisements Interior appearance Sales</div> <div>What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?</div> <div>_____</div> <div>_____</div> <div>_____</div> <div>Section 3 – Future Research If you would be interested in helping further towards my research in the near future – email conversation, interview etc. Please put your details below.</div> <div>Name _____</div> <div>Email Address _____</div> <div>Thank you for your help</div> <div>All information shall be strictly used for educational research purposes only and anonymity will be utilised</div>
Promotes	Inhibits				

Figure 3.6 – Example Consumer Questionnaire

3.8.1a A Shift in Direction

As mentioned in the introduction section of this chapter, when embarking on the journey of this research it was already recognised that ethical purchasing research had been criticised for its methodological approach (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Dickson, 2013). Whilst these issues were taken into consideration and activities devised to avoid factors such as simple rating scales, data provided by the consumer focus group was not rich enough in nature for a methodology to be based upon. Whilst this study provided a foundation for the existing methodology, upon reflection the purchasing process was a two-sided discussion and studying only one party would not answer the initial research questions to the full potential. It was at this stage in the study that the researcher,

through reflection, decided that an alteration to the methodological approach was needed. This was also an advantage of adopting the iterative approach to the project, allowing for adaptations during the process. As a result of this change, retailers as the second party involved in the purchasing process were introduced to the study.

Although it was vital for the overall study that this shift occurred, without carrying out the consumer study primarily, insights into the consumer purchasing process would have remained unanswered. Having analysed and interpreted the data collected from the consumer study, a methodological iteration could occur and the initial framework built upon. Gaining insights into both parties involved in the purchasing process would ensure that the data collection would be rich in nature and fulfil the overarching research questions.

3.8.2 Stage 2 – Principal Retailer Case Study (Company A)

Following on from the incorporation of the retailers into the study, the next stage of the data collection process was the primary retailer case study. This approach gave the research industry perspective and context, whilst applying a more theoretical approach to a live industry situation. Meanwhile, it provided an insight into the operational day-to-day running of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) department within a high street clothing retailer. Consequently, this helped to develop a more contextual understanding of industry practice, naturally having positive effects on the investigation.

3.8.2a Retailer Structure



Figure 3.7 – Retailer Case Study Structure

The structure of the multiple retailer case studies was that of principal and additional retailers (Figure 3.7), with the principal being investigated in-depth using an ethnographic approach. These retailers created a cross referencing platform for the data collection, allowing for the comparison in CSR (corporate social responsibility)

strategies within the various companies. With the initial case study being a constant referral point, a set of structured comparison points were established with semi-structured interviews taking place with the additional retailers. Working mechanisms or business strategies were firstly identified which acted as guides and theories for the subsequent retailer studies. This allowed the study to take a wider view of the high street as a whole, without the need for ethnographic case studies to take place with each retailer, which would have been both costly and time consuming.

3.8.2b Company A

After careful analysis of a range of high street retailers, it was decided that Company A would be the first choice to approach with a research proposal for their consideration. The rationale for this decision was due to Company A actively seeking how they can continuously develop and enhance their business CSR strategy over a projection of time. In addition to this, the level of commitment that had been applied into the strategy of the company was diverse for a high street clothing retailer. Whilst being a high-street leader in ethics and sustainability, using Company A as a case study would set a precedent to later be compared to by other selected companies.

Company A's products and their sustainable business approach illustrates that high-street retailers can make responsible choices in their merchandise, whilst retailing to the mass market. They are also unique in the sense that they have marketed and branded their ethical and sustainable commitments in such a way that consumers can interact and engage with these on a choice of levels. Unlike the majority of retailers, Company A chooses to appear open and publicise information regarding their CSR strategy and how this is applied across their business.

3.8.2c Areas of investigation

The aim of the research was to fully explore and understand the company CSR strategy and how this was implemented throughout the varying levels of the business. In addition to this core information, there were three particular areas of investigation specific to Company A that the researcher wished to gain further insight into. These were as follows:

- A particular range that complied heavily with their CSR strategy
- An internal research unit that worked closely with Company A's consumers

- A status awarded to suppliers for a high level of social factory compliance

Whilst investigating these areas the focus was on execution analysis and success measurement, allowing time for potential improvement suggestions and recommendations.

It was agreed with the Ethical Trade Team at Company A that in order for the data collection process to be efficient, the researcher would work within the team on a daily basis for three weeks. This allowed for both observations to be carried out but to also allow the researcher to get a feel for the operations within the team. In addition to this, the researcher was allocated time to plan and carry out any interviews and meetings deemed necessary. This level of entry allowed the researcher to act as participant observer; whilst observations and data collection for the investigation was the primary reason for the visit, work for Company A was carried out simultaneously (Bryman, 2001, p. 163).

Over the three week period, time was spent shadowing Company A's Ethical Trade Manager and working closely within the ethical trade team. Although the presence of the researcher automatically impacted on the natural circumstances of the organisation, the observations carried out were as close to the real behaviour as possible. However, it is to be acknowledged, later in the chapter that this working situation did present a number of limitations.

3.8.2d Methods Used

The data collection process utilised two key methods: observations and semi-structured informal interviews.

Observations

The observations occurred during office hours only and were mainly positioned in the office and in any internal meetings. The observations did not occur during lunch or coffee breaks or at any social, out of hours occasion.

The observations were unstructured and not planned beforehand. This was due to not being familiar with the setup and operations within the company and the possibility that the structure of each day would be different. The following factors were considered during the observation process:

- Nature of the work being carried out
- Individual employees roles within the team
- Events that occurred during the study (meetings, presentations etc.)
- Project goals and how they are approached

The above factors were observed over a three-week period with how these factors changed over time, for example, how goals are approached and met, also being observed.

Semi-structured Interviews

A series of semi-structured informal interviews took place during the three-week period. The participants of these were directly selected with the help of the Ethical Trade Manager, to link to and potentially address the initial research questions.

Once appointments were established with the relevant people, a rough format and preliminary questions could be formulated with identified aims (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). However, as the researcher had not met the participants before, an informal approach was determined to be the best strategy to adopt. Through the utilisation of semi-structured interviews, further follow up questions could be added, which also allowed scope for the direction of the interview to change in response to information disclosed by the participant. It also gave the interviewee more freedom and choice to discuss other relevant information. This relaxed approach may have also been beneficial to the investigation, as the participant may have been more inclined to disclose further information and details.

Open ended questions were used throughout the series of interviews to again allow the interviewees to freely discuss issues they wanted to, where fixed, structured answers were not required, allowing respondents to answer in any way they deemed appropriate (Bryman, 2001, p. 118).

The time frame of the interviews was set at 30 minutes, but often ran over. This relatively short period of time was used to encourage participants to take part in the study. The locations of the interviews were in informal coffee areas to again encourage people to take part and to keep the mood of the interviews casual and relaxed. The advantages of using semi-structured interviews allowed for versatile questioning and little preparation due to the informal style used, there were also disadvantages to be

considered when selecting this method. Again a researcher's presence during an interview could influence the respondent's answer; answering in a way they think the interviewer may want. However, it is thought that interviews are a more effective method of question and answer style than when using questionnaires. In this situation it was paramount that the researcher met face-to-face with the interviewees as the wider context of the study could be explained thoroughly, and follow up questions could be used to obtain a richer data collection (Bryman, 2001, p. 130).

3.8.3 Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey

The survey was designed to ask consumers directly both the methods they used to obtain retailer CSR information, and the type of information they required from their search. The survey utilised six questions in order to obtain this information, using multiple choice answers but also allowing participants an *Other (please state)* option, where they could manually input information of their choice. The survey was put together using an online survey software facility; Survey Gizmo (www.surveygizmo.com). This service allowed for easy design and distribution of the survey once complete.

Once again, a relevant ethical fashion body were used to recruit participants for the survey. The Ethical Fashion Forum (www.ethicalfashionforum.com), an industry body for sustainable fashion, sent a broadcast email to their database of users, providing a summary of the research and a participation request. The Ethical Fashion Forum's database holds approximately 6000 individual members spread globally over 100 countries. The message was sent directly to database members email accounts, with promotion also broadcast across social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. An example of this correspondence can be seen in Appendix 1.

3.8.4 Stage 4 – In-store and online Communication Study (Company A, B, C, D & E)

Prior to the additional case study interviews, an analysis of secondary data was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to examine the communication of retailer CSR strategies to consumers both on the retailer websites and in-store. Both the methods of communication used and the type of data given was explored for all five companies studied. Carrying out this study prior to interviewing the companies in question would enable the researcher to have thorough background knowledge on the existing

communication methods used. This also allowed for further questions or clarification of certain factors to be addressed to the interviewed retailer employees, at a later date.

Following the results of the online consumer survey, a criterion was formulated for both the in-store and online communication study. The survey provided multiple-choice answers for participants to choose from, however as a direct response to the results of this survey, new emerging criteria were also incorporated. For example, when asked what types of CSR information a consumer would like to read on a retailer website, supply chain transparency was added to the criteria, due to a number of participants putting this in as a additional answer. Whilst the researcher could have suggested these criterion factors, to ensure that this study was carried out with a rigorous, fair approach an online consumer survey was carried out to explore CSR information consumers look to obtain from retailers and how they do this.

The results of the two communication studies (online and in-store) were disseminated into a matrix table, where each retailer could be analysed using a number of different criteria. For example on the online study (Figure 3.8), Company A's website would be examined for evidence of; *supplier ethical standards, factory lists, retailer code of conduct, audit process details, minimum wage, freedom of association and supply chain transparency* (Appendix 2). Companies B, C, D and E would then go through the same process.

	Supplier Ethical Standards <small>A set of minimum standards of compliance given to suppliers prior to manufacture</small>	Factory Lists <small>Specific information given regarding the factories used to manufacture products for the retailer i.e. names, location etc.</small>	Retailer Code of Conduct <small>A set of values that the retailer works to reflecting the philosophy of the company as a brand</small>	Audit Process Details <small>The process undertaken by internal/external auditors to assess the ethical standards of a factory</small>	Minimum Wage <small>The minimum amount of money workers can be paid in accordance to living costs in specific countries</small>	Freedom of Association <small>Giving workers the right to come together with others to collectively pursue common interests</small>	Supplychain Transparency <small>Making all stages of the supply chain explicit and public</small>	Summary
Company A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of detail regarding their CSR action plan given, however specific details such as audit process or suppliers are not included. The website is very engaging for customers but the more knowledgeable consumer may require more information. Specific types of products mentioned even though the CSR website directs consumers away from the product website.
Company B	✓ <small>The retailer Code of Conduct must be adhered to.</small>	X	○ <small>In alignment with the ETI base code - however this is not detailed.</small>	X	○ <small>Legal minimum wage mentioned, however country specifics not detailed.</small>	✓ <small>Compliant, with promotion used as business case.</small>	○ <small>Homeworkers are acknowledge due to the nature of the employment work - no further details.</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very engaging website that communicates the look and feel of the brand well. The details that are provided appear in a word document format which does not communicate effectively the CSR work they are carrying out. The website throughout appears quite product focused, with the highly embellished nature of many affecting the CSR values.
Company C	✓ <small>The supplier Code of Conduct must be adhered to.</small>	○ <small>The number and type of factories included, however no specific details given.</small>	✓ <small>Next code of conduct detailed. ETI base code also acknowledged.</small>	✓ <small>Summary of audits included in their annual CSR reports.</small>	○ <small>Legal minimum wage mentioned, however country specifics not detailed.</small>	✓ <small>Compliant and mentioned in their Code of Conduct.</small>	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good level of detail, however very business orientated with no product link or imagery. Very un-engaging for readers. Navigates the consumer away from the product website to a corporate version, providing no direct link with the products they sell and the values they promote.
Company D	✓ <small>Details given in the Code of Conduct document.</small>	X	✓ <small>Available to download from the company website.</small>	✓ <small>Auditing process mapped and explained (Code of Conduct).</small>	X	✓ <small>Details given in the Code of Conduct document.</small>	○ <small>A summary of suppliers given but not specific details.</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All brands are covered in the Company Code of Conduct with specific brands not individually mentioned. A good level of detail is given but documents are wordy and jargon loaded, generally not very engaging. No product link made to the CSR work carried out by the retailer.
Company E	✓ <small>The company Code of Conduct must be adhered to.</small>	X	✓ <small>Available to download from the website.</small>	✓ <small>The details of the auditing process are provided.</small>	X	✓ <small>Detailed in the completed commitments in 2011.</small>	○ <small>A summary of the roles provided - not specific details.</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website appears engaging to the consumer with a number of communication channels used. A good balance of statistics and summary information used. Navigation through the site is fairly complex. Directs consumers away from the product website to the corporate version.
<div> X = No ○ = To some extent ✓ = Yes </div>								

Figure 3.8 – Online CSR Communication Study Results

During the in-store data collection, the researcher visited each company store in turn in Newcastle upon Tyne, looking for evidence of CSR communication methods (Appendix 3). Each of the following methods were analysed, with data recorded accordingly; *swing tags*, *care labels*, *carrier bags*, *leaflets/magazines*, *window displays*, *poster/advertisements* and *initiatives* (Figure 3.9).

	Swing Tags Labels attached to the outside of a garment, usually featuring price and brand name	Care Labels Fabric labels which are attached in the side seams of a garment	Carrier Bags Any plastic or paper bags which are given to customers to carry their bought goods	Leaflets / magazines Any paper based publications made available to customers in-store	Window Displays Any posters, window vinyls or visual merchandising able to be seen from outside the store	Posters / Advertisements Any internal interior decorations or posters able to be seen in-store	Initiatives Events or concessionary ranges featured in-store to promote the company CSR strategy	Summary
Company A Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 220 1/13	Only seen on Fairtrade garments.	Features Wash at 30 Degrees & Recycle	CSR strategy logo and website address featured.	CSR initiatives and events fully featured.		CSR initiative banners and commitments displayed.	CSR initiatives featured heavily throughout the clothing departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company A communicate certain aspects of their CSR strategy to their customers well. The recently launched CSR initiative could be seen in several places in-store, with feature also in their monthly magazine. Ethical commitments were less well publicised, with only the Fairtrade swing tags being used.
Company B Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 220 1/13	All Company B garments have a specific CSR strategy branded swing tag		The CSR strategy brand features on all bags	Leaflets are fully recyclable, bio degradable from well-managed forests and use chlorine free paper.		Small signs next to Fairtrade and charity partnership garments.	Profits from Fairtrade garments used in a charity partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Company B store communicated the brand philosophy well with the CSR strategy brand appearing on separate swing tags and being explained. Other initiatives could be seen throughout the store, where consumers could choose to read or not. The nature of specialist homeworkers needed for embellishment was also explained through the use of swing tags.
Company C Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 220 1/13		Features wash it at 30 degrees		Featured in the catalogue but not smaller pamphlets		Ethical trade logo behind the till points		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-store Company D communicate very little to their customers, however they do have a unique channel of communication in the form of their catalogue, providing consumers time to browse this at home. An ethical trade logo is featured in store but provides no explanation or further information.
Company D Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 220 1/13		Features Save energy, wash at 30 Degrees		Not Available				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company D communicated very little to their customers in store, with their featured care labels only being used on some garments. Several channels are not being utilised, with no social aspect being mentioned.
Company E Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 220 1/13	On the ethical and sustainable range the swing tags explain the rationale and commitment targeted			Use of sustainable materials indicated using a green dot, not fully explained.			The ethical and sustainable collection featured in larger stores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst Company E heavily rely on their specific ethical and sustainable collection to communicate their CSR strategy to customers, very few unrelated messages are featured. The coding feature within the catalogue was a good way to relate product to CSR activity, but the way in which the product complied with this was not fully explained.
<div> ✗ = No ○ = To some extent ✓ = Yes </div>								

Figure 3.9 – In-store CSR Communication Study Results

The matrix recording template allowed for the data collected to be categorised in accordance to the individual retailers level of compliance. A three-stage scale was used: *Yes*, *No* and *To some extent* and were visually recorded using colour coded icons to allow the reader to have a quick and easy overview of all the retailer case studies. Further details were also recorded, i.e. the type of CSR information featured on the carrier bags of Company X. The matrix also accommodated a short summary of the store to be detailed again taking into consideration the original criteria identified.

3.8.5 Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

Following the completion of the first four stages of the data collection process, the data collected was thoroughly analysed in order to build upon the methodological structure for the subsequent case study company interviews. During the analysis of the data collected with Company A, four key classifications were identified through the application of a content analysis approach; *CSR strategy*, *consumers*, *communication*

and *retailers*. These categories, along with the research questions, formed the direction for the line of questioning to be used in the additional retailer interviews. This rigorous approach ensured that the data collected would not only contribute to answering the overarching research question: *what influences ethical fashion purchasing?* but also to ensure that a direct comparison could be drawn between all five retailer case studies.

The interviews with the additional retailer employees, were planned for an hour in length, allowing plenty of time for introductions and a recap of the project summary. As before, a similar strategy was adopted to the semi-structured interviews conducted with Company A. Whilst there was a plan and structure to the time allocated, there was also space for additional conversation or for the researcher to ask any follow up questions as a direct consequence of something disclosed by the interviewee. All four of these sessions were audio recorded and later transcribed, allowing the researcher to fully engage in discussion with the participant.

3.9 Data Analysis Methods

The data collection methods deployed earlier in the study were predominantly qualitative, however it is acknowledged that qualitative analysis can be a difficult process due to not only the amount of data these methods can generate but also the richness of the data (Bryman, 2001). Qualitative research has been described as an *attractive nuisance* due to researchers being attracted to the quality of the data that can be collected but a potential nightmare during the analysis process (Miles, 1979). This difficulty has been identified during the analysis process of this study, due not only to the quantity of data, but also the types of data collected from the varying methods used.

3.9.1 Analysis Approach

The analysis approach that this research adopts is predominantly qualitative in nature, yet circular in execution, with this being identified throughout the methodology due to the repetitive interplay of both data collection and analysis. This strategy was chosen due to the iterative nature that the data collection process required, with the methodological complexities identified in previous research of a similar nature (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Dickson, 2013). Taking this step-by-step approach allowed the methodology and development of findings, interpretations and conclusions to be

refined throughout the process. It is believed that this alternation of data collection and analysis allows for sampling on the basis of emerging concepts and enables validation of these concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

At each stage of data collection, the time management structure of the investigation allowed for the analysis of data and early development of concepts. This also facilitated the researcher in being able to reflect on the work that had been carried out and the interpretation of the data collected. Consequently the development of future methods within the study could then be established, with constant reference to addressing the initial research questions.

The relationship developed during this process between data collection, analysis and eventual conclusions resulted in an iterative process in the methodological approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Consequently whilst an applied methodology can often become a series of stand-alone method collections, the on-going nature of this approach has allowed the data collection process to continue in narrative and development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The process of analysis has been detailed as a circular process, with an on-going process of describing, classifying and connecting data in order for conclusions to be reached (Dey, 1993). This circular process can be identified throughout the methodological journey of this investigations, seeing the continual process of collection, interpretation and conclusions being utilised.

Due to the mixed methods approach applied throughout the study, the analysis methods varied during each stage of the data collection process. Bryman (2001) acknowledges that due to the varying nature of the individual researcher's studies, the analysis approach differed from study to study. The next section will describe the analysis methods utilised for the five stages of the data collected.

3.9.2 Qualitative Analysis Methods

Content Analysis and Coding

Due to the majority of data collected being qualitative in nature, a range of methods were utilised at the different stages of data collection. Throughout the study, content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969) was a prominent method used, where qualitative text was analysed for emerging themes and underlying concepts. Byman (2001) describes this process as an approach to the analysis of texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable

manner. During this investigation this method was primarily utilised in the analysis of both the principal and additional retailer case studies. With the analysis of these interviews, the audio recordings were firstly transcribed, which then allowed for the content analysis process to begin.

The process of qualitative content analysis, also sometimes referred to as ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996) was carried out in a number of stages, where different types and levels of coding are accepted (Charmaz, 2000). The first stage of the process was the methodical analysis and highlighting of concepts that are directly relevant to the aims of the study. The second stage allowed for these identified concepts to be grouped together into a number of emerging categories that would later structure the coding process. With the highlights of data identified it was broken down into component parts and labelled appropriately. With the principal and additional interviews, a cross content analysis was used in order for a direct comparison between the companies to be made. This then facilitated the development of a cross analysis matrix to be formulated, with the four key categories being shown on the Y-axis and the retailers shown on the X-axis. This format facilitated a direct comparison to be visually shown with the emergence of patterns to be identified later in Chapter 6.

At this stage of the analysis, the data was examined for *similarities*; the factors that the interviewees agreed on, *differences*; the factors that the interviewees disagreed on and *anomalies*; factors identified as a one-off point of view during the interviews. These elements were then given a summary label describing the point in question. An example of this is illustrated below, along with the relevant quote from the retailer interview:

Similarity:

The acknowledgement that as a retailer they cannot be perfect in their actions from an ethical and sustainable point of view.

Evidence:

Company C: *‘There’s no way our supply chain is going to be perfect, absolutely no way, so it would only take one incident... and then all of the trust and all of the faith has gone down the pan. In some ways as retailers its better not to communicate it.’*

Company B: *‘We’re trying to be an ethical company and sometimes it doesn’t always work because we get let down by certain suppliers or some things happens, nobodies perfect.’*

Company D: *‘I also think the corporates should come up with a ‘warts and all’...we do so much, **not everything is going to be successful. We cant be 100% successful** because we need the other side to engage, and when I talk about the other side I mean the factories to engage with us and we need the workers to engage with us.’*

In accordance to Dey (1993) the connections made between the concepts does not need to be formal, but can rather be substantive in the identification of associations.

Following this recognition of connections, rationale and potential explanation for these could be made.

This level of analysis was seen as part of the coding process, with the corresponding concepts within the labelled categories now being grouped together with themes and patterns identified. Coding, as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), is the analytical processes through which data is fractured, conceptualized and integrated to create knowledge. The coding process in this investigation was carried out visually with grouped concepts colour coded and numbered in relation to the summary point. The similarities, differences and anomalies were coded accordingly, with label indicators showing the differences (Figure 3.10).

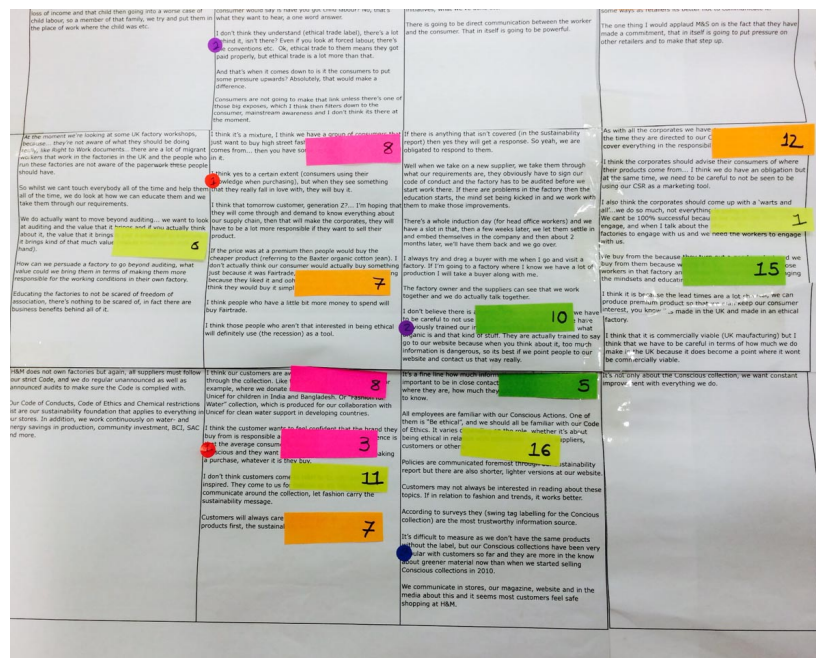


Figure 3.10 – Retailer Coded Analysis

Following the recognition of connections, rationale and potential explanation for these could be made. This visual process allowed for any patterns to be identified, for

example, it was seen that Company C and D were agreeing to many of the similarity points made. This was then analysed further with potential reasoning identified during one of the additional case study interviews.

Despite content analysis being a recognised method of textual investigation (Silverman, 2001, p. 123) there are also disadvantages to be recognised with the formation of categories and codes. Although placing data into categories can be seen as a powerful conceptual grid, it is said that this grid like format is potentially difficult to escape (Atkinson, 1990, p. 459). A further criticism to be recognised is the potential loss of flow and narrative during the analysis process. The method of creating concepts, categories and coding requires the segregation of data, splitting the documentation into fragmented parts. This approach whilst thorough in its application, has been acknowledged to potentially disrupt the flow of the data, encouraging the loss of narrative (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). By acknowledging these difficulties, this investigation aims to overcome this potential restriction by removing the relevant data from the matrix format once the analysis process was complete.

3.9.3 Quantitative Analysis Methods

A number of variables previously explored for potential correlation (*garment type*, *price* and *store bought from*) were broken down into sub-categories (i.e. garment type was broken down into a further 5 sub-categories: *basic garments*, *knitwear*, *outerwear*, *denim* and *decorative garments*) in order for more accurate conclusions to be reached. One variable explored was ethical rating in relation to price. For this stage of analysis, due to the two variables being two quantitative elements, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used. This theory developed by Karl Pearson in statistics allows two numeric values (an X and Y variable) to be directly compared and a measure of correlation established. When using Pearson's mathematical equation, a value between +1 and -1 is given to measure the strength of a linear dependency (Bryman, 2001, p. 227). This level of numeric accuracy allowed for a thorough analysis of price in correlation to ethical rating across the entire study. The results from this have been presented and discussed on page 110.

Despite the majority of data collected being qualitative, there were certain instances where participants answered in a multiple-choice format. This allowed for answers to be analysed and conclusions reached quickly using a cumulative total or a mode. Bryman (2001, p. 225) describes a mode as the variable that occurs most frequently in

the distribution of data. Data could then be visualised using mathematical tools such as graphs and pie charts to rapidly show participants preferential answers. For example, during one exercise participants were asked to place in hierarchical order the factors that they look for when purchasing garments. These eight limited options were then given a numerical score in accordance to their rating, i.e. if someone placed a factor as their top priority this was given a value of eight, and contrary if a factor was positioned as a participants eighth choice, this was given a score of one. This allowed for the top answers to the question to gain the most value numerically and visually to have the largest volume choice.

3.10 Conclusion Process

In order to ensure rigor during the process of defining conclusions for the study, a series of steps were taken. These steps worked from the initial research questions set for the study, making connections between these and the results of the individual methods carried out. Patterns in the data could then be interpreted, taking into consideration both the findings and relationships to literature in order to formulate a number of conclusions.

The first step within the conclusion process, was to segregate the data collection process into the five methodological stages carried out within the study. These were as follows:

- Stage 1 - Consumer Focus Group
- Stage 2 - Initial Case Study (Company A)
- Stage 3 - Online Consumer Study
- Stage 4 - Retailer to Consumer Communication Study
- Stage 5 - Subsequent Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

Each methodological stage was then categorised into the individual research questions that the method addressed. For example, Stage 1, the consumer focus group directly addressed the following three research questions:

- Question 1 - What influences ethical fashion purchasing?

- Question 2 - Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in ethical fashion purchasing?
- Question 3 - How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?

This process was repeated for all five of the methodological stages which allowed for the results from each of the methods carried out to be directly linked to the specific research question it addressed. The results were taken from the data analysed after each study, which has been earlier discussed during the empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Following the connection being made between the results of each study and the project research questions, a series of interpretations occurred. This allowed the researcher to more widely consider the findings being discussed, taking the analysis process from that of an isolated method approach to a study wide format. This interpretation stage of the conclusion process also allowed for all that the researcher has experienced and learnt throughout the investigation, to be applied. For each result several interpretations were generated, considering all possibilities of meaning whilst considering multiple perspectives of the investigation. An example of this can be seen below:

Result: A multi-channel approach is used to communicate CSR initiatives or events (social media, email, leaflets etc.)

Interpretation:

1. No one method would be effective, it is a combination of the channels used that is the most successful
2. Each method supports another in consistently reinforcing the CSR message

Conclusion: It takes a combined method approach for the communication of CSR strategies to be successful

Once the findings had been interpreted, early conclusions could be reached. All findings, interpretations and conclusions were placed in a table format, in relation to both methodological stage and research question. In addition to this, the findings relationship to literature and the positioning of this finding within the thesis is also detailed. A copy of these five process tables can be found in Appendices 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Due to too many early conclusions being reached at that point, thematic grouping

took place. Using a mapping technique seven initial, key project categories were placed in relation to each other; consumers, retailers, ethical, knowledge, responsibility, communication and behaviour. These not only reflected key topics of the overall investigation but also gave the mapping process context. The initial 53 conclusions (yellow notes) were then mapped in relation to the seven categories (pink notes), bearing in mind the relevance to each category, with the positioning of the conclusions reflecting this (Figure 3.11).

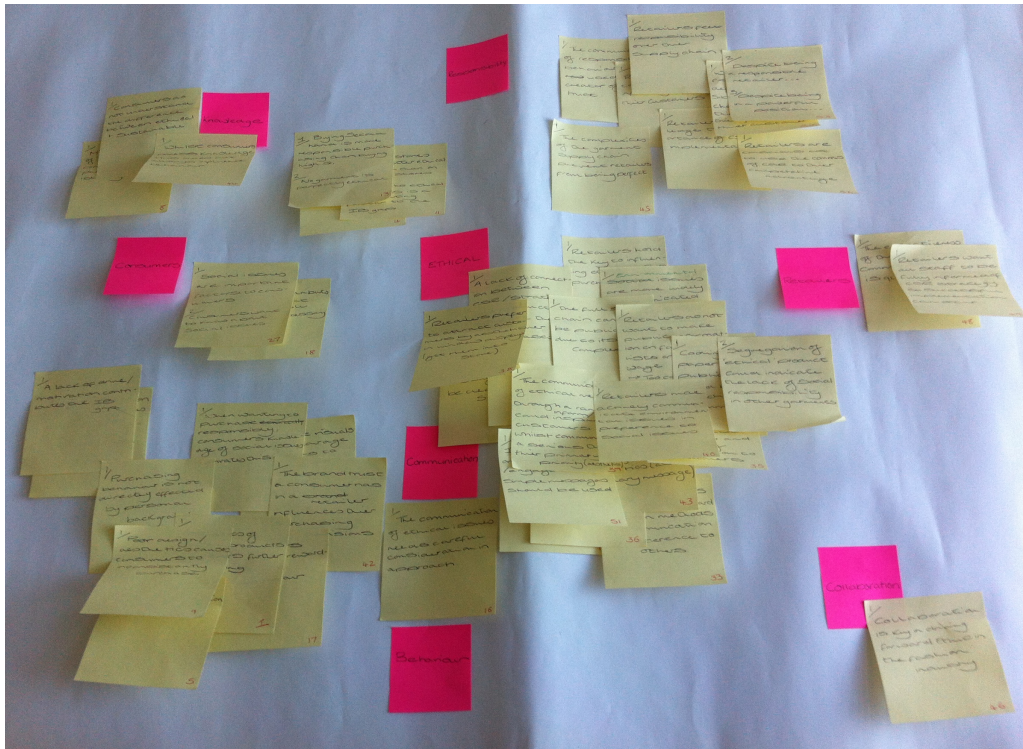


Figure 3.11 – Visual Mapping Process – Primary Categorisation

From this initial mapping process, a series of emerging sub-categories were established (orange notes), formulating phrases which illustrated the relationship between the categories but also reflected the wider issues being addressed through the investigation (Figure 3.12). These emerging, interrelating sub-categories were as follows:

- Retailer communication of CSR
- Factors prohibiting ethical behaviour
- Consumer perceptions of the term ethical
- Retailer responsibility



Figure 3.12 – Visual Mapping Process – Secondary Categorisation

At this point heavily populated areas of results generated could be clearly identified from the visual mapping exercise. From this, alongside the emerging categories a final series of conclusions were reached. These took all aspects of both results found from the methodological stages carried out and the consequential relationship to literature previously discussed in Chapter 2. This connection to literature identified gaps in the current scope of knowledge within the area of ethical fashion purchasing and would later contribute to the identification of the contribution to new knowledge. The final set of conclusions (green notes) aimed to provide answers to the original research questions set, whilst also highlighting areas for future work and research (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13 – Visual Mapping Process – Initial Conclusions

The final stage for the conclusion analysis process was a number of consequential practical solutions or suggested incremental steps (blue notes) to the conclusions presented (Figure 3.14). These will be later discussed in Chapter 7, in terms of long and short-term goals proposed for development towards a more socially responsible future for the fashion industry.



Figure 3.14 – Visual Mapping Process – Practical Solutions

3.11 Issues of Trustworthiness

When conducting any type of research, it must be acknowledged that through the methodology applied there will be issues of trustworthiness within the data collected. It has previously been recognised that due to the sensitive nature of certain aspects of this research eliciting a true account of participant's thoughts could potentially be difficult (Auger and Devinney, 2007). When discussing social issues within the garment supply chain, it is possible that consumers may have felt uncomfortable, and thus more inclined to give answers that are seen as more socially acceptable. Furthermore, due to the consumer focus group being carried out with the researcher as the facilitator, participants may have also been wanting to provide information that the researcher was looking for or expecting.

The complexity of obtaining unbiased, truthful answers is recognised during this research, with measures taken in order to avoid these issues wherever possible. This was acknowledged prior to the design of the methodological approach and could therefore be considered and built into the foundations of the data collection process. Where problem areas were identified, the methods were reconsidered in order to achieve a true representation of consumer thoughts and opinions.

Certain aspects of the consumer research were carried out within a focus group discussion, it is in a situation such as this, where answers are shared and made public, that participants may be more inclined to give more socially acceptable answers. With the public nature of these discussions, people may not have necessarily agreed with the points made, but then again may not have been comfortable to disagree with other participants. Furthermore, when discussing sensitive social issues, such as working conditions or factory employee wages in a public arena, the collection of unbiased data may not have been possible.

In order to avoid untruthful answers being given by participants a number of measures were introduced. Firstly the warm-up exercise was introduced, where participants were made to feel comfortable and early interactions with other participants could be made. This was designed as a brainstorming activity, which prompted discussions and constructive arguments regarding the term ethical. In addition to testing participants perceptions of the term, it also provided a time where participants could start thinking in the right space, in the hope that discussions would prompt further more thought-led answers.

The second measure put in place was the addition of solo or individual answers. This allowed the consumers to provide information without other people being able to see their answers. Participants could write down their answers and return the paper provided in order to keep their thoughts private. This process was implemented in the hope that data given would be more honest and close to their true opinions. This written element was also introduced in the hope that the consumers would again answer using their true thoughts and not in the way that the researcher wants them to. This was done with the assumption that people would feel more inclined to answer in the way they wanted to, opposed to a way they deemed more acceptable, when not directly answering face-to-face with the researcher.

One further consideration that needed to be recognised with regards to the trustworthiness of the data collection, was the presence of the researcher when conducting research. This was particularly prominent in this study when a period of time was spent within Company A. With the research acting as the observer as participant (Bryman, 2001, p. 163), it was hoped that the data collected would be under as natural circumstances as possible. The ethnographic nature of the work, conducted over a period of time, was also devised in order for the team with which the researcher would work to get used to the presence and involvement of a unfamiliar person. The way that the researcher participated in day-to-day work within company A was also thought to have aided in the continuity of natural working circumstances.

3.11.1 Limitations

Throughout the investigation, every step was taken in order to ensure the reliability and unconstrained circumstances in data collection, however there were certain limitations within the methodological approach that were out of the control of the researcher. These limitations could be seen as potential weaknesses in the study, and where they could have not have been overcome in methodological approach, they are to be acknowledged.

During the focus group activity the participant sample, as previously mentioned was predominantly fashion students and tutors, meaning that the group had similar backgrounds and interests. Whilst this could be seen as a potential data reliability limitation, the introduction of variable testing within demographic information provided grounds to defend this. It was explored during the analysis process to see if

demographic information such as age, occupation and salary would dramatically change a consumers purchasing behaviour. However it was seen that when looking at these individual factors, there was no direct correlation or patterns of information to confirm that demographics directly influence the fashion purchasing behaviour of the participants tested. Therefore, it can be concluded that this potential limitation did not bias the nature of the data collected. The results and findings from the consumer focus group activity will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

A further discussion point regarding the consumer focus group participants, is the existence of prior knowledge of ethical issues within the garment supply chain. This knowledge was evidenced before the focus group data collection through the presence of the individuals at the conference where the activity took place. As previously mentioned, the focus group was conducted at an ethical fashion symposium hosted by Fashioning an Ethical Industry, therefore it could be assumed that attendees had an initial interest or previous knowledge of such ethical issues. However, this symposium was deemed appropriate due to the desired exploration of the intention-behaviour gap. The different aspects that would be further investigated here was both the initial purchasing intentions of consumers, but also the eventual purchasing behaviour. Without prior ethical knowledge, or intentions to purchase ethical, this disparity in aims and actions could not be fully explored.

The consumer online survey was heavily answered by only one gender, of the 111 overall respondents, only three participants were male and 108 female. This is a limitation within the study that was out of the control of the researcher. No constraints were put in place when the broadcast of the survey was circulated, with all members of the Ethical Fashion Forum's database contacted in the same way of which provided the same information. The conclusion for this is either that females are more likely to answer surveys when requested or that the specific database used attracts more female members due to the subject nature. However, the aim of this survey was to obtain information from which a criteria could then be formulated for the next step of the investigation. Whilst acknowledging that a limitation has been introduced through the survey being predominantly answered by females, it is thought to have not impacted on the reliability of the data provided.

3.11.2 Delimitations

Whilst a number of limitation factors were out of the control of the researcher, there were some delimitations employed that the researcher put in place to control and shape the research in some form (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

The primary delimitation used within this investigation was the number of high street fashion retailers used to create a series of case studies. This was an informed choice made by the researcher, as it was thought that five retailers would give a fair overview of the high street, whilst keeping within the constraints of the study. These companies were chosen due to both their brand profile and prominence in the UK fashion market. All five companies had large female fashion departments and had in excess of 200 stores nationwide. These factors, along with others such as turnover and employee numbers added to the comparability of the retailers for the sake of the case studies. In addition to this, it was felt that the data collected fully addressed and explored the research questions initially established, where categories were formulated and consequential relationships investigated.

When conducting the retailer to consumer communication study, the in-store data collection was carried out in the stores located in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. This was taken as an example high street, with all data collected in stores of that location only. This could be seen as a potential weakness within the study, with a variety of different stores of different geographical locations needed to strengthen the investigation. For a fair sample of UK high streets, a wide range of towns and cities could have been included, however it was decided that the Newcastle upon Tyne store could be taken as an example high street with data used to inform the online consumer survey criteria. Had this have been a prominent focus of the investigation, a wider sample of stores would have been used.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter describes the methodological journey this research has taken, recognising that ethical purchasing research has been heavily associated with data collection complexities in the past, leading to previous research uncovering similar findings and conclusions (Auger and Deviney, 2007; Dickson, 2013). The initial questions and aims of the project were approached from a dual focussed angle, considering both consumer

and retailers within the process of fashion purchasing. The rationale for the research and the approach has been discussed, with the choice of consumer and retailer sample participants explained.

Due to this dual focussed approach, the predominantly qualitative, five-stage, data collection process has been detailed in a sequential manner, describing the mixed methods or bricolage approach to the series of data collection tools utilised. The data collected from these implemented methods was then explored, with conclusions drawn using again mixed method analysis techniques. The rationale for the methods and analysis process used was key to the justification of the investigation process, showing that these tools were selected from a range of methods considered. Limitations, delimitations and issues of trustworthiness have also been discussed, highlighting potential weaknesses in the research and how these have been overcome through the design of the methodology.

The study has been designed in such a way that the interplay of data collection, analysis, interpretation and conclusions has led to a number of iterations throughout the methodology. This has allowed for the development and refinement of the data collection stages over time, with each stage informing the next. Emerging categories from the range of findings were firmly established with relationships and codes between these fully explored. These relationships acted as the structural foundation for the back-bone of the research and guided the methodological development appropriately. The methods and results will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, during the empirical chapters (Chapter 4, 5 and 6).

Chapter 4

Consumer Focus Group

4. Introduction

As this was the primary stage of the data collection, the use of a consumer focus group allowed for a wide scope of consumer data to be collected, providing a foundation to start the iterative approach taken as a reflection of the analysis framework implemented. This method also allowed for a large amount of rich data to be collated, in preference to more time consuming methods such as interviews (Bryman, 2001, p. 336), which would not have been possible within the constraints of the investigation.

In accordance with the targeted participant approach taken by Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., (2006), the sample group of participants were targeted at an ethical fashion conference in Edinburgh, which provided a participant group of ethically aware and environmentally conscious individuals for the research. Whilst this delimitation could potentially be seen as a weakness in the methodology, this ethically aware criteria was necessary as consumers needed to primarily possess the intention to buy ethical clothing, in order for the potential intention-behaviour disparity to be measured (as discussed previously in section 2.2.4). The symposium was primarily aimed at higher education individuals, therefore the participant sample were predominantly students, tutors and industry experts. This event thus provided a good number of participants, of varying demographics to offer a wide range of data regarding attitudes towards ethical fashion and their purchasing behaviour.

Due to the nature of the scoping exercise, it was determined that a research method that allowed for several individuals to participate simultaneously would be the most appropriate. It was decided that a focus group would be the most effective method to target a large section of consumers. In addressing these initial aims and research questions, a series of four creative activities were devised in order to successfully obtain the information needed. These individual activities addressed three of the research questions established overall, whilst also being fun and creative in the way that the information was collected.

This chapter aimed to give further detail of the methods used during stage 1 of the primary data collection process and how the four creative activities were utilised in addressing the research questions. The chapter has been divided by the four main activities that took place during the consumer focus group. Each activity section will present the approach taken to the activity, the methods implemented, the results

generated through the application of these, the way the results have been analysed finally the conclusions that have been reached. Overall conclusions and implications of the findings will conclude the chapter, with the impact of the remaining data collection process taken into consideration.

4.1 Focus Group Approach

The four activities carried out during the focus group session aimed to investigate the purchasing behaviours and attitudes of ethically aware high street consumers. In addition to this wider aim, there were several key areas that the study focused on:

- Consumer purchasing behaviour
- Factors influencing purchasing behaviour
- The intention-behaviour gap
- Consumer ethical awareness levels

The research questions addressed through the application of the consumer focus group are as follows:

- Question 1 – What influences ethical fashion purchasing?
- Question 2 – Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in ethical fashion purchasing?
- Question 3 – How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?

The four focus group activities had a slight variation in numbers attending (between 17 and 35), however for the full duration of each individual activity, the participant numbers remained the same. Whilst these numbers are considerably larger than a traditional focus group study, the activities were designed in such a way that allowed for a larger group to participate, resulting in a broader spectrum of data.

The focus group took place during an open-space session arranged by the symposium organisers (Fashioning an Ethical Industry), with other discussion groups and activities occurring simultaneously. The open-space nature of the sessions meant that the symposium delegates could move freely from one event to another, with activities kept

informal and relaxed. As a consequence of this setup, the four short design activities were developed to adapt to the session space provided, however this did mean that the participant levels of each activity differed slightly. Over a 90-minute period, all four activities took place; Define Ethical, Ethical Scale, Garment Requirements and a Questionnaire.

4.2 Activity 1 - Define Ethical

Target Research Question:



How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on consumer purchasing behaviour?

Number of Participants: 35

Number of Answers Recorded: 63

Duration: 25 minutes

4.2.1 Activity Aims and Objectives

This activity was used as a warm up exercise, getting participants to start thinking in the correct space, but also to encourage and promote discussion between the group. The aim of this activity was to test the participant's perceptions of the term *ethical* and also to analyse their awareness levels and how they then implement such knowledge during their purchasing behaviour.

With the researcher acting as the activity facilitator, participants were asked to suggest words, terminology and phrases that clearly define their own understanding of the word *ethical*. These suggested terms prompted discussion amongst the group, leading to the creation of further phrases or definition suggestions.

The activity was conducted as a mapping or brain storming exercise using A1 sheets of plain paper and coloured Post-it notes (Figure 4.1) to record the data provided. Both the participants and the facilitator could contribute words, which often prompted a more detailed conversation or discussion to take place.



Figure 4.1 – Ethical Mapping Exercise

This provided an insight into the participant's level of awareness and knowledge surrounding the term *ethical* and the key words they would use to communicate their ideas.

4.2.2 Analysis Method

The recording methods used during this exercise were both video footage and the visual mapping process, both of which were co-created by the facilitator and participants. Using both of these elements provided, a narrative of the discussion that took place was formulated. From this narrative a number of key discussion topics could be identified as headings for further sub-topics of conversations. The key headings were as follows:

- Social
- Environmental
- Education and awareness
- Influential purchasing factors
- Attitudes
- Solutions

From the 35 participants who contributed to the study, 63 terms or phrases were put forward to best describe the group's knowledge and understanding of the term ethical.

In order to formulate conclusions and visualize thought processes an integrated mind map was created illustrating key connections and links between the terms and phrases discussed (Figure 4.2).

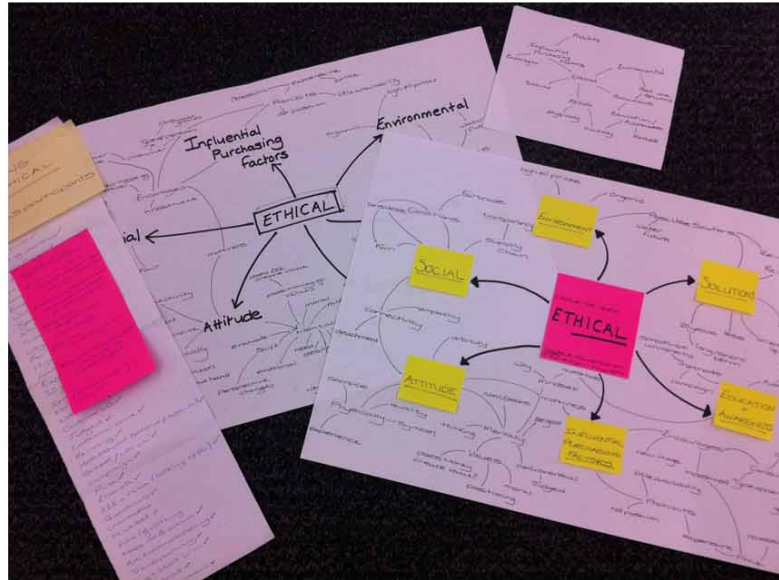


Figure 4.2 – Integrated Mind Map

Despite this activity being used primarily as a warm-up exercise, the participants contributed interesting discussion points and structured arguments towards the problem defined in this research.

4.2.3 Key Findings

- Despite the traditional association between the term ethical being with social issues, the group of participants attributed a number of ecological issues such as organic, water conservation and oil with the term. Whilst environmental and ethical issues are often grouped together and at times overlap, this illustrates a key misunderstanding of the term ethical which when used by retailers to communicate to consumers could have a consequential effect on an individual's purchasing behaviour.
- One recurring topic during the activity was the view that ethical fashion was not perceived as fashionable or on trend. This was also given as a key reason why the participants often did not shop responsibly. This illustrates that the

industry as a whole is still struggling to shake off dated stigmatisms in terms of ethical fashion not being trend driven.

- The idea that the ethical fashion movement was a trend was discussed, implying that awareness and interest regarding these issues could decline in the future. This suggests that the recent increase in ethical awareness and action is a passing phase and may witness the rise and consequential fall of interests in ethical issues.
- Consumer attitudes were heavily discussed during the session, with the general feeling that an individual consumer had to possess the drive, motivation and the correct mind set to purchase responsibly. This notion could reflect the fickle attitude and purchasing behaviour of consumers and could provide potential reasoning to the inconsistent nature of ethical purchasing.
- A number of potential solutions to address the problems raised were discussed during the session, however all participants were in agreement that solutions had to be realistic. The idea of post-use solutions were also discussed (i.e. recycling, reuse etc.) but again this mainly targets environmental issues as it considers the post-use disposal and environmental impact of clothing.

4.3 Activity 2 - Ethical Scale

Target Research Questions:



What influences ethical fashion purchasing?



How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on consumer purchasing behaviour?

Number of Participants: 35

Number of Answers: 35

Duration: 25 minutes

4.3.1 Activity Aims and Objectives

This activity was used to gauge consumer awareness levels of social issues within the garment supply chain, but also to see how the participant's knowledge influenced their purchasing behaviour. It encouraged the participants to think about their own personal ethical or non-ethical purchasing criteria and the factors that contributed towards this, i.e. country of origin or price paid.

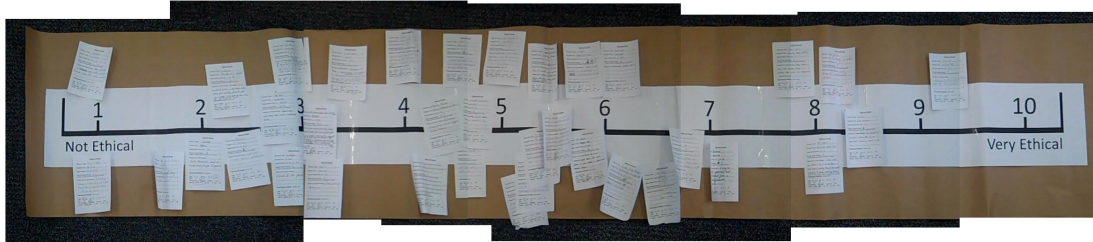


Figure 4.3 – Ethical Scale

The activity asked participants to analyse an item of clothing they were wearing at the time of the activity and through the utilisation of their awareness levels and perceptions of the term ethical, rate their garment on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 was *very ethical* and 1 being *not ethical at all*. The activity was recorded on a small A6 sheet where several additional pieces of information regarding the garment were asked. In addition to a small amount of anonymised personal data (Age range, gender and salary bracket) they were asked to disclose the following:

- Garment type
- Where the garment was purchased
- The approximate price paid
- How they would rate the garment on the scale of 1 to 10
- The rationale for their numeric rating

Participants were then asked to stick their answer sheets on a large ethical scale (Figure 4.3) creating a visual piece of data where correlations and patterns could be easily identified.

Despite the activity being based upon a rating scale, during the design stage the previous criticisms of using such techniques were acknowledged. To overcome relying only on the numeric number given by the participants the additional information was

requested to understand the rationale for the decision made. The physical activity of positioning their answers within the 1 to 10 scale made the participants really consider their answers, knowing that other people would be able to see their answers. Whilst the activity was not designed to embarrass or inhibit participants, some felt ashamed of their answers, acknowledging that they did not implement their knowledge during their purchasing activities. To summarise, this indicates that the participant's initial intentions did not reflect their purchasing behaviour, reinforcing the intention-behaviour gap previously evidenced in literature.

4.3.2 Analysis Methods

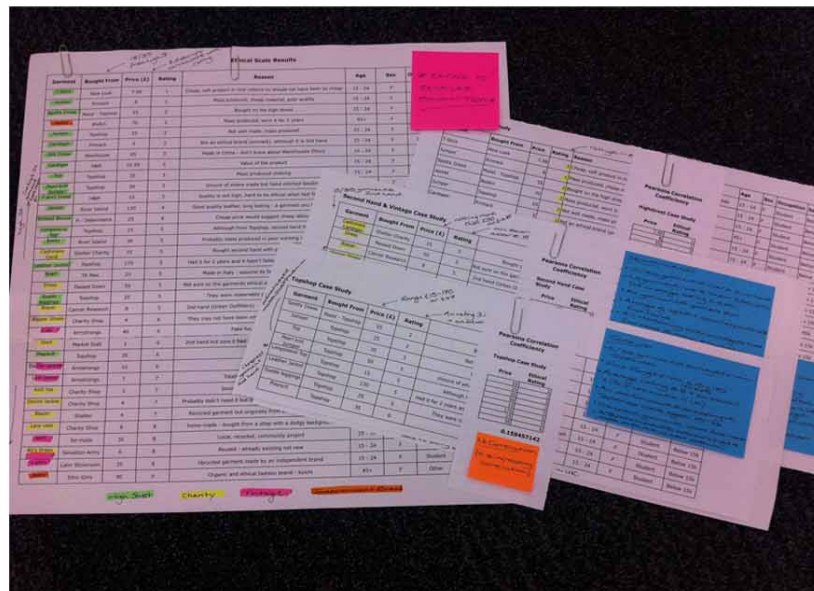


Figure 4.4 – Visual Analysis Methods

The results of this exercise were analysed using a very visual process and using both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Figure 4.4). This mixed-analysis was necessary given to the quantity of data collected. Due to the additional information given about each garment, the data could be divided by variable and additionally analysed in relation to ethical rating which was the constant factor. For example, ethical rating was analysed in relation to:

- Garment type
- Price
- Store bought from

Due to many variables being tested in this study, the analysis was a staggered process, which will now be explained in more detail.

Classification

Firstly all data was put into an easy-to-read table format in ascending order of the ethical rating scale, which allowed for a classification divide to be put into place.

This was divided into 3 key areas of classification that were as follows:

- Rating 1, 2 and 3 = poor
- Rating 4, 5 and 6 = average
- Rating 7, 8, 9 and 10 = good

The individual analysis technique differed again, according to the variable that was being discussed. The diagram below illustrates the different ways in which the variables were tested against each other and broken down into further categories and subcategories (Figure 4.5). For example, ethical rating to garment type was the first factor tested to look for correlation. Once organised with the ethical rating in ascending order, the results were then categorised into the types of garments featured in the answers provided. The prominent garment types found were outerwear, denim, knitwear, decorative pieces and basics. Once the results were separated into one of these five garment type categories, each of those could then be further sub-categorised into second hand/vintage or bought on the high street. From this level of analysis, correlation was identified and conclusions made. This process of analysis was then repeated for ethical rating to price and retailer.

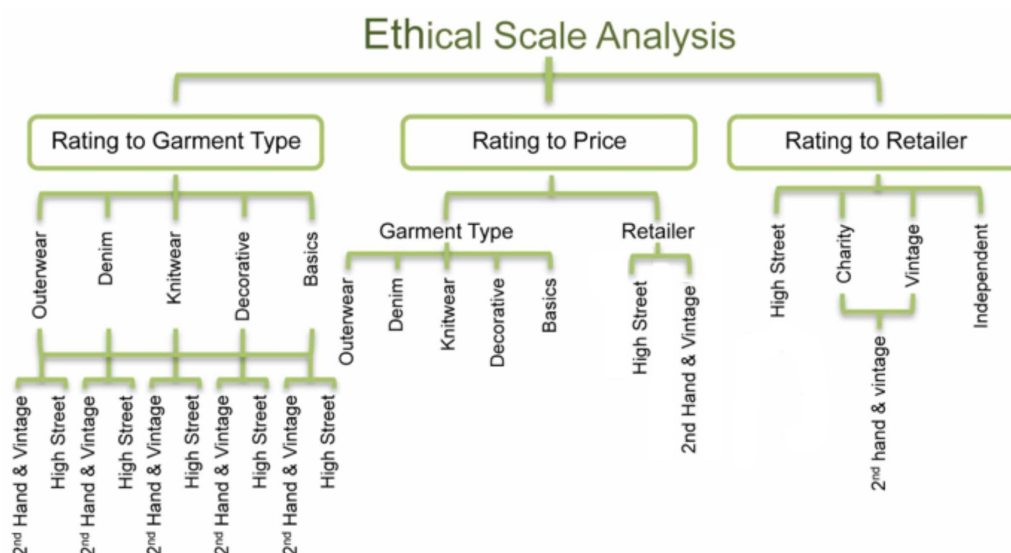


Figure 4.5 – Ethical Scale: Levels of Analysis

For the details of the individual analysis techniques and findings, the variables have been discussed separately below.

Ethical Rating to Garment Type

For the first level of analysis was the testing of the variables data ethical rating to garment type, in which there were five prominent categories which also reflected the common classifications used by the fashion industry. These categories were; *basic garments*, *knitwear*, *outerwear*, *denim* and *decorative garments*. The categories could then be analysed separately, specifically looking at patterns in data when comparing the ethical rating to the individual garment type. For example, ethical rating in relation to knitwear.

A further cross section categorisation could then take place, where the individual garment type classifications could be sub-categorised into high street and second hand. An example of this would be outerwear being sub-divided into second hand outerwear and high street outerwear. This facilitated another level of analysis to occur, specifically looking for patterns in garment type, both second hand and high street purchases.

Ethical Rating to Price

The next factor to be explored was ethical rating in relation to price. For this stage of analysis, two quantitative elements were compared, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used. This theory developed by Karl Pearson in the field of statistics allows an X

and Y variable to be directly compared and a measure of correlation established. Using Pearson's mathematical equation a value between +1 and -1 is given to measure the strength of a linear dependence. This formula was applied in relation to ethical rating to the sub-categorised variables, which were as follows:

- All garments
- Second hand & vintage garments
- High street garments
- Individual garment types (basic garments, knitwear, outerwear, denim and decorative garments)
- Further sub-categorisation of the individual garments types (above) into second hand and high street

This level of classification allowed for a thorough analysis of price in correlation to ethical rating across the entire study.

Ethical Rating to Retailer

The next stage of the analysis process for this activity was the testing of ethical rating to the retailer the garment being analysed was purchased from. The data was divided into four initial categories; second hand, high street, vintage and independent. This division was conducted due to 15 of the overall 35 garments analysed being from either a charity shop or a vintage store. These categories could then be analysed separately and any emerging regularities or patterns identified.

4.3.3 Key Findings

- All garments surveyed were ethically rated between 1 and 9, with no high street garment being scored above 6 and all second hand garments between 5 and 9. This implies that in the opinion of the activity participants, purchasing second hand is classed as more ethical than purchasing from high street retailers, this notion was seen as a recurring theme throughout the four activities.
- Although the majority of the participants were of a similar background (aged 15 to 24, students, with an annual salary of below £15,000) the anomalies in this sample did not show their purchasing behaviour to be dramatically

different. High street, fast fashion and low value goods were purchased by all participants, illustrating that an increased age and salary does not directly affect purchasing behaviour.

- When analysing the garment type categories individually, no dramatic conclusions could be reached. However when the further sub-classification of these categories into second hand and high street occurred a distinct disparity between the two was evident. Second hand goods were significantly lower priced and also give a higher ethical rating, due to their reused nature when compared to those purchased on the high street. However some of the second hand garments originated from high street retailers, prompting some participants to question if they were still supporting the philosophy and moral values of such high street companies by buying these, albeit second hand purchases. This demonstrated a certain awareness level of ethical issues on the part of the participants, allowing them to question and make a level of informed decisions when purchasing fashion items.

Whilst the above points were general findings observed from the overall study, when categorised using the same groupings as utilised during the analysis process, the discussion of more in-depth details is possible.

Variable: Ethical Rating to Garment Type

- **Denim** - Four of the 35 garments surveyed were denim, with three of the four being second hand and the remainder surveyed garment being purchased from an organic cotton branded boutique. This garment was an anomaly across the whole study as it was the only item not either second hand or from a high street retailer. Despite having the highest price tag within the denim section of £90, it was also the only garment across the activity with an ethical rating of 9. When the participant was asked why this garment did not receive a 10, she replied that no item of clothing is perfect when it comes to ethics.
- **Basics** – This garment category was a good example of the extent of the disparity in ethical rating between high street and second hand. Of the five items surveyed, three were from the high street and were ethically rated

between 1 and 5, in comparison to the remaining two, second hand garments who both received an ethical rating of 8.

- **Knitwear** - Again in the knitwear category, when comparing garment type to ethical rating, there was a large difference between second hand and high street garments. Five of the seven garments were high street and were ethically rated no higher than 3, in comparison to the second hand goods that scored between 5 and 7. This category also showed that there was an inverted correlation when comparing price and ethical rating. This was due to the highest ethically rated knitwear garment being the lowest in price and the lowest rated garment, costing the most.
- **Decorative Garments** – In this category there was a noticeable difference in the amount participants were willing to pay for garments, with an average price of £32.70 per item. Again second hand garments were ethically rated the highest, however this was the first time in the study where production and country of origin was detailed in the qualitative reasoning. There was also acknowledgment of the participant not knowing or being familiar with a specific company's ethical values, implying an informed decision could not be made.
- **Outerwear** – Five of the nine garments surveyed were again purchased on the high street, however the average spend per item dramatically increased in this category with an average of £85 spent per item. This illustrates that participants were more willing to spend more money on an outerwear garment in comparison to the other garment categories in this study. The remainder four garments were second hand and again were ethically rated the highest in this classification despite having an average price of only £14 per garment. When it came to the qualitative reasoning, participants were suggesting that a higher quality or longer lasting item could reflect a higher ethical rating, thus the overall ethical rating in this outerwear category being marginally higher when compared to the other garment type classifications.

Variable: Ethical Rating to Retailer

- High St** – From the overall activity, 18 of the 35 garments surveyed were purchased from the high street, with no garment being ethical rated above 6 and an average of 3.5. When asked for reasoning behind the participants rating choice, 12 of the 18 answers acknowledged that despite spending an average of £44.55 per garment there was a certain level of social implications when purchasing from the high street.
- Second Hand/Vintage** – 15 of the 35 garments surveyed were either from a charity shop or vintage store, with no garment costing more than £50 and an average price of £14.60, an average difference of £29.95 when compared to high street garments. All garments analysed were ethically rated 5 and above with an average of 6.6. All qualitative reasoning acknowledged that purchasing second hand was more ethical than buying on the high street.

Variable: Ethical Rating to Price

The final variable to be tested within the ethical scale activity was price in relation to ethical rating. As previously mentioned on page 84, this was done using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The results were a value between +1 and -1 indicating the strength of a linear dependency, where +1 indicates a positive correlation, -1 shows a negative correlation and 0 indicates no correlation at all (Bryman, 2001, p. 227).

	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient	Direct Correlation
All answers	-0.090334426	No
Bought From Category		
Second Hand/Vintage Case Study	-0.195696375	No
High Street Case Study	0.265600105	No
Garment Type (All)		
Outerwear Garments	-0.428645684	No
Basic Garments	0.430374403	No
Knitwear Garments	-0.184764637	No
Decorative Garments	-0.656582019	No
Denim Garments	0.906445214	No
Garment Type (High Street Only)		
Outerwear Garments	0	No
Basic Garments	0.866025404	No
Knitwear Garments	0.534942169	No
Decorative Garments	-0.620173673	No
Denim Garments	n/a	n/a

Table 4.1 – Quantitative Table of Results – Ethical Rating to Price

Whilst the results show that there is no strong correlation between price and ethical rating in any of the categories, all but one have a degree of correlation (all but one result show a result of a positive or negative numeric value). Ethical rating in relation to the price of outerwear garments had a result of 0, appearing as the only clothing category to have neither a positive or negative correlation. When analysing the study as a whole (all categories) the rating of 0.09 shows that there is almost no direct correlation between the two variables being tested, however when the sub-categorisation is applied, the results differ significantly.

For an increasing correlation, meaning that the as the price increases so does the ethical rating score, denim garments (all) has the highest result of correlation with a rating of 0.91, shortly followed by high street basic garment category with a rating of 0.87. In terms of a decreasing correlation, meaning that as the ethical rating increases, the price decreases, the nearest category to a correlating rating of 1, is decorative garments (all) with a result of -0.66, closely followed by high street decorative garments with a rating of -0.62.

4.4 Activity 3 - Garment Requirements

Target Research Questions:



What influences ethical fashion purchasing?



How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on consumer purchasing behaviour?

Number of Participants: 35


Number of Answers: 35

Duration: 20 minutes

4.4.1 Activity Aims and Objectives

This activity aimed to gain insights into the priority factors that were important to participants when looking for fashion items and the way that these factors could

influence their final purchasing behaviour. This activity also required qualitative reasoning behind the participant's decisions, trying to determine why the chosen factors were important to them.

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Task 2
Garment Requirements


From the stickers attached to the sheet, select the most 5 important factors when purchasing a garment and prioritise them 1 -5.
Briefly Explain your choice.


Most Important	Why is this important?


Least Important


Logo Key:



Hand made



Organic


Fairtrade


Price


Aesthetics


Locally Sourced


Material



Washing Instructions

Figure 4.6 – Example Garment Requirements Record Sheet

This activity asked participants to define the five most important factors they look for when purchasing a garment. Preparation time for the activity did not allow for prior research to take place in order for the criteria to be selected, therefore the researcher selected the eight possible answers without applying an ethics bias. During the activity eight possible factors were given to choose from:

- Hand made
- Organic
- Fairtrade
- Price
- Aesthetics
- Locally sourced

- Material
- Washing instructions

Participants were then asked to rank the top five most important factors in descending order from the *most important* to the *least important*. The participants most important factor was labelled as their *first choice* and their final selection being their *fifth choice*, with the selection in between being numerically labelled appropriately (second, third and fourth choice).

The activity was recorded using a pre-prepared A5 sheet and small stickers using representative icons for the eight possible answers. These could then be stuck into place according to the participants hierarchical choices with space left for a small statement explaining their choice (Figure 4.6).

4.4.2 Analysis Method

This activity was analysed using the results of the hierarchical choices made by the participants, indicating the factors that they look for when purchasing clothing. Consequently the analysis methods used were predominantly quantitative according to the cumulative number of participants that chose each factor, however due to participants also being asked to briefly explain why each factor chose as important to them, qualitative analysis also took place. The consumer hierarchical choices, from first to fifth, were disseminated from the original recording template to a large results table, which allowed for cumulative analysis to take place (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 – Activity 3 – Table of Results

The individual eight possible choices (hand made, organic, Fairtrade, price, aesthetics, locally sourced, material and washing instructions) were calculated both in terms of votes per positional choice (i.e. first choice, second choice, third choice etc.) but also the total cumulative votes received throughout the activity. In order to calculate the votes per positional choice a numerical mark was assigned to each answer. For example, a participant first choice would receive five marks, second choice would receive four marks and so on. A sample of this can be seen in the table below:

Choice No.	Example Choice Factor	Marks Allocated
1st	Handmade	5
2nd	Price	4
3rd	Aesthetics	3
4th	Washing Instructions	2
5th	Material	1

Table 4.2 – Choice Factors - Marks Allocation

Once the initial quantitative analysis was complete, patterns, regularities and singularities in the data were identified and possible conclusions and reasoning formulated.

4.4.3 Key Findings

During the analysis process, patterns were identified where it became apparent there was a top/bottom divide between the eight choices provided. The top four choices; aesthetics, material, price and washing instructions, could be described as necessities when purchasing clothing, in comparison to the bottom 4 choices; hand made, locally sourced, Fairtrade and organic, which could be described as desirable factors, however not necessary when deciding to purchase an item. The cumulative votes per factor in the overall study can be seen in the bar-chart below (Figure 4.8).

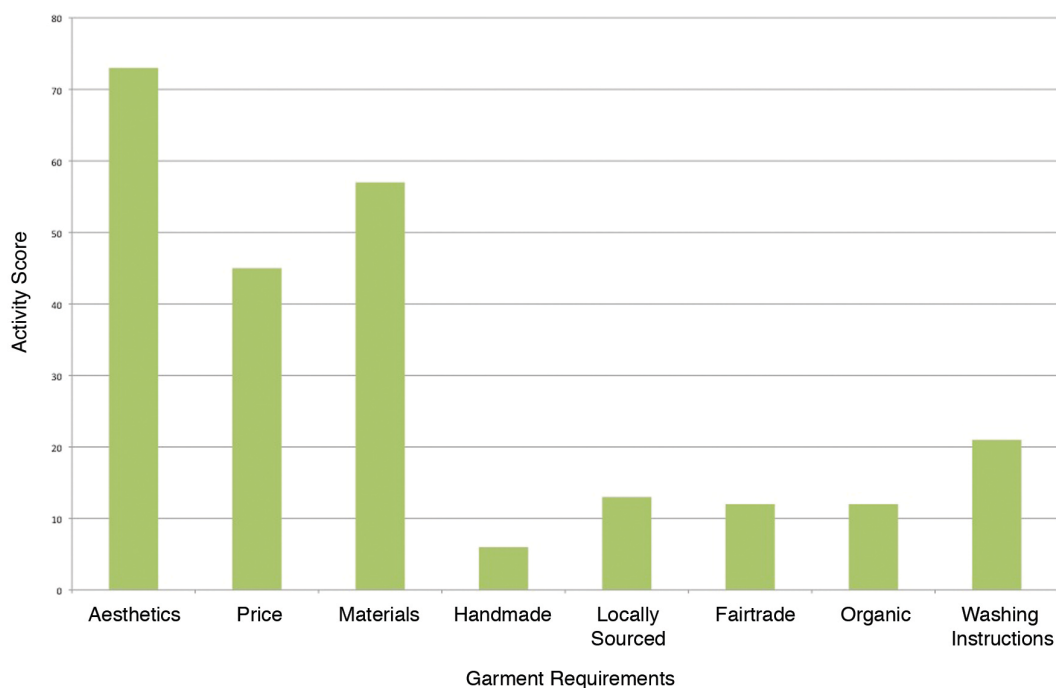


Figure 4.8 – Data Visual – Garment Requirements

The following results have been divided by the number of choice to provide greater details and insights.

1st Choice

Choice Factors	Aesthetics	Price	Material	Hand Made	Locally Sourced	Fairtrade	Organic	Washing Instructions
Participant Votes	13	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Table 4.3 – Garment Requirements – 1st Choice Results

13 of the 15 participants voted *aesthetics* as their priority choice when purchasing garments, showing that the look and image of garments was the most important factor to the participants when buying fashion items. Whilst one participant detailed their first choice as *material*, the final participant chose *locally sourced*, however this individual did differ in personal details in comparison to the majority of the group. This answer could therefore be classified as an irregularity.

2nd Choice

Choice Factors	Aesthetics	Price	Material	Hand Made	Locally Sourced	Fairtrade	Organic	Washing Instructions
Participant Votes	1	5	8	0	0	0	2	0

Table 4.4 – Garment Requirements – 2nd Choice Results

The second choice for a large proportion of participants was *material* with eight out of 16 people voting this way. From the qualitative reasoning provided, participants saw material as very important due to it being an indication of quality. There were also two votes for *organic*, whilst again these participants did differ in age and salary range to the large part of participants. The remainder of votes were dedicated to *price*.

3rd Choice

Choice Factors	Aesthetics	Price	Material	Hand Made	Locally Sourced	Fairtrade	Organic	Washing Instructions
Participant Votes	1	7	6	0	0	1	0	1

Table 4.5 – Garment Requirements – 3rd Choice Results

The third choice shared the votes between *material* and *price*, however at this point of the participant hierarchical choice were the first votes for *Fairtrade* and *washing instructions*. This indicates that by the third choice, consumers are beginning to incorporate ethical attributes into their purchasing rationale. By this third hierarchical choice, all participants had voted for *aesthetics*, meaning that it was in the top three priority choices by all the participants in the activity.

4th Choice

Choice Factors	Aesthetics	Price	Material	Hand Made	Locally Sourced	Fairtrade	Organic	Washing Instructions
Participant Votes	0	1	1	1	2	2	1	8

Table 4.6 – Garment Requirements – 4th Choice Results

Eight of the 16 participants chose *washing instructions* as their fourth priority choice in the garment requirements activity. This category also saw the first votes for *handmade* which provided evidence for the top/bottom divide beginning to emerge. This choice also saw the final vote for *materials*, which meant that this was in the top four choices for all participants.

5th Choice

Choice Factors	Aesthetics	Price	Material	Hand Made	Locally Sourced	Fairtrade	Organic	Washing Instructions
Participant Votes	0	2	0	3	2	4	2	2

Table 4.7 – Garment Requirements – 5th Choice Results

The final choice saw *Fairtrade* and *handmade* as the most popular choices, illustrating that people saw these factors as desirable but not vital when considering their purchasing criteria. As shown in the table above the votes have shifted to the choices to the right hand side of the table, where the ethical and sustainable attributes were more apparent. When compared to the table of results in 1st choice, where the majority of votes were positioned at the left hand side of the table, indicating again this divide between necessity and desirable factors when purchasing garments.

4.5 Activity 4 – Questionnaire

Target Research Questions:

Q1

What influences ethical fashion purchasing?

Q2

Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in the ethical fashion purchasing process?

Q3

How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on consumer purchasing behaviour?

Number of Participants: 15

Number of Answers: 15

Duration: 20 minutes

4.5.1 Activity Aims and Objectives

This activity aimed to delve further into the attitudes and behaviours of consumers shopping on the high street, focusing on the in-store factors that inhibit or encourage consumers to purchase more responsibly. In addition to this the questionnaire asked the participants to contribute to the actions retailers could take in order to boost ethical awareness.

The questionnaire consisted of five key questions focusing specifically on what factors they think effect their choice when purchasing fashion and what could be done to boost ethical fashion sales. The questions were as follows:

1. In your opinion, what promotes or inhibits consumers to purchase ethically?
2. Which 3 high street stores do you shop at most frequently?
3. Do you think that the high street or online store offer the best ethical ranges?
4. During your shopping experience, what in-store factors affect your purchasing behaviour?

5. What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?

Questions 1, 2 and 5, allowed the participants to write freely in the boxes provided, whereas question 3 was multiple choice and question 4 gave the option of several answers where the respondents could circle all answers that applied. This was again recorded on a pre-prepared A5 sheet (Figure 4.9) that could then be taken away by the researcher at the end of the session.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 0.8em;"> Alana James Postgraduate Researcher Northumbria University </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">Task 4 Ethical Fashion Research Questionnaire</p> <p>Section 1 - Ethical Consumerism</p> <p>In your opinion, what promotes or inhibits consumers to purchase ethically? (List as many as apply)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Promotes</th> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Inhibits</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="height: 80px;"></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Which 3 shops do you mostly shop of the high street?</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____</p> <p>3 _____</p> <p>Do you think that the high street or online stores offer the best ethical ranges? (circle one)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="radio"/> High Street <input type="radio"/> Online </p>	Promotes	Inhibits			<p>During your shopping experience what in-store factors effect your purchasing behaviour? (circle as many as apply)</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Announcements</td> <td>Special Offers</td> <td>Swing tags</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Visual Boards</td> <td>Celebrity Endorsement</td> <td>Lighting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advertisements</td> <td>Interior appearance</td> <td>Sales</td> </tr> </table> <p>What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Section 3 - Future Research</p> <p>If you would be interested in helping further towards my research in the near future – email conversation, interview etc. Please put your details below.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Email Address _____</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"><i>Thank you for your help</i></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.7em; margin-top: 20px;">All information shall be strictly used for educational research purposes only and anonymity will be utilised</p>	Announcements	Special Offers	Swing tags	Visual Boards	Celebrity Endorsement	Lighting	Advertisements	Interior appearance	Sales
Promotes	Inhibits													
Announcements	Special Offers	Swing tags												
Visual Boards	Celebrity Endorsement	Lighting												
Advertisements	Interior appearance	Sales												

Figure 4.9 – Example Consumer Questionnaire

4.5.2 Analysis Method

Firstly the raw data from the recording template (see figure 4.9) was transferred into a large results table, where data could be easily compared across participants (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10 – Questionnaire Results Table

The questionnaire activity contained five questions, addressing a range of related issues and topics. This resulted in the questions producing a variety of data, which consequently meant that the analysis methods also had to vary. The way in which each participant answered also differed between questions, as some allowed the participants to answer freely, whilst others gave multiple-choice answers. This variety of qualitative and quantitative data meant that each question needed to be analysed individually in order for the correct conclusions to be reached.

- Question 1A and 1B - **What promotes consumers to purchase ethically?**
This question allowed participants to freely write their response in a table with 2 columns; *promotes* and *inhibits*. Using content analysis, as previously discussed in chapter 3, these answers were then grouped into common themes or emerging categories within both sections, they were as follows:
 - **Promotes** – conscience, environmental, social, awareness, quality, advertisement and trend
 - **Inhibits** – price, style, material, lack of knowledge, accessibility and limited range

These common categories could then be cumulatively accessed through the number of participants who considered them to influence their purchasing behaviour.

- **Question 2 - Which 3 high street shops do you shop in the most?**

Again when answering this question, participants could freely input the answer in to the questionnaire. The most common answers were then cumulatively assessed and the top three retailers could be identified.

- **Question 3 - Do you think that the high street or online stores offer the best ethical ranges?**

This was a multiple choice question where participants could with circle *high street* or *online* as their answer. This again was cumulatively assessed as to the number of participants voted for each answer provided.

- **Question 4 - During you shopping experience what in-store factors effect your purchasing behaviour?**

This question provided nine choice answers for the participant to choose from, allowing them to circle as many as applied. The choices given were; accessibility, visual boards, advertising, special offers, celebrity endorsement, internal appearance, swing tags, lighting and sales. Each choice was then cumulatively accessed for the number of participants that each answer applied to.

- **Question 5 - What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?**

The final question asked participants to again freely answer the question in the space provided. Content analysis was again used to identify common themes and emerging key words, which allowed for reoccurring answers to be cumulatively analysed and then directly compared to other answers given.

4.5.3 Key Findings

Through the use of the multiple analysis methods, the questions and their findings have been detailed individually below:

Question 1A - What promotes consumers to purchase ethically?

With this question, participants were asked to draw on both their own knowledge gained from experience and their opinion of consumers more generally as to what motivates them to purchase in an ethical manner. When analysing this data the answer of *social issues* was the most popular suggestion for the key factor that would encourage consumers to purchase more responsibly (Figure 4.11). This illustrates that the participants have a certain level of awareness regarding social pressures in the garment supply chain suggesting that if consumers were more educated in such issues they would make more informed decisions when purchasing clothing.

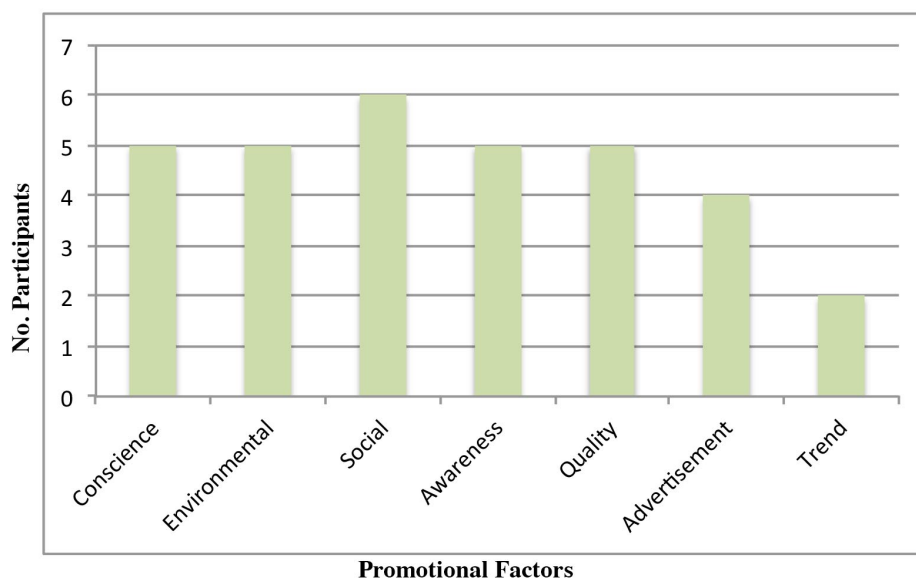


Figure 4.11 – Data Visual - What promotes consumers to purchase ethically?

Other popular answers were *conscience* and *awareness*, which reflects a very consumer focused approach, with the idea that if consumers were to feel like they were making a difference to certain issues, they would be more inclined to purchase responsibly. The idea of ethical ranges being more trend focussed was also suggested, however this was the least popular answer given.

Question 1B - What inhibits consumers from purchasing ethically?

During the exercise it was noticed that participants were much happier to answer factors that inhibited consumers from purchasing responsibly in preference to factors which would encourage people. This could be seen in the number of answers given by

each participant, but also the balance of answers given between the promotes and inhibits factors.

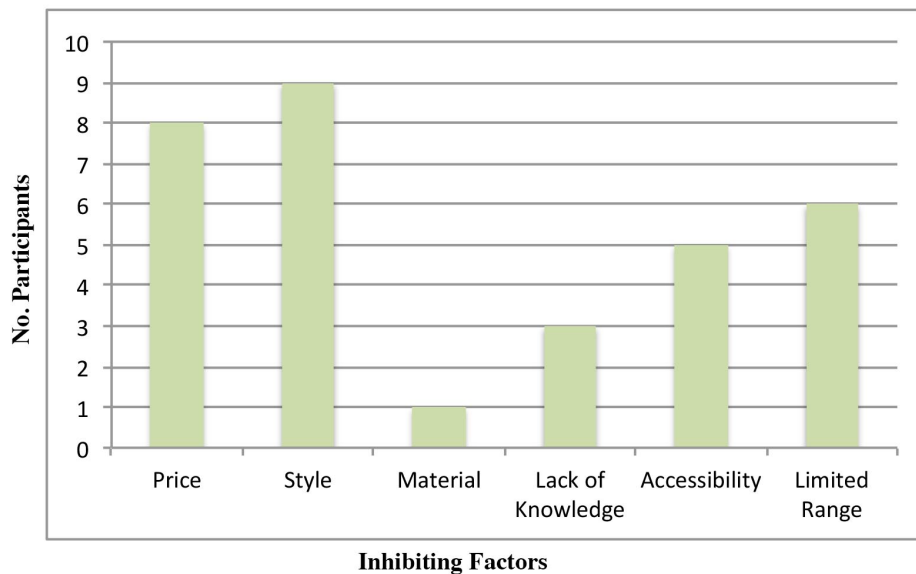


Figure 4.12 – Data Visual - What inhibits consumers to purchase ethically?

The most popular answers during the activity fell within the categories of style and price, illustrating that participants thought that ethical ranges and brands were not fashion or trend orientated enough and were often over priced. This was also reflected in other popular answers such as range limitation and accessibility (Figure 4.12). In addition to this, participants also thought that ethical fashion was inaccessible to the everyday consumer.

Question 2 - Which 3 high street shops do you shop in the most?

The top 5 stores listed by participants were Topshop, H&M, Urban Outfitters, New Look and M&S. Other answers included Zara, River Island and Primark (Figure 4.13). These results influenced the retailers which were approached for the case studies as discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

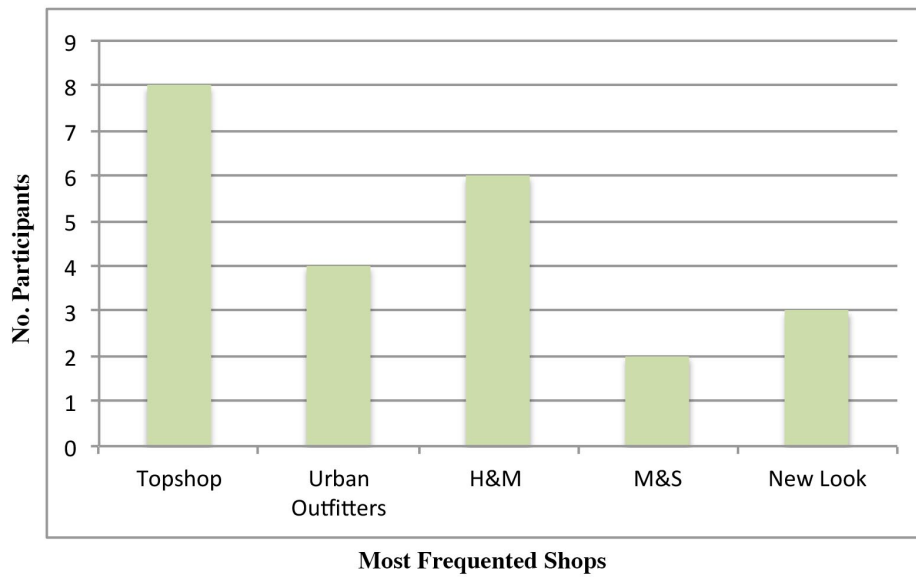


Figure 4.13 – Data Visual - Which high street shops do you shop in the most?

The data collected from this question was used to determine the most popular stores with the sample participants, but also identify specific factors that contribute to this opinion, i.e. price, location, merchandise sold etc.

Question 3 - Do you think that the high street or online stores offer the best ethical ranges?

The results of this question were very clear with 14 of the 15 participants voting for online as offering the best ethical ranges to consumers, in comparison to the remaining 1 participant who voted for the high street (Figure 4.14). This illustrates that the consumer sample do not think that the high street offers enough provision or choices for the ethically aware consumer and that more could be done on the part of the retailer to meet such needs.

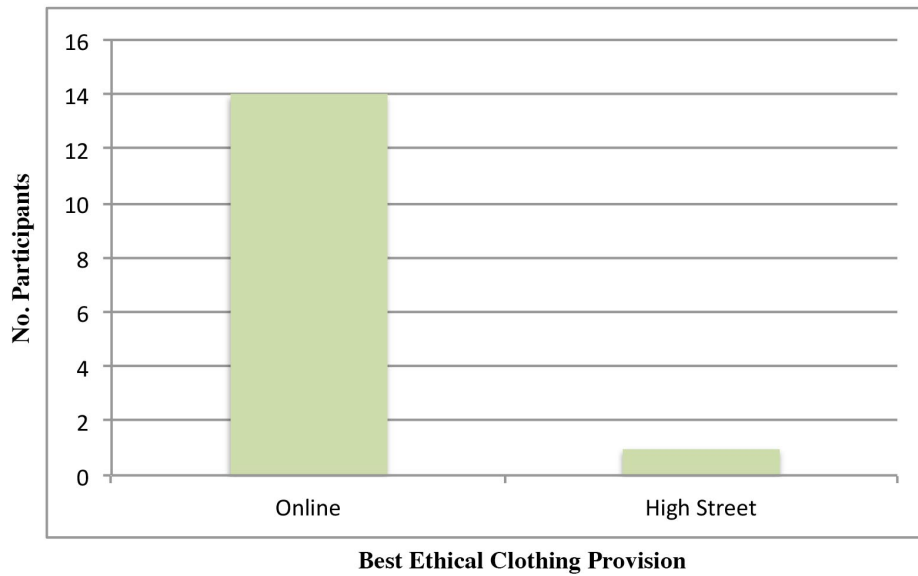


Figure 4.14 – Data Visual - Do you think that the high street or online stores offer the best ethical ranges?

Question 4 - During your shopping experience what in-store factors effect your purchasing behaviour?

The most popular answer in this question was *interior appearance* of the store, with 11 of the 15 participants voting for this answer. Other popular answers were *special offers* and *visual boards* (Figure 4.15).

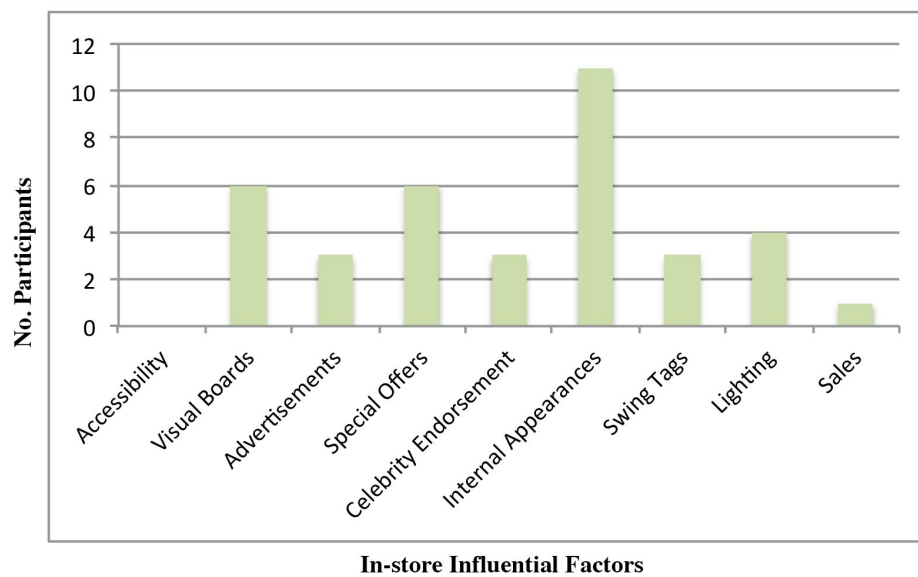


Figure 4.15 – Data Visual - During your shopping experience what in-store factors effect your purchasing behaviour?

This implied that consumers were most stimulated and affected by visual factors whilst in store. This could therefore contribute to the further discussion of what retailers can do in-store to promote consumer awareness issues surround ethics and sustainability. Accessibility was the only answer offered that received no votes from participants and was therefore deemed not to be an in-store influential factor.

Question 5 - What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?

From the analysis of the results, it was evident that the emerging categories were as follows; improved accessibility, better ranges, advertising, labels, improved style and celebrity endorsement. The most contributed factor was advertising with six of the participants thinking this was the most effective method of boosting ethical awareness (Figure 4.16). Labelling was also a popular answer along with celebrity endorsement, which may have reflected the age and background of individuals participating in the study as they thought that the use of the celebrity culture could increase consumers knowledge and awareness of ethical issues.

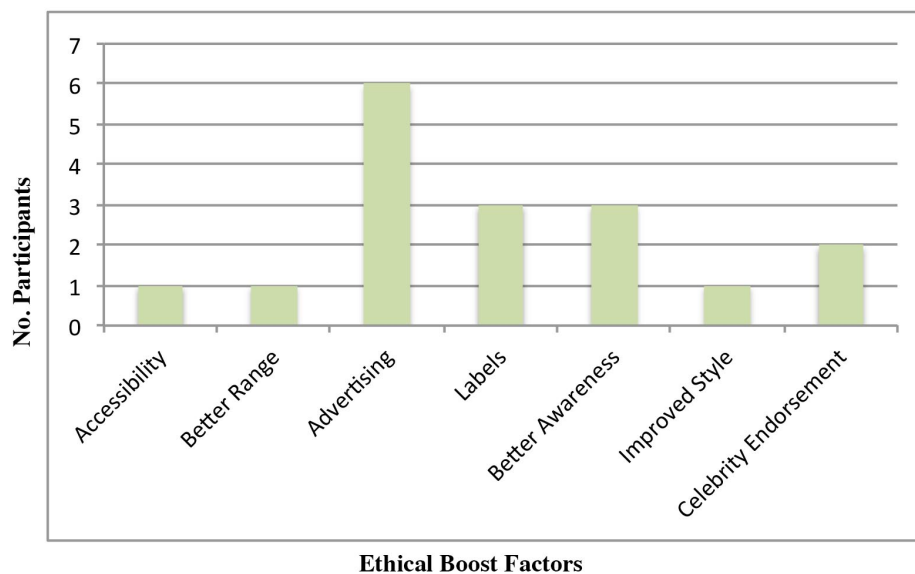


Figure 4.16 – Data Visual - What do you think retailers could do to boost ethical awareness?

4.6 Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Through the utilisation of an ethical fashion conference, an investigation was undertaken into the level of awareness and understanding of a group of ethically conscious fashion staff and students to determine the factors which might influence the

purchasing behaviour of such a group. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, ethical purchasing has been identified to be notoriously problematic in terms of methodological approach and reliability of results (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Dickson, 2013; Ulrich and Sarasin, 1995). Given the lack of information and awareness on the part of an average fashion consumer the choice of this sample was quite deliberate in order to gauge the nuances of ethical fashion purchasing in what might be described as an ethically aware group.

The focus group results saw inconsistencies in attitudes and opinions confirming that purchasing behaviour can be complex and often unreliable. The fickle nature of consumer attitudes and behaviour can be seen throughout the study. For example, during the first activity in which participants were asked to define the term ethical, a key misunderstanding of the social orientation of the term was identified. Participants on several occasions contributed environmental and ecological terms and phrases, showing that whilst a certain level and understanding existed, their interpretations were not accurate. Further to this, throughout the study participants acknowledged that purchasing on the high street potentially had serious social and environmental impacts. However in question three of the questionnaire activity the sample were asked to list the three stores they shop at the most, the top five answers were all high street stores (Topshop, H&M, Urban Outfitters, New Look and M&S). Whilst this indicates that consumers want to be able to purchase socially responsible fashion on the average high street, it further proves that consumers do not follow their attitudes up through consequential behaviour. This can be identified as a further inconsistency through the data collection, contributing to the rationale of the shift in focus of the methodological approach.

It is from this point that the incorporation of retailers into the study was necessary. The results from this study have illustrated that the purchasing process is a complex and unpredictable practice and that studying the retailer simultaneously may bring new insights into the study. The methodological approach for the study was therefore reconsidered with the investigation of both groups of ethically aware fashion consumers and high street fashion retailers. This approach allowed for both the parties that provide the fashion goods to the high street fashion stores and groups that are purchasing such goods to be investigated and the interrelationships explored. Consequently the next stage of the data collection process would be explored through a series of retailer case studies, where the supply of fashion to the UK high street was considered. The role of the consumer and the communication between retailers and

consumers was further explored and will be explained in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.7 Conclusion

This study, consisting of four small activities aimed to investigate consumer attitudes and behaviour towards socially responsible fashion through the utilisation of an ethically aware sample group. Through the four creative activities set, some of the initial research questions have been addressed, with the creation of further questions for the next stage of the investigation. Upon reflection of the findings, the fickle, unpredictable nature of consumer data collection has resulted in the incorporation of retailers moving forward.

The exercises carried out by the participants were also used as a scoping exercise, looking closer at the perceptions and knowledge of consumers of the ethical fashion market. The findings show that the sample group have a reasonable level of awareness of social issues within the garment supply chain, however confusions and overlapping of environmental and sustainable issues confirm that more work is clearly needed in this area. Findings also show that the participants through their awareness levels, acknowledge that their behaviour does not always follow through with this knowledge and that other issues such as price and availability often take precedent over ethical attributes.

The data collected in several activities illustrated that the group also thought that purchasing second hand, either at a charity or vintage store, was seen as more ethical behaviour than purchasing from retailers on the high street. On several occasions individuals rationalised their purchasing behaviour due to an item being re-used or recycled. From the qualitative reasoning element in several of the activities, it can be seen that this rationale is given due to charity and vintage stores giving an unwanted item, that may have otherwise been taken to landfill, a second or new lease of life. This notion was a reoccurring theme throughout the focus group study and influenced the categorisation used during the content analysis of the data collected. However one participant contributed an interesting point, questioning if she was supporting the morals and values of a high street store by purchasing their goods second hand. This

level of self-awareness was insightful during the Ethical Scale activity, with the participant acknowledging that she had never consider this point previously.

Alongside the attitudes and behaviours, influential factors effecting purchasing behaviour were also explored. Again reoccurring answers implying that the ethical fashion market does not currently facilitate on-trend fashion which is readily accessible to consumers. From the questionnaire, it can be seen that the sample group clearly think that the high street is not facilitating ethical purchasing, which is often leading to non-ethical behaviour or consumers resorting to second hand goods as a substitute. This, along with other points discussed previously confirms that ethical fashion purchasing is an area that requires further investigation and an innovative approach in order to provide new insights. It is through the approach this study takes, using a creative methodology and the simultaneous study of the consumer and the retailer that hopes to achieve new knowledge within this field.

Chapter 5

Initial Retailer Case Study

5. Introduction

This investigation was approached from a two-sided perspective, studying both the consumers that shop on the high street and the high street retailers providing the merchandise. This provided a platform to enable the purchasing process to be explored from both angles, looking closer at the influential factors affecting this process. The approach also provided an overview of the high street, mid-market clothing retailers facilitated by the sample utilised during the study.

As discussed during the methodology chapter, the retailer study structure is that of initial and subsequent case studies (Figure 3.7). A period of three weeks was spent with the initial case study company, which allowed for the formulation of interview content and structure for the four subsequent high-street fashion retailers. The methodological advantages of incorporating retailers into the study have been discussed earlier, however further advantages of using this approach include applying an industry perspective and context to the study, applying a number of theoretical approaches to a live business situation. Meanwhile through the application of design research methods, the researcher gained invaluable insights into the operational running of corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments and a more contextual understanding of industry practice.

Company A Profile

Company A was primarily chosen due to their ambitious CSR strategy commitments and the actions taken in order to fulfil these commitments. The methods used to publicise these actions are also unusual for a high-street fashion retailer, making their actions explicit and branding their strategies in such a way that communicates their actions in an easy to understand, engaging manner.

Company A provide merchandise in clothing (womens wear, mens wear and childrens wear), home ware and food to the mid-market high street market. They currently employ approximately over 50,000 people across their 500+ stores nationwide (Table 5.1).

	Merchandise	No. of Stores (UK)	No. of Employees	Employee Participants
Company A	Clothing, Home ware and food	Over 500	Over 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Sustainable Business • Head of Lingerie Technology • Product Marketer • Assistant Buyer (Men's casual shirts)

Table 5.1 – Company A Profile

Company A's sustainable business approach suggests that high-street retailers can make ethical choices in their merchandise, whilst staying on trend and price. They are also unique in the way that they have marketed their ethical and sustainable commitments, where consumers can interact and engage with these on a choice of levels. Unlike the majority of retailers, Company A chooses to disclose a great deal of information regarding their CSR commitments and how this is applied to various products. Their website and in-store marketing is delivered at an easy to understand level for their target audience and is successful in their approach due to the customer being able to engage at a number of different levels. Following Company A being approached, the research proposal was accepted and terms of the study negotiated. It was decided that for the researcher to get the most out of the time spent with Company A, a three week internship spent shadowing the Ethical Trade Manager was the best way for this to be achieved.

This chapter will discuss the approach taken during the three-week internship, explaining further the data collection methods that were utilised in order to address the study's research questions. The overall aims and areas of questioning in direct relation to the research questions will be described, whilst the sample participants chosen and their relevance to the study discussed. Descriptive findings from each participant interview will be presented, alongside a more critical point of view reflecting the stance taken by this research. These findings will also be discussed using the coding process undertaken during the content analysis of the data collected. Similarities, differences and anomalies within the data will be highlighted, with possible rationales behind the identification of these discussed. The chapter will conclude with an overall summary, reiterating the key points that have been discussed and the implications these findings have had on the remainder of the study.

5.1 Methodology

Within Company A the aim was to fully explore and understand the series of CSR commitments made by the retailer and to explore how these were implemented throughout the varying levels of the business. The communication of these commitments to their customers in terms of methods utilised and brand image was also investigated. In addition to this core information, there were three particular areas specific to the retailer that the researcher investigated prompted by secondary research conducted prior to the investigation:

- A carbon neutral garment range that complied with the CSR strategy
- An internal research unit that worked closely with Company A's consumers
- A status awarded to suppliers for a high level of factory compliance

These three areas of additional interest were approached in terms of execution analysis and success measurement, allowing time within the internship for potential improvement suggestions and recommendations.

5.1.1 Questions

During the planning process of this initial retailer case study, a series of company specific questions were formulated in accordance with the overall study research questions. These focused questions were as follows:

- How are the CSR commitments communicated to customers? What average awareness levels of these commitments do the Company A target audience have?
- How do the results of studies carried out by the internal research unit influence future Company A practice? How are participants originally selected and what methods of data collection are used?
- How is the current carbon neutral range marketed to consumers? Does this successfully convey the key ethical message?
- What strategies, if any are currently being undertaken in order to reassure customers that garments are produced under the factory programme initiated by the CSR strategies?

- What strategies are being implemented to track and improve the sales of ethical product?

With these overarching questions in mind, more specific lines of inquiry were formulated when the interviewees were finalised. This had to be done during the internship as it was unknown the exact Company A employees that would be interviewed.

5.1.2 Sample Participants

The interviews were formulated with the research aims and questions in mind. With the assistance of the shadowed Ethical Trade Manager, relevant members of Company A employees were approached to participate in the planned semi-structured informal interviews. The participating employees were directly targeted due to their area of expertise and their ability to answer the questions provided by the researcher. The positions of the staff members interviewed were as follows:

Participant 1 – Head of Sustainable Business

Participant 2 – Head of Lingerie Technology

Participant 3 – Product Marketer

Participant 4 – Assistant Buyer (Men's Casual Shirts Department)

It was thought that these participants would offer a distribution of knowledge when addressing the aims and questions initially formulated during the proposal stage of the investigation. In addition to these interviews, observations during meetings were thought to be able to reinforce or highlight any missing vital information before the end of the study's three week period.

5.2 Analysis Methods

A qualitative analysis approach was taken when handling the data collected in the semi-structured interviews. From the research methods utilised, content analysis and levels of coding were used to interpret the information. Notes were taken during the interview period by the researcher in order to record the discussion carried out. The interviews were not audio recorded at the request of the company. The notes were then

processed immediately after, allowing for any additional discussion points to be recorded (these can be read in full – please refer to Appendix 9). This process was the first level of analysis, where the researcher began to interpret and make connections between the information collected. However the content analysis and coding methods began once these notes had been documented, providing a platform for the analysis to be carried out. This process is described in a step-by-step process below and was repeated for all four interviews conducted during the internship:

- From the notes recorded during the interviews, the first step of the analysis process was to highlight any important information obtained that would contribute to answering the research questions and aims of the project.
- From this highlighted information common categories or prominent emerging themes were then identified. These were finalised as: CSR strategy, Consumers, Marketing & Communication and Ethical Ranges.
- The data was then placed in a matrix (Figure 5.2) allowing for comparison of data across both participants and categories to be easily made. Participants were recorded on the X axis with the categories on the Y axis.

	CSR Strategy	Consumers	Marketing & Communication	Ethical Ranges
Participant 1 Head of Sustainable Business				
Participant 2 Head of Lingerie Technology				
Participant 3 Product Marketer				
Participant 3 Assistant Buyer				

Figure 5.1 – Example Results Matrix

- With the data categorised a series of codes could be established. These codes identified similarities; issues that the participants agreed on, differences; issues

that participants disagreed on, and anomalies; one off highlighted issues that only one participant highlighted.

- Once these codes were established and the common issue highlighted, a series of rationales or reasoning for the similarities, differences or anomalies could be made.

In alignment with the iterative nature of the study, the analysis of the data collected during this initial case study allowed for the further development of methods later in the data collection. The data collection and analysis process with subsequent retailers was a direct development and refinement of the methods seen in this initial retailer case study. The iterative nature of this approach ensured that the methodological journey taken during the investigation addressed the research questions and aims of the study.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The following section will give a summary of the results from each interview. The results have been discussed by participant and will include the areas of questioning posed to the participant, followed by a descriptive summary of the conversation that took place.

5.3.1 Participant 1 – Head of Sustainable Business

Areas of Questioning

- The role that the Head of Sustainable Business plays in Company A
- The methods implemented to ensure that sustainable practice is implemented throughout the business
- The current success/failure of the CSR commitments made and the competition from other retailers on the high street
- The connection made between the companies CSR strategy and the merchandise

Descriptive Findings

Participant 1 began the interview by describing the typology of Company A consumers as found through research carried out internally during a sustainable consumer study. It found that 70% of consumers are categorised as average, whilst 20% were said to have no care or consideration for ethical and sustainable issues. The remaining 10% can be described as *green consumers* (Figure 5.3). The research found two further segmentations that could be applied – those who *don't believe they can help* and those who are *willing but don't know how*.

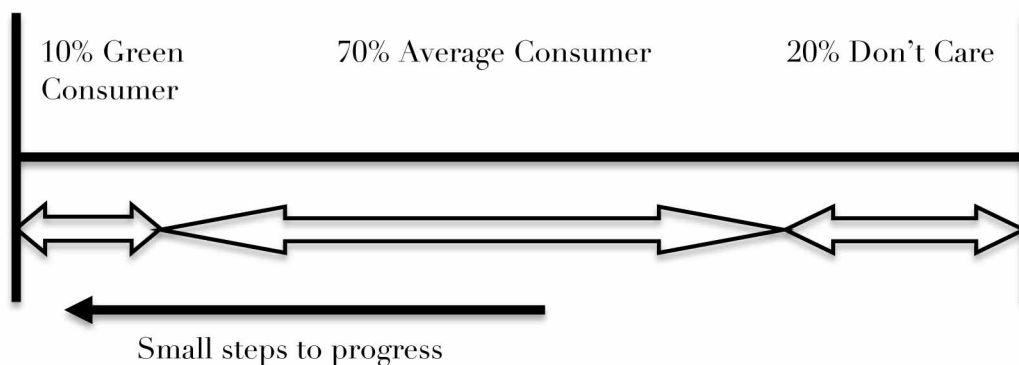


Figure 5.2 – Company A Consumer typology

During early discussions, participant A expressed the feeling that it is small steps that need to be taken towards the green consumers end of the spectrum (the left on the above diagram) that will enable the industry to move to a more sustainable business practice. Participant 1 continued to discuss the idea that consumers are happy to be categorized into groups as it provides a sense of belonging, it is on this premise that Company A incorporates simple consumer tribes in order to fully describe their purchasing behaviour. This point of view could be seen as realistic, where a retailer is acknowledging that it is going to take time to slowly develop to a more sustainable way of doing business.

Brand Trust

From the research conducted internally within Company A, it was found that consumers want the retailers to do the hard work for them in order to be more ethical and sustainable in their purchasing behaviour. Participant 1 believes that consumers can leave their worries at the door and merely trust Company A as a brand to make the correct decisions for their consumers. This theory relies heavily on the brand or retailer to make the correct decisions in order to be able to lean on brand trust and reassurance. Despite Participant 1's confidence in the Company A consumer already being able to

do this, the researcher acting as an impartial spectator is doubtful that consumers yet feel this trust for any brand due to a constant see-saw effect of media fed information. It could be questioned if indeed consumers cannot entirely trust any specific retailer or brand due to mixed messages being delivered and the increased speed of news delivery.

Retailer / Consumer Communication

Due to Company A's sustained period of work in the area of ethics and sustainability, they have realised that merely preaching their message to consumers is not an effective way of communication. Their experience has led them to the conclusion that people respond effectively to incentive and reward schemes, a feeling that they are being rewarded for their good behaviour. Initiatives ran by Company A have seen customers being rewarded for their participation through vouchers which can be put towards their next purchase in-store. This level of incentive however relies on further consumption and the future purchasing of garments. Whilst these sort of schemes improve the end-of-life consequences for clothing, the incentives rewarded encourage the purchasing of more goods. As a CSR strategy for a business, this scheme is effective, however when viewed as a sustainable action, the crux rationale for the scheme could be questioned.

Participant 1 believes that retailers are in a unique and powerful position and are able to influence both the suppliers of their products and the customers who purchase the products. This point reflects the argument discussed earlier, over the power that consumers and retailer have in influencing the action of the other.

Employee Role in Company A

As the Head of Sustainable business in Company A, Participant 1 covers four key areas of responsibility:

- Stakeholder Engagement – taking charge of partnerships and collaboration within the company CSR strategy – engaging with companies with the correct philosophy and vision, i.e. charities, NGO's etc.
- Problem Solving – Participant 1 believes that 150 of the planned CSR commitments are achievable, whilst 20-30 are more challenging and will only be achieved in time. Teams have been allocated to address these more challenging commitments and are currently being supervised by Participant 1.

- E-Commerce Communication – this includes media coverage and press releases. Participant 1 referred to himself as the face behind the company's CSR commitments.
- Strategy – the ultimate plan to move the business forward and ensure that Company A continue to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability.

Despite not disclosing how this was measured, in Participant 1's opinion Company A are currently operating at only 10% of their full ethical and sustainable capacity and it is only with the persistence of the CSR commitments that will enable the capacity will grow.

5.3.2 Participant 2 – Head of Lingerie Technology

Areas of Questioning

- The methods used to communicate the sustainable message behind the carbon neutral range – are these methods effective?
- Do you think consumers consider ethical/sustainable factors when purchasing products?
- How was the carbon neutral range advertised in store?
- Is the carbon neutral manufacturing strategy feasible to be rolled out across other department?

Descriptive Findings

Participant 2 began the interview by providing context to the development of the current CSR commitments made by Company A. This development was initiated by the CEO at the time who launched the first campaign of its time in order to communicate the CSR actions being made by the company to their consumers. This initial action developed into the CSR strategy that can be seen within Company A today. They also realised that it was not only one issue being targeted that would make these actions successful, the project needed to encompass a range of issues unlike those previously seen by other retailers that focused purely on one issue, such as sustainable water issues.

When launching the CSR strategy, Company A felt that they were setting a precedent in the industry and raising the bar higher for other retailers to look to. This also came

as an advantage as they had no other companies or previously run projects to compare themselves to.

Awarded Factory Compliance

One of the commitments made by Company A in their CSR strategy was to create a status awarded to factories who have scored very highly on all auditable sectors of the companies factory standards. This was first achieved in Asia through the production of the carbon neutral range.

In order to offset the carbon used in the manufacture of the range Company A bought offset credits through a project run by a third party carbon conservation company. This involved planting over 6000 trees in desolate land within the area of the producing factory, working in collaboration with nine local farmers. This facilitated the carbon offset for the range, for the specific collection is 2kg per item. Through this project alone Company A offset the equivalent of 1440 tonnes of carbon.

All of the trees planted were able to generate income for the local farmers, meaning that the fruit or substance from the plants could be sold on at a profit. This was to not only boost the local economy but to also develop entrepreneurial businesses for local people. This community-based approach is said to be advantageous due to the local people wanting to take care of the scheme and put something back into the community.

The Collection

The carbon neutral collection was marketed purely on design, the thinking behind this approach was to make the garments beautiful in order to appeal to consumers. The eco-credentials were a secondary message to the consumers and was seen as an added bonus to the beautiful products. Participant 2 added that people buy clothing on aesthetics, comfort and ultimately price, not if the product is ethical or not.

The marketing of the product was again based purely on aesthetics, the sustainability message was however detailed on the swing tag to inform consumers. In addition to the swing tag notification the carbon offset scheme was publicised on the Company A website and paper based magazine. The collection also received good press coverage, which added to the positive brand projections of the company. This media attention was from both a fashion and eco point of view, Participant 2 added that 'everyone loves a success story'.

The carbon neutral collection was seen as a learning curve for Company A and is not a scheme that could be successfully rolled out across the clothing department. For this project, Company A paid for all the carbon offsets and consequently it was not a profitable system for them as a business. The learning aspect of the project allowed Company A to identify the CO₂ content of each garment in the collection and therefore how this could be significantly reduced in the future. The carbon neutral range was also used to enhance the Company A brand philosophy and also the retailer/consumer trust relationship.

Participant 2 expressed their belief that good business is about being a brand, being good and also being profitable. In their opinion the CSR philosophy works throughout the business, where nothing is sinister or acting as a publicity stunt. It is also thought that the workers believe in the brands ethical and sustainable philosophy and everything the company stands for.

5.3.3 Participant 3 – Product Marketer

Area of Questioning

- What methods are used to communicate the positive messages of the companies CSR strategy to consumers?
- Are ranges such as the carbon neutral range marketed in a different way to other ranges?
- Is the ethical/sustainable message of these ranges communicated effectively?

Descriptive Findings

Following a research project carried out internally within Company A during 2010, several key messages were highlighted, which included consumers expressing the desire for information on simple green issues and also showing more interest in what could be done for future generations in preference to what could be done to create change for current society. It could be questioned if this expression was the realization that change may be a long and complex journey and not possible as an instant result. This notion was also reflected in the opinion of Participant 1 when they described that it would be small steps that would lead to success in terms of ethics and sustainability.

From this research Company A noticed a shift in their previous thinking in striving for sustainable change, this was a movement from what Company A can do as the retailer

to what they can facilitate their consumers to do. This power shift from retailer to consumer meant that the company's CSR team needed to concentrate their time on the facilitation of large-scale projects where the consumer was the lead in making a real difference.

Communication

With the shift of focus from retailer to consumer, Company A began to plan large-scale consumer driven initiatives in all areas of merchandise. These events encouraged customers to participate in schemes with rewards offered for their involvement. The events also used celebrity endorsement as a marketing tool, showing that the specific celebrities used agreed with ethical and sustainable commitments made by the retailer. Participant 3 explained that people were keen to take part in events such as these due to it being a relatively easy task to incorporate into their busy daily lives.

To run in conjunction with the events, the marketing team developed a new application that can be used on Company A's website. This sees the customer being able to virtually see the impact their participation in such events has on social and environmental issues. In addition to the website advertisement, CSR events and schemes were being marketed through a series of postcard flyers being distributed in store. In more general terms the CSR message of Company A is spread across many different medias and platforms; Facebook, Twitter, the company newsletter, mobile banner advertisements, SMS text messaging, the retail website and point of sale in store. All of which direct the users directly to the CSR strategy micro site to read more around the commitments and actions being made.

The final method of communication utilised was Thank You campaigns. This is where the success of the specific CSR project and events are assessed, results delivered to the public and a Thank You campaign delivered. Participant 3 thought that these campaigns were effective due to the participants feeling good about their contribution to such projects, inspiring them to contribute again in the future.

5.3.4 Participant 4 - Assistant Buyer (Mens Casual Shirts Department)

Area of Questioning

- How do the CSR commitments influence the decisions made by the buying teams?

- How are the buying teams informed about the companies CSR strategy?
- What are the key ethical/sustainable considerations working within men's casual shirts?
- Do you think men differ to women when purchasing clothing ethically?

Descriptive Findings

A reoccurring factor expressed by Participant 4 throughout the interview was the notion of the impact ethical or sustainable ranges would have on garment/departments price margins. This indicated that the employees within lower positions are very restricted with costs and appear to work with this is the forefront of their minds. Participant 4 elaborated on this, that to be able to apply ethical or sustainable ranges within the department the cost would need to be absorbed elsewhere, either by the company or the customer.

Participant 4 discussed an incident from 2010 where there appeared to be a big push from higher departments on the implementation of the company's CSR commitments, which saw a shift from the use of traditional to BCI cotton (cotton grown in accordance with the Better Cotton Initiative). However this change was done at the time when cotton prices were surging and therefore BCI cotton was the cheaper choice. This change was quite quickly reversed due to the cotton price stabilizing. Participant 4 suggested that a more cost effective way of purchasing cotton would be to buy BCI cotton in mass quantities in order to reduce the price and increase availability.

Ethical Ranges

At the time of the interview there were no plans in place within the men's casual shirts department for a dedicated ethical or sustainable range, however the Modal fibre was used in a lot of the products within one range was compliant with one of the specific raw material commitments detailed in the CSR strategy.

Participant 4 explained how they saw no direct benefit to the consumer when purchasing ethical products, yet it was thought that this may vary between men and women. It was suggested that women are more conscientious shoppers and therefore ethical and sustainable products may be more appealing to them. Participant 4 continued to suggest that the women's wear department took more action on these issues and was where the constant development of the clothing CSR commitments were put into action. There were numerous organic and Fair Trade cotton ranges in the

women's wear department, offering customers further ethical choice when purchasing clothing.

Although Participant 4 thought that ethical development in women's wear would be more effective in the long term they did however add that more factories were wanting to awarded for good factory compliance. Despite this being a long-term goal, for many factories this is an expensive and long-term commitment on their part, drive for this must come from Company A as the retailer and desire on the part of the supplier to remain a Company A supplier in the future.

5.4 Coded Analysis

As discussed earlier the data collected during the interview process was placed in a matrix which was then categorised into four sections: CSR strategy, consumers, marketing & communication and ethical ranges (Figure 5.4).

*** VERSION 1 ***

	Consumers	Marketing & Communication	Ethical Ranges	Other (emerging classifications)
Head of Sustainable Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	
Head of Logistics Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	
Product Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	
Assistant Buyer (Men's Casual Shirts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that all of the data is captured and not just the ethical and sustainable aspects, which 30-35 are more challenging and will vary in different stores. Many referred to it itself as the new business plan A. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. It is important to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. 	

Figure 5.3 – Results Matrix

This organisation of data then allowed for comparisons to be made across both all four categories and all four interviewees. Once positioned into categories a series of codes were created where there were emerging key issues across the set of data. A series of similarities, differences and anomalies were identified, where rationales and possible

explanations were then explored (Figure 5.5). These codes will be discussed in more detail below.

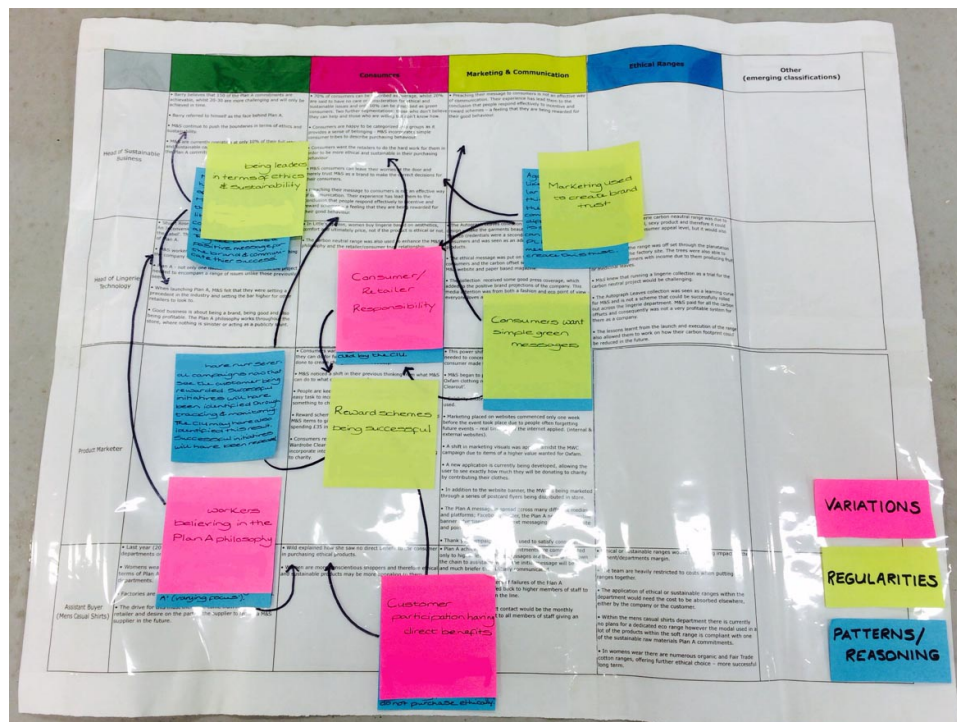


Figure 5.4 – Coded Results Matrix

5.4.1 Similarities

1. Similarity

Company A being leaders in terms of ethics & sustainability

Evidence:

Participant 1: Company A continue to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability.

Participant 2: When launching their CSR strategy, Company A felt that they were setting a precedent in the industry and setting the bar higher for other retailers to look to.

Discussion:

Participants 1 and 2 were both senior members of management at Company A and therefore have a certain level of responsibility to convey a positive message/image of the company to the public and external parties. Participant 1 during their interview claimed to be the face of their CSR commitments, therefore along with Participant 2

would like to communicate the success' of the company to their customers for positive publicity reasons.

2. Similarity

Customer reward schemes with Company A customers are successful

Evidence:

Participant 1: Preaching their CSR message to consumers is not an effective way of communication. Company A's experience has led them to the conclusion that people respond effectively to incentive and reward schemes, a feeling that they are being rewarded for their good behaviour.

Participant 3: Consumers responded well to CSR initiatives and events in-store as it was a relatively easy task to incorporate into their daily lives, yet they are doing something good.

Discussion:

Company A have run several campaigns that see the customer being rewarded with vouchers or loyalty schemes, opinions of which were mentioned during the interviews with Participants 1 and 3. Successful initiatives have been identified through tracking and monitoring through research being carried out internally. From this work, the campaigns that have been successful have been analysed with successful elements identified and repeated in future events. The inclusion of this point made by two of the four employees interviewed, indicates again that not only is a positive message wanting to be publicised but also that both these participants must have been involved in the initiation of the internal research work carried out.

3. Similarity

Consumers want simple (CSR) messages

Evidence:

Participant 1: Consumers want the retailers to do the hard work for them

Participant 3: Consumers want information on simple green issues and what they can do for future generations rather than what can be done to create change for current society.

Discussion:

Participants 1 and 3 have again agreed on data identified by research carried out internally within Company A. Due to this issue being based on marketing of CSR strategies and this also being the area of expertise of Participant 3, their opinion is thought to be a reliable source of information. This along with their previous experience of good and bad marketing campaigns have led to the conclusion of consumers wanting simple green messages from retailers. The identification of this also contributed to the future direction of their CSR marketing and communication of these commitments to customers.

4. Similarity

Marketing is used in the creation of brand trust

Evidence:

Participant 1: Through this communication, Company A consumers can leave their worries at the door and merely trust them as a brand to make the correct decisions for their consumers.

Participant 2: The collection received some good press coverage, which added to the positive brand projections of the company.

Discussion:

Again due to Participants 1 and 2 being senior members of management, they are likely to convey similar messages to the public. However their comments regarding this point come from slightly different angles due to the nature of the conversation. Participant 1 communicates how Company A customers can trust them as a brand in making the correct ethical and sustainable choices for them. Whereas Participant 2 described how the carbon neutral clothing range was used to convey a positive image to customers and used as a method to create brand trust. These differing perspectives were due to the different lines of questioning to each participant, however this resulted in the emergence of a similarity being recognised in the findings.

5.4.2 Differences**1. Difference**

Consumer or retailer responsibility

Evidence:

Participant 1: Consumers want the retailers to do the hard work for them in order to be more ethical and sustainable in their purchasing behaviour

Participant 3: Company A noticed a shift in their previous thinking from what the retailer can do, to what consumers can do.

Discussion:

The conflicting points of view of Participant 1 and 3 could be due to their differing roles and focus within the company. Participant 1 believed that consumers should be able to trust retailers to make the correct decisions and therefore it should be the retailers leading the way in turning their philosophy into action. This was indicated as the opinion of the participant and therefore due to this being based on opinion and not fact, this could be the reasoning behind the contradictory data collected. Whereas Participant 3 due to their role as a marketer may be referring to data or feedback received from either the marketing department or internal research carried out.

2. Difference

Company A employees believe in the business' CSR strategy

Evidence:

Participant 2: Company A workers believe in the companies CSR strategy and the values that the company stands for.

Participant 4: Participant 4 explained how she saw no direct benefit to the consumer in purchasing ethical products.

Discussion:

Throughout the interview with Participant 4, there were distinct disparities between the comments made previously by Participants 2 and 3 and that of Participant 4. When questioned why people do or do not purchase responsibly, they expressed that they saw no direct benefit to customers when purchasing ethical or sustainable products. In contrast to this, Participant 2 stated during his interview that all Company A workers believed in the CSR philosophy being developed by the company. These contrasting views could be due to the difference hierarchical roles between the two parties. Whilst information regarding the actions of the CSR strategy were drip fed down to the less senior employees, this approach was obviously not as effective as thought by senior members of management, as illustrated in the opinion of Participant 4.

3. Difference

Customer Participation in Company A initiatives have direct benefits

Evidence:

Participant 3: Consumers responded well to CSR initiatives and events in-store as it was a relatively easy task to incorporate into their daily lives, yet they are doing something good.

Participant 4: Participant 4 explained how she saw no direct benefit to the consumer in purchasing ethical products.

Discussion:

This again involves the comment made by Participant 4 regarding customers receiving, in their opinion, no direct benefit when participating in ethical/sustainable initiatives and campaigns led by Company A. Participant 3 is directly involved in the marketing of such campaigns and therefore is aware of the consumer response and benefits of the initiatives when participating. Participant 4's comment was speculative and only in their opinion, therefore not reliant on data or any previous experience.

5.5 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, during the time the researcher spent with Company A, a number of qualitative research methods were utilised, such as observation and semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with a number of different member of Company A employees, in varying roles, at varying levels. The aim of interviewing employees in varying roles was to not only address the research questions of the study but to also gain a multiple perspective of several key issues. This allowed for a comparison of similarities and differences, whilst anomalies in the data could also be highlighted. From early analysis it became clear that the opinions of employees according to their position within the company varied greatly. It appeared that higher ranked individuals were driven by quite idealistic points of view of the companies CSR strategy and the work that was being achieved in response to this. These individuals thought that the CSR message was being effectively communicated to workers in lower grade positions within the company and that all Company A employees were

working to the same set of values. In reality workers appear to be driven by price and profit margins and lead times.

In addition to employee perceptions of the CSR activity of Company A, the investigation also explored the consumer perception of such activity and the effect this was having on their purchasing behaviour. This was explored from the perspective of the company, and the typology of their consumers when considering ethical issues in clothing. Whilst the internal research carried out by Company A with their consumers highlighted some key factors that have contributed to the marketing methods utilised, through the data collected during this study, it shows that this research has also caused some disparities in employee opinion. Differences of opinion were also found amongst employees when it came to responsibility of social issues within fashion, with conflicting opinions being put forward between that of the action of the retailer or the consumer. These disparities could highlight potential weaknesses in the operation and implementation of Company A's CSR strategy.

The communication of Company A's CSR strategies was heavily discussed with several techniques and methods detailed. One way that the company promote their CSR activity is through incentive schemes, where customers are offered rewards for their participation in a recycling scheme. The rationale for this scheme however could be questioned, as the rewards offered encouraged further consumption and purchasing in-store. Again, when looking at this sceptically, the rationale could be highlighted as price and profit due to the promotion of further purchasing in preference to the social benefits the scheme has. However, it could also be questioned that perhaps this method has been implemented to encourage the participation of consumers as they see their good behaviour to be rewarded. This relates to a further point discussed during the primary case study, where participant 2 detailed how products were sold primarily on aesthetics and price alone. Thus meaning that whilst ethics and sustainability was perhaps a desired feature of a product, it was not a necessity.

Following the analysis of this study, the incorporation of further retailers provided a platform for cross retailer comparison of the key areas of investigation of this study. Four further retailer case studies to be discussed during Chapter 6, allowed for a fair sample of the high street to be utilised and for conclusions and recommendations for further work to be established.

Chapter 6

Subsequent Retailer Case Studies

6. Introduction

Following on from the initial retailer case study with Company A, it was recognised that the incorporation of further companies was needed in order to study a relevant sample of UK high street retailers. Introduced as additional retailer case studies to the investigation, the lines of enquiry from the work carried out with Company A were developed and repeated with Company B, C, D and E. The widening of the research scope allowed for more robust conclusions and discussions to be formulated towards the end of the thesis, with the suggestion of further work to be carried out in the future.

The criteria for the selection and incorporation of Company A was due to the active nature of their CSR work and ambitious commitments set, the subsequent retailers were chosen to represent a fair sample of the UK fashion high street. Company B, C, D and E stores can be found on the majority of high streets nationwide and all sell women's wear merchandise. Whilst the companies in question may offer other types of merchandise, this research focuses predominantly on women's, ready-to-wear fashion garments and the social responsibility that is taken when bringing that garment to the high street customer. These retailers were also chosen for their company comparability to Company A, including the amount of stores they have in the UK market and the number of people employed in these stores (see Table 6.1 for the company profiles). Alongside company comparability, employees of a similar role with similar responsibilities were directly selected to represent the individual retailer during the interviews. This again ensured that the data collection process was fair and that the cross comparison process between the five retailers could take place.

Prior to the case studies with the four subsequent retailers an additional data scoping exercise was carried out in order to establish the methods currently used by companies to communicate their CSR commitments to their customers. This was carried out across all five retailers using both in-store and online as a platform for this communication study. To establish a criteria for the retailers to be checked against, an online consumer survey was initially used to allow consumer opinion guide and develop the individual criteria for the study to be based upon. This online and in-store scoping exercise was carried out prior to the interviews with the individual retailers so that follow up questions regarding their current CSR communication strategy could be discussed.

	Merchandise	No. of Stores (UK)	No. of Employees (UK)	Employee Participants Interviewed
Company A	Clothing, Home ware and food	Over 500	Over 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Sustainable Business • Head of Lingerie Technology • Product Marketer • Assistant Buyer (Men's casual shirts)
Company B	Clothing and Home ware	Under 500	Under 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Ethical Trading Manager
Company C	Clothing and Home ware	Over 500	Over 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Social Responsibility
Company D	Clothing	Under 500	Under 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Ethical Trade Manager
Company E	Clothing and Home ware	Under 500	Under 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Fashion & Sustainability Communication

Table 6.1 – Company Profiles (Company A, B, C, D and E)

This chapter will explain this data collection process in detail, discussing the individual steps leading to the subsequent retailer case study interviews. Following on from details of the methodology utilised during this phase of the research, how the data has been handled and analysed will also be detailed. The findings from each of the three steps will also be discussed alongside the impact that these findings have when placed contextually in the overall study.

6.1 Methodology

As previously mentioned, this phase of the research was carried out in a three-step process, each contributing and developing to the next. This iterative process was again a reflection of the research approach utilised throughout the study. These essential three steps whilst conducted as individual studies aimed to inform and direct the following, leading to a robust research method, concluding the data collection process of the study (Figure 6.1).

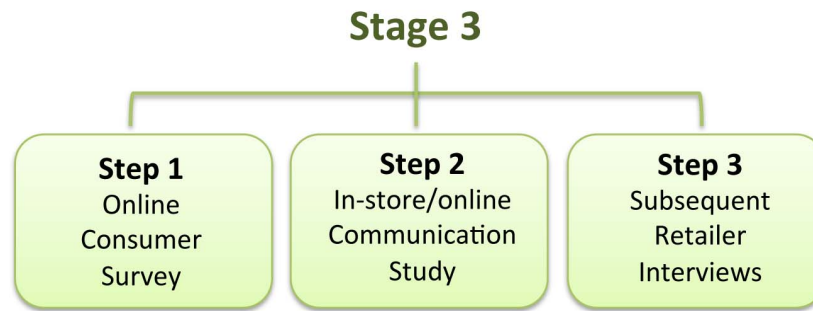


Figure 6.1 – Subsequent Retailer Three-Step Data Collection Process

The three steps of data collection were as follows:

Step 1 - Online Consumer Survey

This was used to determine the current consumer experience when looking for further information regarding a retailer's ethical and sustainable commitments. It was also utilised to find out what type of information a consumer wants to see when making this search both in-store and online. Whilst this initial step was used to develop criteria for the following secondary research study, it also contributed to the recommendations made in order to improve the communication of CSR message made by companies.

Step 2 – In-store and Online Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

Once the criteria for the in-store and online study was established from the results of the online consumer survey, a secondary scoping exercise was conducted of the current communication methods used by retailers to inform customers of their current CSR activities. With the researcher acting as a customer, each individual retailer store and website were visited to conduct the study. Whilst being used as a preliminary scoping exercise, this study was also used to provide background research to inform the study prior to conducting one-to-one interviews with the company representatives.

Step 3 - Subsequent Retailer Interviews

From the initial research carried out during Step 1 and 2, further interviews took place with four subsequent retailer case studies. These were directly informed from the emerging coded categories found from the initial case study discussed in Chapter 5:

- CSR commitments
- Consumers
- Marketing & Communication

- Ethical ranges

This approach not only incorporated four further retailers into the investigation, but facilitated a comparative platform for the key issues within the study to be analysed across the companies involved.

Whilst this area of the investigation concentrated heavily on the retailer side of the study, by incorporating a consumer perspective during Steps 1 and 2 of the process, it ensured that the research conducted addressed all five of the research questions initially formulated. This simultaneous investigation of the consumer and retailer allowed for the purchasing process of socially responsible merchandise to be fully explored.

6.1.1 Research Methods

Due to this phase of the research being categorised into a three-step process, various methods were utilised at each stage. This was due to each step not only working with different sample participants but also with each step approaching the research questions from a slightly different angle. Whilst all methods were qualitative in nature, different data collection methods were required to adapt to the information needing to be obtained.

Step 1 - Online Consumer Survey

The online survey utilised six questions in order to collect the information required. This was purposely designed to be as easy as possible for people to answer so to encourage their participation, thus it was kept short, often using multiple-choice questions. Where the multiple-choice questions were used a further option was also used allowing participants an *Other (please state)* option, where they could manually input information of their choice. The survey was put together using an online survey software facility Survey Gizmo. This service allowed for easy design, distribution and collation of data collected once the survey was complete.

The six questions utilised during the online consumer survey were as follows:

- What sources of information do you rely on to inform you, as an individual of social issues involved in the garment supply chain?

- Do you think it is the responsibility of retailers to inform consumers of social issues within the garment supply chain, or should this be the responsibility of the consumer as individuals?
- What methods of communication do you think would be effective for a retailer to inform customers of their CSR (corporate social responsibility) values in-store?
- When receiving information about retailer CSR (corporate social responsibility) values, what format would be most effective?
- To what extent do you think that the branding of retailers CSR (corporate social responsibility) values is an effective method to communicate to consumers?
- When looking for retailer CSR (corporate social responsibility) information online, what information would you like to be made available?

As discussed in detail during Chapter 3, at this stage a survey was chosen as the optimum data collection method as it needed to be circulated to a large sample and needed to be simple and cost effective to put together.

Once again, a relevant ethical fashion body were used to recruit participants for the survey. The Ethical Fashion Forum, an industry body for sustainable fashion, sent a broadcast email to their database of users, providing a summary of the research and a participation request. The Ethical Fashion Forum's database holds approximately 6000 individual members spread globally over 100 countries. The message was sent directly to database members email accounts, with promotion also broadcast across social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. An example of this promotion can be seen in Appendix 1.

Step 2 – In-store and Online Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

This study was carried out as an initial scoping exercise in order to create an overview of the information made available by retailers to their customers. In order to carry the in-store element of the study out, each of the five retailer stores were visited for

observations to be carried out from the perspective of the customer. Various factors were purposefully observed such as swing tags and garment care labels, whilst other factors such as in-store visuals or point of sale promotions were speculatively noted. Each time a communication method was observed, a note was made of not only the method type but also the type of information being represented. The criteria that was observed was directly informed by Step 1 of this phase of research, taken from the results of the online consumer survey conducted. For the in-store element of the study these were:

- Swing tags
- Care labels
- Carrier bags
- Leaflets/magazines
- Window displays
- Poster/advertisements and initiatives

This research was carried out in Newcastle upon Tyne and was used as an example location for purposes of the study. Widening the geographical scope of the study could have made the data more reliable as a comparison could have been made across a number of stores. This would have also provided an opportunity for further work, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

For the online element of the study, content analysis was used when browsing the five individual retailer websites. Once again this criteria was determined in step one, was based on the online consumer survey conducted previously. The finalised criteria were:

- Supplier ethical standards
- Factory lists
- Retailer code of conduct
- Audit process details
- Minimum wage
- Freedom of association
- Supply chain transparency

Each site was individually visited from the perspective of the consumer in order to see if these criterion information was actively made available to browsers of the company

websites. Initially the main company website was visited, but often the CSR activities were detailed on a microsite or a more business focussed area of the site, which was where the observations then took place.

The observations found during both phases of this study were recorded in two matrix templates (in-store and online), with the five retailers on the X axis and the criteria positioned on the Y axis. This allowed for a clear visual recording to be made where both individual and multiple retailers could be assessed at the same time (Figure 6.2).

	Swing Tags Labels attached to the outside of a garment, usually featuring price and brand name	Care Labels Fabric labels which are attached in the side seams of a garment	Carrier Bags Any plastic or paper bags which are given to customers to carry their bought goods	Leaflets / magazines Any paper based publications made available to customers in-store
Company A Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 2201113				
Company B Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 2201113				
Company C Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 2201113				

	Supplier Ethical Standards A set of minimum standards of compliance given to suppliers prior to manufacture	Factory Lists Specific information given regarding the factories used to manufacture products for the retailer i.e. names, location etc.	Retailer Code of Conduct A set of values that the retailer works to reflecting the philosophy of the company as a brand	Audit Process Details The process undertaken by internal/external auditors to assess the ethical standards of a factory	Minimum Wage The minimum amount of money workers can be paid in accordance to living costs in specific countries
Company A					
Company B					
Company C					

Figure 6.2 – Example In-store and Online Recording Matrix

During both the in-store and the online study a compliance scale was used to visually illustrate to what extent the companies complied with the criteria factors. This scale had three incremental stages and were typographically represented using traffic light colour codes (Figure 6.3).

X = No	O = To some extent	✓ = Yes
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Figure 6.3 – Traffic Light Matrix Indicators

Step 3 - Subsequent Retailer Interviews

From the preparation work carried out during Steps 1 and 2, the final element of this phase of the research was carried out. Through the widening of the study's scope, four further retailers were interviewed. This was carried out with CSR representatives from each retailer, each of similar or equivalent roles within each business. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, semi-structured, informal interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection, where additional questions could be added in

response to answers given or prompted by the researcher. A series of open-ended questions were used just as with the interviews conducted with Company A, allowing the participant freedom to discuss any relevant areas of information.

The roles of individuals interviewed from each retailer were as follows:

- Company B - Global Ethical Trading Manager
- Company C - Corporate Social Responsibility
- Company D - Senior Ethical Trading Manager
- Company E - Head of Fashion and Sustainability Communication

Each of the company employees were contacted directly, explaining the nature of the research and the expectation of participants. Following this a face-face interview could be arranged, or in the case of Company E, a telephone interview, where this was more convenient for the individual. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled for approximately one hour, but according to the flow of the discussion this often under ran, however in some cases exceeded the time allocated. The locations of these interviews were carried out at the individual company head offices, where the researcher was invited to meet the retailer employees.

6.1.2 Areas of Investigation

As previously mentioned, the lines of inquiry for the subsequent retailer interviews were directly developed using the data collected and analysed from the initial retail case study with Company A. From the coded analysis of this initial study, four reoccurring categories emerged; CSR commitments, consumers, marketing & communication and ethical ranges. From these categories common areas of questioning could be formulated for the interviews carried out with Company B, C, D and E.

Whilst there were many common questions addressed to all the subsequent retailers, there were also retailer specific questions asked, addressing elements that were only relevant to the company being interviewed. This additional discussion was often follow up questions from the communication study carried out previously. These areas were in direct response to the data found during Step 2 of this study, during the in-store and online communication study. An example of this was a specific ethical range featured

in-store or a CSR commitment made explicit on the website, where further information was wanted.

The common lines of enquiry used throughout the four subsequent case study interviews were as follows:

- Consumer awareness levels of ethical and sustainable issues and how this impacts of purchasing behaviour
- Implementation of CSR commitments throughout the business and in merchandise sold on the high street
- Retailer to consumer communication methods currently being used and their effectiveness is influencing purchasing behaviour

The nature of this iterative approach ensured that there was not only continuity in the retailer investigations but also that the research questions were addressed using the best possible methods.

6.2 Data Analysis Methods

During the analysis of the data collected, a variety of methods and approaches were used. This was due to the varying types and quantity of data collected. These different analysis methods will be discussed in relation to the three step process previously identified earlier in the chapter.

Step 1 - Online Consumer Survey

Due to the majority of questions generating a multiple choice answer, the data was initially analysed using quantitative methods due to the answers being cumulatively assessed. From the 111 responses a percentage of the overall votes each multiple choice answer received could be calculated (an example of this can be seen in Figure 6.4). These figures were then visually represented in graphs, allowing the results from the original question to be communicated effectively.

2. Do you think it is the responsibility of retailers to inform consumers of social issues within the garment supply chain, or should this be the responsibility of the consumer as individuals?

Value	Count	Percent %	Statistics	
Retailers	90	81.1%	Total Responses	111
Consumers	21	18.9%		

Figure 6.4 – Example Consumer Survey Result

In addition to the six multiple-choice questions, participants were asked to provide minimal personal details including age, gender and occupation. These factors could then be taken into consideration during the analysis of the six core questions for any prominent factors that may indicate a rationale for a participants response. To again use Question 1 as an example, (*What sources of information do you rely on to inform you, as an individual of social issues involved in the garment supply chain?*), one of the 33 participants who chose the *Other (please State)* answer giving the additional information as ‘asking suppliers questions’. Due to the unusual nature of this answer the participant personal details were taken into consideration which indicating that the individual was a female who worked for a clothing brand. With the inclusion of her personal details in the analysis process, the rationale behind the unusual answer was identified. Whilst this provided an interesting angle to the question, this has been classified as an anomaly in the data due to the average consumer not having access to suppliers in order to rely on them as a source of information.

Step 2 – In-store and Online Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

As discussed previously, the data collected from this study was visually represented in a matrix diagram, using typographic symbols to indicate the extent of which the individual retailer complied with the criteria elements. The data for this activity was collected as a series of observations, which were recorded through a series of notes prior to being put into the matrix recoding template.

The determination to the level of compliance of each criteria element was conducted comparatively across the retailers surveyed. For example, during the website communication study when exploring the Supply Chain Transparency (making all stages of the supply chain explicit and public) criteria, Company B acknowledged the use of homeworkers within their supply chain, due to the nature of the embellished work conducted throughout their ranges. Company B was therefore given the to *some extent* classification, as certain elements of their supply chain are detailed, however there are still gaps that they failed to make public on their website. In comparison,

whilst providing a lot of details regarding their CSR commitments and actions, Company A failed to provide any details regarding their supply chain transparency and therefore are classified in the bottom of the three levels provided (Figure 6.5).

	Supply chain Transparency Making all stages of the supply chain explicit and public
Company A	X
Company B	O Homeworkers are acknowledged due to the nature of the embellishment work - no further details.

Figure 6.5 – Example Matrix Classification

In addition to the classification system that has been applied across this study, further relevant details were also noted on the matrix-recording template which were detailed in the summary box provided. These factors included comments on the aesthetics of the website and the ease of navigation for the user.

Step 3 - Subsequent Retailer Interviews

The final phase of analysis during this stage of the investigation was the cross comparison on the four subsequent retailer interviews. These semi-structured interviews were audio recorded at the time of the interview that were then transcribed by the researcher at a later date. Once a transcript of the four interviews was available, the several layers of the analysis process could begin.

Firstly each individual interview was read thoroughly with key pieces of information and quotes highlighted. The data being highlighted at this stage was information that could directly contribute to the address of the studies research questions. Secondly the transcripts were analysed a second time with the previously highlighted information categorised into the four established categories previously developed during the initial case study with Company A. As mentioned previously, the categories were as follows: CSR Commitments, Consumers, Marketing & Communication and Ethical Ranges. This process was carried out using a series of colour-coded analysis. The next stage of

this process was to incorporate Company A into the analysis, where the data collected from the interviews conducted with all five retailers could be collated and the cross comparisons made (Figure 6.6). The coding process initially carried out with Company A was then repeated across the data collected from all five companies, where similarities, differences and anomalies were identified across all the interview data. This coding process was again a colour coding exercise, however due to the complexities of the comparative nature, a numbered system was also introduced (Figure 6.7). The final stage of this process was to collate all the similarities, differences and anomalies along with the supporting data evidence for each factor identified.

Figure 6.6 – Retailer Coding Process

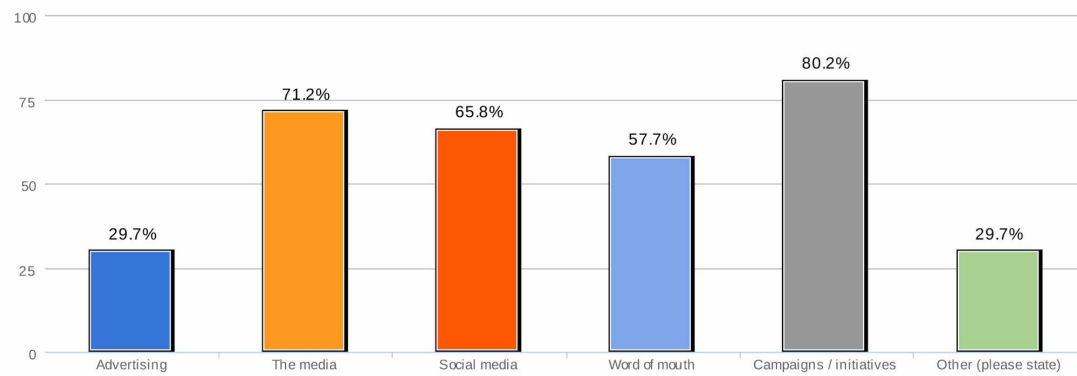


Figure 6.8 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 1

This question was asked to find out the range of sources commonly used by consumers to inform them of social issues within the garment supply chain. The question was multiple-choice, allowing the participants to tick as many answers that applied. The results of which show that 89 of the 111 respondents rely on campaigns and initiatives formulated by retailers and independent organisations to keep them up to date with relevant issues. This was closely followed by the media, with 79 of the participants in agreement.

The source with the least amount of participant votes was advertising, with only 33 of all participants saying that they relied on this as an informant. This may reflect a certain level of cynicism from consumers when looking to the media as a reliable source of information.

Answers provided in the Other (please state) option ranged from individually named organisations such as The Ethical Fashion Forum, to directly asking companies themselves. The mention of the EFF as an organisation however may be due to the publicity broadcast for the participation in the survey being from the database of the company direct. Although there were 33 participants selecting the Other (please state) option, there were no prominent emerging categories at this point.

Question 2

- Do you think it is the responsibility of retailers to inform consumers of social issues within the garment supply chain, or should this be the responsibility of the consumer as individuals?

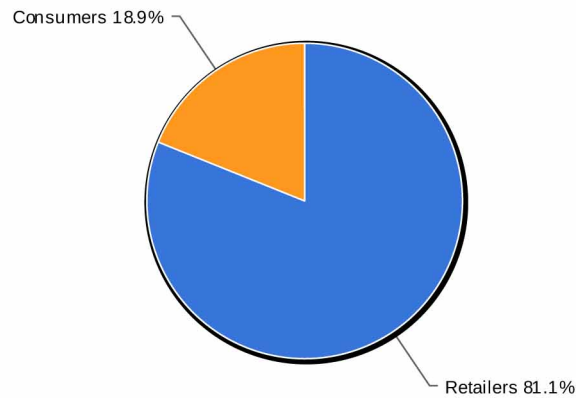


Figure 6.9 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 2

This question was asked to determine where consumers thought that the responsibility of obtaining information of social issues within the garment supply chain lied. It was also asked to contribute directly to the conclusions and recommendations made as a result of the data collected throughout this study.

Of the 111 participants, 90 of those thought that it was the responsibility of the retailer to inform consumers of social issues affecting the fashion industry. The remaining 21 thought that the onerous was with the consumer to inform themselves of such issues. These results show that a large proportion of participants agree that they want the retailers to carry out the hard work when it comes to obtaining information around social responsibility. This also reiterates the importance of communication methods on the part of the retailer, as demonstrated in Step 2 of this chapter.

Question 3

- What methods of communication do you think would be effective for a retailer to inform customers of their CSR (corporate social responsibility) values in-store?

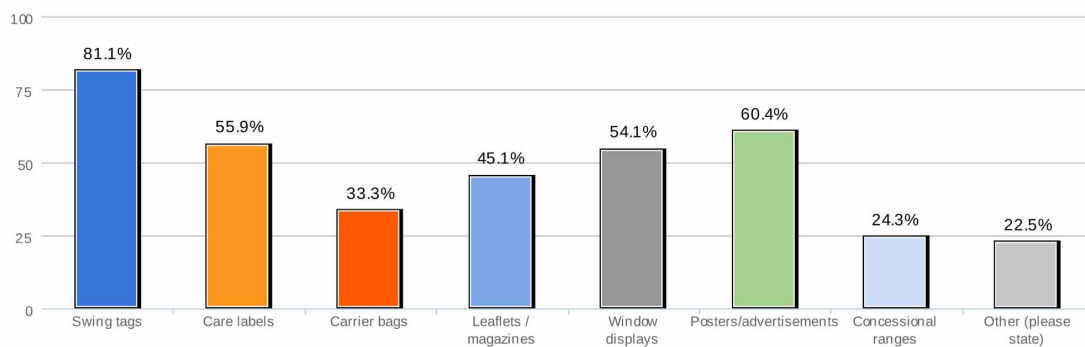


Figure 6.10 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 3

This question specifically focused on the communication methods that the participants thought would be most effective within a retail store. This was to gain an insight into the types of visual communication retail customers take notice of when shopping. Again this question was multiple choice and participants could tick all answers that applied to them.

The most popular answer was swing tags, with 90 of the 111 participants agreeing that this would be an effective method of communication in-store. Following that, poster/advertisements and window displays were popular answers, indicating that large visual displays in retail environments could communicate ethics and sustainability in the garment supply chain effectively. The lowest rated answer was concessional ranges, with only 27 participants thinking this could be used to inform customers whilst shopping. For the Other (please state) option, 25 answers were provided including better educated staff. This suggests that consumers may prefer a more personal, human touch when it comes to communicating ethics and sustainability, in preference to visual imagery and printed information.

Question 4

- When receiving information about retailer CSR (corporate social responsibility) values, what format would be most effective?

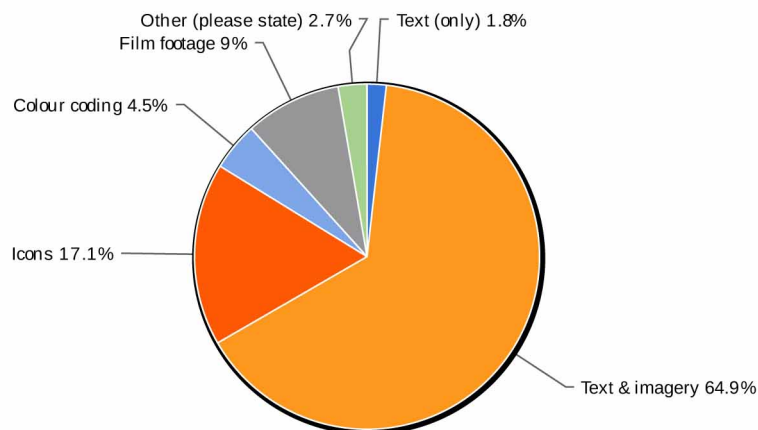


Figure 6.11 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 4

Following on from a previous point regarding participants potentially preferring visual data formats, this question aimed to delve deeper into the type of visual layout and text/visual balance. The question provided participants with a number of suggested formats to choose from, including colour coding techniques and digital film footage.

This relied on customers past experiences of information acknowledgement and to articulate what method works best for them as an individual. Question 4 was a multiple-choice question, where participants could only choose one answer.

The most popular answer with 72 of the 111 participants voting this way, was text and imagery. When comparing this to the other results, it is the clear format choice, in direct comparison to imagery (only) where no participant thought this to be an effective method of communication. 17% of participants thought that icons would be a simple and quick method to communication information, yet only 5% thought that colour-coding methods would work for them.

Question 5

- To what extent do you think that the branding of retailers CSR (corporate social responsibility) values is an effective method to communicate to consumers?

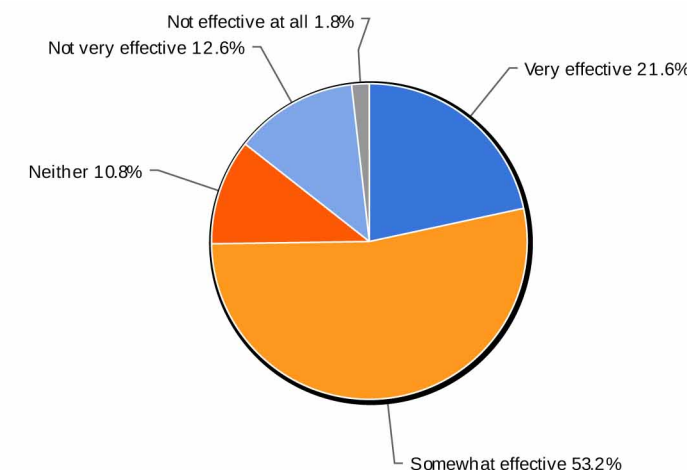


Figure 6.12 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 5

This question asked for participants to comment on how effective, in their opinion, this was. Whilst one example was given, participants could interpret CSR branding in anyway they thought appropriate. It also asked participants to again draw on their experience and again was a multiple choice question, but participants could chose only one answer.

The most popular answer in this question was somewhat effective, meaning that participants partially agreed that the branding of CSR commitments was an effective

method of communication. Only two participants thought this method to be not effective at all, whilst 24 of the 111 answers said this method to be very effective. When interpreting this question and the data provided it could be suggested that retailers could begin to incorporate this strategy into the communication of their CSR activities as consumers evidently pay attention to strategies that are already in place.

Question 6

- When looking for retailer CSR (corporate social responsibility) information online, what information would you like to be made available?

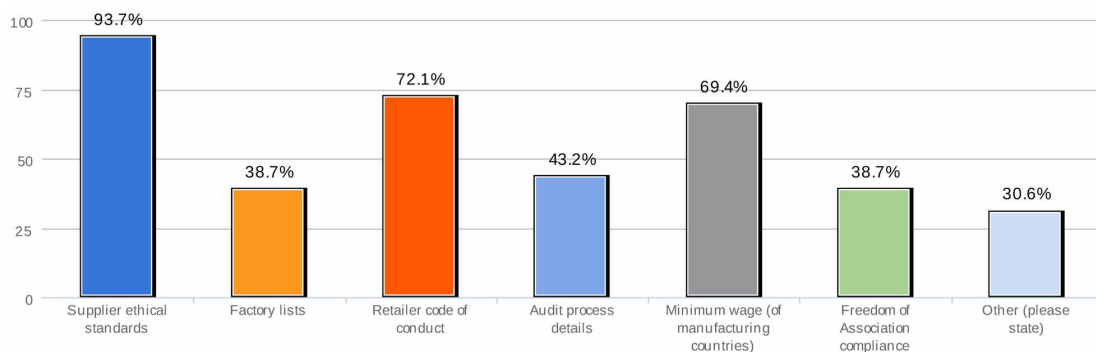


Figure 6.13 – Online Consumer Survey – Question 6

This question was asked to directly inform the criteria needed for step two of this phase of research: the in-store/online communication study. Participants were asked to detail the types of information they would like to be made available by retailers regarding the garment supply chain. This was a multiple choice question but participants could tick as many answers as applied.

104 of the 111 participants thought that retailers should provide information regarding their supplier ethical standards. This indicated that the participants surveyed have a high level of active interest in the social levels implemented by retailers throughout their supply chain. 72% of participants also thought the retailer code of conduct should be made explicit and available. However, whilst these terms were suggested answers, no definition for the terms was provided. This relied on the perceptions and understanding of the individuals participating to interpret the answers accordingly. In order to make this data more reliable, the researcher could have provided a working definition for participants to refer to.

The Other (please state) option in this question was popular with 34 people adding additional suggestions into the data. Answers provided ranged from the age of individual workers and details of sub-contracting to environmental impact and transparency of the whole supply chain. The addition of environmental issues was a very popular answer, suggesting that consumers hold both social and environmental issues as important in the production of apparel.

6.3.2 Step 2 – In-store and Online Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

This phase of the study saw the data collected and presented in a matrix format in order for easy comparisons across retailers to be made. Following the analysis of each retailer against each individual criterion, a short summary was put together to give further key pieces of information regarding the data collected.

The level of compliance to the criteria factors was indicated by a colours symbol; a red cross for *no*, an orange circle for *to some extent* and a green tick for *yes*. The classification tool alongside some additional comments were detailed in the matrix tables.

Online

This process was carried out using the retailer websites and where relevant, corresponding CSR micro-sites. The data collection process was done from the point of view of the consumer, accessing only information that was attainable by the general public.

The criteria developed for the online section, alongside working definitions of the terms were as follows:

- **Supplier Ethical Standards** - A set of minimum standards of compliance given to suppliers prior to manufacture
- **Factory Lists** - Specific information given regarding the factories used to manufacture products, i.e. names, location etc.
- **Retailer Code of Conduct** - A set of values that the retailer works to reflecting the philosophy of the company as a brand
- **Audit Process Details** - The process undertaken by internal/external auditors to assess the ethical standards of a factory

- **Minimum Wage** - The minimum amount of money workers can be paid in accordance to living costs in specific countries
- **Freedom of Association** - Giving workers the right to come together with others to collectively pursue common interests
- **Supply Chain Transparency** - Making all stages of the supply chain explicit and public

The results of this online study and the company compliance with each criteria factor will be discussed by individual retailer. For the complete matrix result tables, please refer to Appendix 2.

Company A

	Supplier Ethical Standards	Factory Lists	Retailer Code of Conduct	Audit Process Details	Minimum Wage	Freedom of Association	Supply Chain Transparency
Company A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 6.2 – Online CSR Communication Study - Company A Results

When initially visiting the merchandise homepage of the Company A website, it appeared as a predominantly retail portal. However a link to further details about the company including the CSR commitments and strategy can be found at the bottom of the homepage. This link re-directs the user to the CSR microsite, which is in-keeping with the companies branding and aesthetically pleasing to the reader. The use of animations and striking photography makes the website engaging and informative. The delivery of information regarding the companies CSR strategy is delivered at a very readable and informal manner, allowing the user to interact with the site and the information provided on a number of levels.

Throughout the site, specific commitments are explained and where necessary related directly to a particular product area. However due to the user being directed away from the merchandise site, the product and CSR values become very separated. Through the presentation of the ethical and sustainable issues and the products available to purchase being two separate websites, this may indicate to the user that there is no direct

relationship between the CSR values being explained and the products that the company retails.

In terms of the criteria to which the website is being analysed under, Company A appears very poor in their communication delivery. Whilst the CSR micro site delivers a lot of information regarding the CSR commitments and action the company as a whole is undertaking, the specific details that are required during this study are not made available. Across all seven criteria points Company A was give a red cross indicating that no information of that nature was provided to their customers online.

Company B

	Supplier Ethical Standards	Factory Lists	Retailer Code of Conduct	Audit Process Details	Minimum Wage	Freedom of Association	Supply Chain Transparency
Company B	✓	X	O	X	O	✓	O

Table 6.3 – Online CSR Communication Study - Company B Results

The main website of Company B illustrated the brand identity and nature of the merchandise superbly, with all links and subsequent pages reflecting the nature of the business. The website throughout comes across as very product focused, speaking about specific manufacturing techniques where necessary. The CSR strategy of the company features as one of the main headings on the homepage of the merchandise website, again linking the product directly to the ethics and sustainability information provided.

Specific details such as the criteria factors featured in a series of documents that can be downloaded. These are presented predominantly as PDF Word files, however the brand imagery and logos are again evident. Whilst this method communicates some of the CSR information, the presentation format does not appear to do the work being carried out in terms of ethics justice. A more visual communication format may have been more appropriate in order to explain their actions in detail.

From the seven criteria factors, Company B provides information for all but two; factory lists and audit process details, details for which could not be found. Within the

company code of conduct, supplier ethical standards are detailed, meaning that a green tick was given. With retailer code of conduct, minimum wage and supply chain transparency, certain levels of information was given, but no specific details provided. These three criteria were therefore classified as to some extent. The final criterion; freedom of association, was featured in detail on the website meaning that a green tick was again given.

Company C

	Supplier Ethical Standards	Factory Lists	Retailer Code of Conduct	Audit Process Details	Minimum Wage	Freedom of Association	Supply Chain Transparency
Company C	✓	X	✓	✓	O	✓	X

Table 6.4 – Online CSR Communication Study - Company C Results

Company C was the overall best rated company website for the communication of ethical and sustainable commitments. The aesthetics of the site are not as attractive as with Company B, with the branding of the retailer not being as iconic and recognisable. Again as with Company A, the consumer is directed away from the main merchandise website to a more business focused and corporate microsite. This could again imply that that product and the CSR strategy are two separate concerns for the business, indicating a lack of connectivity.

The details provided for the criteria factors predominantly appeared in Word document format that could be downloaded if the reader wished. This communication format, despite providing some of the details required, appeared quite dull and unappealing to a generic customer, which may discourage them from gaining knowledge of details such as minimum wage standards as implemented by the company. Other details provided were through the annual sustainability reports, which were also both readable and downloadable for the customer.

When referring to the information search criteria, supplier ethical standards, retailer code of conduct, audit process details and freedom of association were all given a green tick as full details regarding these were provided. The number and type of factories utilised by Company C were detailed, yet no specific factory details provided,

This criterion was therefore given an orange circle, indicating that this information had been given to some extent. Similarly with the minimum wage category, the legal minimum wage was mentioned however the differing country specific wages were not detailed. The categories where no information was provided were supply chain transparency and factory lists.

Company D

	Supplier Ethical Standards	Factory Lists	Retailer Code of Conduct	Audit Process Details	Minimum Wage	Freedom of Association	Supply Chain Transparency
Company D	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	O

Table 6.5 – Online CSR Communication Study - Company D Results

As with Company A and C, Company D directs the user away from the merchandise website in order to provide more details regarding their ethical and sustainable actions. The user is directed to a corporate site that is the umbrella site for all the brands held under Company D's corporate group. All brands are covered with the group code of conduct where no brand specific or product specific details are given. The corporate site over all is heavily focused on the business behind the brand and is very unappealing visually. Also the brand identity of the group is different from the specific brand (Company D) being focused on during this study. This again shows to the user a lack of connectivity between the merchandise being sold and the CSR strategy. The tone and language used also indicates that the target audience is different from that of the product being sold.

The criteria details being analysed were predominantly seen in a series of code of conduct documentation, presented as a PDF Word document. This was very text heavy, where no engaging imagery or brand identity portrayed. The documents also feature large quantities of jargon, which the reader would more than likely not understand. It appears that these documents are for industry professionals or individuals who have a substantial level of pre-requisite knowledge regarding ethics and sustainability in the apparel industry.

Supplier ethical standards, retailer code of conduct, audit process details and freedom of association were all detailed in the word PDF word documents provided and therefore were given a complaint classification in the study. Counter wise no details were provided the factory lists and minimum wage categories. As with Company B, generic information was provided regarding the supply chain, however an explicit may or process details were omitted.

Company E

	Supplier Ethical Standards	Factory Lists	Retailer Code of Conduct	Audit Process Details	Minimum Wage	Freedom of Association	Supply Chain Transparency
Company E	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	O

Table 6.6 – Online CSR Communication Study - Company E Results

As with four of the five retailers studied, the user of the Company E website is navigated away from the merchandise website in order to read information about the CSR business strategy. The micro site reflects well the brand image and features lots of imagery of the garment collections currently being sold. This link between product and CSR has not been seen in many of the websites, with Company E being the most successful at illustrating this link to their customers.

The information is provided using a number of different channels, such as text, imagery and video, making the details easy to access and interesting. A good balance of statistics and narrative, also makes the site interesting yet informative. Whilst a lot of information is made available to the user, navigation through the site is fairly complex with headings not being clear on the information being given.

Supplier ethical standards, retailer code of conduct, audit process details and freedom of association were all detailed in either the code of conduct document or annual sustainability report. However as with company D there were no details provided for factory lists and minimum wage. For the supply chain transparency however, a summary of roles within the process were given but with no further or specific information

In-Store

The collection of this data was carried out from the point of view of a customer. Each store was individually visited with the criteria factors in mind, observing if the retailer used each method as a communication tool. Once this was established the type of information provided, the details were recorded. Newcastle upon Tyne was used as an example location for the purposes of the study.

The criteria factors established during Step 1 of this phase of the study were as follows:

- **Swing Tags** – Labels attached to the outside of a garment, usually featuring price and brand name
- **Care Labels** – Fabric labels which are attached in the side seams of a garment
- **Carrier Bags** – Any plastic or paper bags which are given to customers to carry their bought goods
- **Leaflets / magazines** – Any paper based publications made available to customers in-store
- **Window Displays** – Any posters, window vinyl or visual merchandising able to be seen from outside the store
- **Posters / advertisements** – Any interior decorations or posters able to be seen in-store
- **Initiatives** – Events or concessional ranges featured in-store to promote the company's CSR strategy

The results of the in-store investigation and the methods used by the five retailers will be discussed individually. For the complete matrix result tables, please refer to Appendix 3.

Company A

	Swing Tags	Care Labels	Carrier Bags	Leaflets / Magazines	Window Displays	Posters / Advertisements	Initiatives
Company A	O	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓

Table 6.7 – In-store CSR Communication Study - Company A Results

When visiting the Newcastle upon Tyne store of Company A, the presence of their CSR branding was obvious from the outset. In-store visuals, posters and advertisements could be seen on the walls and at the point of sale. The launch of a recent initiative could be seen in several places around the women's wear merchandising department, which was also featured in the monthly in-store magazine provided to customers.

The overall branding of the CSR commitments as mentioned were visible in many areas of the store, however specific commitments or actions were less obvious. Within the women's wear department, these were not evident in terms of in-store visuals or advertisement, however certain ethical commitments were shown on swing tags and garment care labels. On all garment care labels the message *wash at 30 degrees* was given as an environmental message, reflecting the commitments made within their sustainability strategy. Also featured on care labels was a message regarding end of life disposal, reminding the customer to contribute their unwanted items of clothing to their in-store, recycling initiative. Swing tags were used as a method of communication only on garments featuring fair trade cotton, where the Fairtrade logo was featured to inform customers of the ethical implications of the select pieces. This directly reflected the company's social commitments. Where specific commitments were made explicit or directly quoted from the annual report was within the food department, however this approach did not feature across departments in-store.

Other methods of in-store communication evidenced within Company A was on the carrier bags given to customers when making a purchase. Featured on the bags were the CSR commitment branding and the associated website address. Also featured was a statement informing the customer that the plastic bag was made from 100% recycled plastic and to re-use the bag provided to protect the environment. The only criterion within the communication study that Company A did not utilise in-store was window displays.

Company B

	Swing Tags	Care Labels	Carrier Bags	Leaflets / Magazines	Window Displays	Posters / Advertisements	Initiatives
Company B	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓

Table 6.8 – In-store CSR Communication Study - Company B Results

When visiting Company B, the branding of the company and the aesthetic philosophy was very obvious in the store decoration and colour scheme used throughout. Evidence of the CSR commitments could be seen in several areas of the store, with the branding of these commitments making this easier for the customer to identify.

What Company B featured within their in-store communication what none of the other companies surveyed did, was the inclusion of CSR branded swing tags on every garment. These were separate swing tags to those featuring the price, bar code and product specific information and included no other information apart from the explanation of the ethical and sustainable philosophy of the company. These tags were of a high quality and due to their presence on every garment in-store, reflected the company's emphasis and importance of the CSR commitments made. The branded CSR logo was also featured on every carrier bag given to customers. A lot of the merchandise made available by Company B, is of a heavily hand-crafted, embellished nature. How the manufacturing supply chain manages the social responsibility surrounding this hand-work is also explained in swing tag format on the relevant garments. This is again a feature of CSR communication that is not used by the remaining four retailers surveyed.

A further feature that is unique to Company B is the use of small informative signs positioned next to certain products to inform customers of a specific ethical attribute. For example, garments that included fair trade materials were positioned next to a sign giving customers further information of the nature of the fair trade materials used. Another example is merchandise that is associated with a charity partnership, explaining that all profits from specific products are donated directly to charity organisations working in partnerships with the brand. These small signs interact with

consumers on a level where the individuals can choose to read as little or as much information as they want, leaving the customer with the choice. Within the criteria of the communication study, this partnership provided information for the initiatives section.

Company C

	Swing Tags	Care Labels	Carrier Bags	Leaflets / Magazines	Window Displays	Posters / Advertisements	Initiatives
Company C	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X

Table 6.9 – In-store CSR Communication Study - Company C Results

When initially carrying out the study in the store of Company C, no utilised communication methods were immediately obvious. On further investigation, a branded ethical trade sign was positioned behind the till points. This sign however provided no further information regarding how this was being carried out or indeed what it entailed. Whilst this offered customers a simple message, no details were given directing the customer to a source of further information.

Another method of communication used in-store, was the feature of a CSR commitment on the care labels of selected garments. As seen with Company A, this instructed customers to *wash at 30 degrees, if the garment isn't dirty*. This commitment was again in alignment with the environmental strategy made in the company's annual report.

The final method used by Company C to communicate their CSR message to customers was through their catalogue available for customers to take home. This included several pages at the back of the publication explaining the commitments and actions the company are taking towards social and environmental responsibility.

Company D

	Swing Tags	Care Labels	Carrier Bags	Leaflets / Magazines	Window Displays	Posters / Advertisements	Initiatives
Company D	X	✓	O	X	X	X	X

Table 6.10 – In-store CSR Communication Study - Company D Results

Upon visiting Company D's Newcastle upon Tyne store, as with Company C, no communication methods were immediately obvious. Working to the criteria of the study, only one of the seven observed elements was found to be utilised. The care labels featured in the garments displayed a similar message to that found with Company A and C; *save energy, wash at 30 degrees*.

The lack of communication evidence found indicates that the brand are either doing very little to communicate their CSR message to their customers, or indeed they are doing relatively little towards a more social or environmentally responsible future. The findings show that they are not communicating any social action to their customers through any communication channel found during the data collection process.

Company E

	Swing Tags	Care Labels	Carrier Bags	Leaflets / Magazines	Window Displays	Posters / Advertisements	Initiatives
Company E	✓	X	X	O	X	X	✓

Table 6.11 – In-store CSR Communication Study - Company E Results

Company E were unique in the way they communicate their CSR message to their consumers due to their approach being to highlight their actions through a specific collection. This range had a different visual branding identity to the regular collections found in-store, portraying a more in-touch with nature image. This collection featured swing tags explaining the environmental action made through the production of the

range. When looking to the remaining collections found in-store, no swing tags indicating CSR commitments or actions were used. This strategy of communication relied heavily on the specific collection to inform the consumer of the company's CSR activities, where using a multi-channel approach may have improved this.

The final method of communication found to be utilised by Company E was a coding process found within their catalogue publications. Next to garments that directly reflected one or more of the ethical or sustainable commitments made by the retailer, a green dot was marked. When referring to the details in the back of the catalogue, this informed customers that the garment was in some way compliant with their CSR strategy. The details of the method of compliance or the differentiation between a social or environmental attribute was not indicated. This illustrates that within the leaflets/magazines criterion of the communication, Company E complied to some extent. This was due to the commitment being visualised to the customer, however no further detail being given.

6.3.3 Step 3 – Subsequent Retailer Interviews

The final set of results from this phase of the research methodology was from the subsequent retail interviews with Company B, C, D and E. As previously discussed these were semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with retailer CSR representatives, each of comparable positions within the individual companies. The interviews with Company B, C and D were all audio recorded and fully transcribed (Appendix 10), with notes also being recorded from the telephone interview with Company E (Appendix 10).

Once the notes were processed the coding of the data began, with similarities, differences and anomalies identified throughout the data, across all five retailers. These have been detailed below, with the evidence from each retailer provided. Discussion and implications of the identified factors have also been included.

6.3.3a Similarities

Similarities identified by the study are factors that reoccurred in two or more of the interviews carried out with Company A, B, C, D & E.

1. Similarity

The acknowledgement that as a retailer they cannot be perfect in their actions from an ethical and sustainable point of view

Evidence

Company B: 'We're trying to be an ethical company and sometimes it doesn't always work because we get let down by certain suppliers or some things happens, nobodies perfect.'

Company C: 'There's no way our supply chain is going to be perfect, absolutely no way, so it would only take one incident... and then all of the trust and all of the faith has gone down the pan. In some ways as retailers its better not to communicate it.'

Company D: 'I also think the corporates should come up with a 'warts and all'...we do so much, not everything is going to be successful. We cant be 100% successful because we need the other side to engage, and when I talk about the other side I mean the factories to engage with us and we need the workers to engage with us.'

Discussion

When interviewing the retailers, three of the five actively acknowledged that due to the many complex supply chains within the manufacture of the brand merchandise, that the company and their sourcing could not be perfect. During these multiple conversations the company employees became slightly detached from the retailer, expressing that due to restrictions that the retailer as a business imposes such as money and lead times, this ideology would not be possible.

2. Similarity

The negative impact the media could have on a retailers brand reputation if a negative story were to be published

Evidence

Company B: 'It doesn't matter how good or how cheap it is, if its high risk or if they have child labour, no freedom of association or whatever, bonded labour, its not good for business and you could well damage everything that we've just talked about, all the love, all the ethos about the business... you can just destroy that in one 30 minute media report.'

Company C: ‘There’s no way our supply chain is going to be perfect, absolutely no way, so it would only take one incident... and then all of the trust and all of the faith has gone down the pan. In some ways as retailers its better not to communicate it.’

Discussion

This similarity leads on from the last, with the interviewees acknowledging that supply chains are unstable in nature due to the number of manufacturing sources. Both representatives from Company B and C discussed that it would take one small hole in the entirety of their manufacturing processes for their mistakes to be exposed by the media. The impact of this media expose was also acknowledged by both employees, emphasising that it is brand trust and recognition that would be ruined. This led to the representative from Company C stating that it is better to not publicise any details regarding CSR commitments in order to prevent their reputation being damaged.

3. Similarity

Consumers having brand trust in companies and their brand

Evidence

Company A: Company A consumers can leave their worries at the door and merely trust Company A as a brand to make the correct decisions for their consumers.

Company B: ‘Consumers pay quite a decent price for our products and therefore I think with our consumers, there is the expectation that it is reasonably, ethically sourced ...we’re also doing it for brand reputation... its all about damage limitation and how we manage that.’

Company C: ‘I think as with all consumers, only to an extent. I think with consumers, particularly with Company C, because its an established brand and its been on the UK high street etc. but its also seen as being very respectable, a lot of that responsibility they put as a trust, and that as a brand they will do and buy in a certain way and that the impacts wont be negative etc. So, I think that they are aware but whether they are proactive, I think there’s a gap.’

Company E: ‘I think the customer wants to feel confident that the brand they buy from is responsible and active within CSR. My experience is that the average consumer is becoming more and more conscious and they want to make a better choice when making a purchase, whatever it is they buy.’

Discussion

This similarity discusses the consumers relationship with the brand they are purchasing from and if the retailer reputation affects their purchasing behaviour. Company B believes that this trust could be rooted through the monetary value of goods and the expectation of quality and ethics, where Company C thinks that this trust is established over time and presence of the UK market. Company E believe that consumers are currently purchasing with brands they trust, whereas the representative from Company A presented a confident account that their customers could trust them to make the right decisions for them with regards to ethics and sustainability.

4. Similarity

The capacity to create maximum impact and leverage through collaboration with other retailers

Evidence

Company B: ‘One has to question our capacity to influence. If we’re buying less than 5% lets say from a factory and your saying that your wage costs are below minimum wages or your health and safety standards need to be improved, all of which has cost implications, they’ll say you know, I don’t want your business...if you have 50% of their business, its worth while them doing it.’

Company C : ‘What’s key is leverage, if your going to go into a factory and try and implement anything... you’ve not only got (to have) the business behind you to ensure that that commitment is continuing but also the resource then as a company we don’t have to dilute that resource, we can put it all into one pot.’

Discussion

The discussion of leverage was discussed by two of the retailers, each agreeing that it was collaboration and working together with other retailers that would make a real impact in terms of ethics and sustainability. This impact as mentioned in both cases was due to having the capacity within a factory to demand change in working conditions and worker wages. Whilst leverage was not explicitly discussed, Company D did reveal that they were currently working together with Company C in order to improve their supply chain: ‘The representative from Company C and I are actually working very closely together... and how can we persuade a factory to go beyond auditing, what value could we bring them in terms of making them more responsible

for the working conditions in their own factory, so we're kind of looking how we can do that.

5. Similarity

Consumers want simple messages communicated to them regarding ethical and sustainable issues

Evidence

Company A: Consumers want information on simple green issues and what they can do for future generations rather than what can be done to create change for current society.

Company C: 'How would you tell something like that to a consumer? What a consumer would say is have you got child labour? No, that's what they want to hear, a one word answer.'

Company E: 'It's a fine line how much information to include and it's important to be in close contact with the customers to know where they are, how much they know and how much they want to know.'

Discussion

This idea of the consumer wanting a simple, understandable message was a reoccurring theme throughout the work conducted with the retailers. One representative from Company A and the employee interviewed from Company E were both specialist in the communication of sustainability. Both discussed extensively regarding the methods and level of information delivered to consumers in order for it to be effective. The conversation with Company B, whilst mentioning the communication of CSR messages, the root of the conversation was regarding the flaws within the supply chain and how these impact on the purchasing behaviour of their customers.

6. Similarity

The inefficiency and lack of impact auditing has had on compliance in the supply chain when taking into consideration the huge resource this process consumes

Evidence

Company C: 'Now it has come to realisation of the little impact auditing has had and the huge resource we have all put into it which should have resulted in a lot more

impact than has actually happened and now I think there's a lot more of the conversation of how do you go beyond auditing because auditing is such a small snapshot.'

Company D: 'We do actually want to move beyond auditing... we want to look at auditing and the value that it brings and if you actually think about it, the value that it brings is just a snapshot in a factory... it brings kind of that much value' (makes small signal with hand).

Discussion

Whilst auditing was a conversation that was had with all of the retailers, this particular similarity was very precise in expressing the lack of value that auditing brings to monitoring the supply chain and the level of compliance to the companies code of conduct. As previously mentioned in Similarity __, during the interview with the representative from Company D, the collaboration with Company C to create leverage was discussed. This similarity comes therefore as no surprise as the current auditing agenda will be similar across both companies.

7. Similarity

During the purchasing process ethics is seen as a secondary message

Evidence

Company A: The carbon neutral range was marketed purely on design - make the garments beautiful to appeal to consumers. The eco credentials were a secondary message to the consumers and was seen as an added bonus to the beautiful products.

Company B: 'But that doesn't mean that the consumer is naïve... you have to make that money go as far as you can and sometimes people will trade off... I know perhaps that product isn't quite as ethically sourced as it should be but...'

Company D: 'If the price was at a premium then people would buy the cheaper product (referring to the an organic cotton jean). I don't actually think our consumer would actually buy something just because it was Fairtrade, I think they would buy something because they liked it and ooh look, its Fairtrade too, I don't think they would buy it simply because it was Fairtrade.'

Company E: 'Customers will always care about the look and use of the products first, the sustainability level is an added value.'

Discussion

The acknowledgement that consumers shop for aesthetics and not purely for the ethical and sustainable attributes of a garment was mentioned by four of the five retailers. This approach could be seen as fairly realistic and practical approach, with this also affecting the marketing and communication methods used. Across all four of the interviews where this similarity was evident, the general feeling was that consumers would like if the product they had decided to purchase had these CSR attributes but it was not a priority factor needed in order for a consumer to actually make a purchase.

8. Similarity

There is a certain level of awareness amongst consumers of social issues within the garment supply chain

Evidence

Company A: 70% of consumers can be described as average, whilst 20% are said to have no care or consideration for ethical and sustainable issues and only 10% can be described as green consumers. Two further segmentations: those who don't believe they can help and those who are willing but don't know how.

Company B: 'I think consumers are aware and I think there is a growing awareness... How much that affects their choices, I think that depends.'

Company C: 'Consumers are fickle but there is a lot of awareness out there.'

Company D: 'I think it's a mixture, I think we have a group of consumers that just want to buy high street fashion and don't care where it comes from... then you have some that are genuinely interested in it.'

Discussion

This similarity was evidenced across all five of the retailers interviewed, this being the first time it had occurred during the coded analysis process. All five retailers expressed the thought that the majority of consumers have a certain level of awareness regarding ethics and sustainability. However Company B, C and D continued to discuss that consumers may not implement their pre-requisite knowledge into their purchasing behaviour. Company A and D acknowledge that there are certain consumers that do not care or consider ethics and sustainability at all when buying fashion garments.

9. Similarity

A business has to be commercially successful primarily before an ethical impact can be made

Evidence

Company A: Good business is about being a brand, being good and also being profitable. Our CSR philosophy works throughout the store, where nothing is sinister or acting as a publicity stunt.

Company B: 'Everything that we try to do, whilst profit might be a dirty word, if we don't have a commercially successful business then we can put pressure on our suppliers to make changes and its trying to sort of create that balance and that harmony really.'

Discussion

The representatives from Company A and B spoke of business being the primary priority as a company, and that without business success and profits there could be no work carried out in terms of ethics and sustainability. The role of the representative of Company A is Head of Sustainable business which primarily includes the incorporation of strategy to ensure that the business moves forward and consequently continues to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability. This idea reflects the idea that a business needs to be successful in order to be sustainable.

10. Similarity

Ethics should not be used as a marketing tool

Evidence

Company A: Good business is about being a brand, being good and also being profitable. Our CSR philosophy works throughout the store, where nothing is sinister or acting as a publicity stunt.

Company D: 'I don't believe there is anything in store actually, again we have to be careful to not use our CSR as a marketing tool, we have previously trained our in-store staff to what Fairtrade is, what organic is and that kind of stuff. They are actually trained to say go to our website because when you think about it, too much information is dangerous, so its best if we point people to our website and contact us that way really.'

Discussion

This similarity appeared with only two of the five retailers interviewed, however this was not a response to a question asked by the researcher. With Company D this was a prominent point that was mentioned at multiple moments of the interview. Whilst Company A wanted to reiterate that the unique branding of their CSR commitments that take place was not for publicity or profit making purposes.

11. Similarity

It is not necessarily the job of the retailer to inform consumers of ethical issues which occur during garment manufacture

Evidence

Company B: 'I don't think it is necessarily our responsibility to inform per say... we source where we source from and we have to do that against standards.'

Company C: 'I wouldn't say that's its not our responsibility to inform consumers but because its complicated...'

Company E: 'I don't think customers come to our stores to be educated, rather inspired. They come to us for fashion so it's important to communicate around the collection, let fashion carry the sustainability message.'

Discussion

The five retailers were directly if it was the responsibility of the retailer to inform consumers of ethical and sustainable issues in the garment supply chain, or if should be down to the consumers to be proactive in their knowledge collection. Three of the five responses acknowledged that it was not the responsibility of the retailers to educate or inform their customers, with Company E explaining that the strategy they use to communicate their CSR message is through inspiring their customers when in store. This innovative approach was unseen throughout the remaining data collection process.

12. Similarity

Retailers are acknowledging a sense of responsibility

Evidence

Company A: Retailers are in a unique and powerful position and are able to influence both the suppliers of their products and the customers who purchase the products.

Company C: ‘As a company I think we have a big responsibility because ultimately they are manufacturing our products and within that sphere of influence, within that factory, that is certainly our responsibility.’

Company D: ‘As with all the corporates we have our responsibility and a lot of the time they are directed to our CSR report because we do cover everything in the responsibilities report.’

Discussion

The idea of responsibility continued throughout the interviews, with similarities also occurring when general ethics and sustainability was concerned. Three of the five retailers explicitly mentioned that they as a company had a responsibility to manufacturer in an ethical and sustainable manner. Company C discussed the company taking ownership of the product they manufacture, whilst Company A add that with this responsibility comes a unique and powerful position.

13. Similarity

Communication of ethical values within retailers are from a top-down approach, drip-fed through employees from the top management down

Evidence

Company A: The CSR achievements and commitments are communicated only to higher levels. These messages are then drip fed down the chain to assistants where the initial message will be diluted and much briefer than initially communicated.

Company B: ‘You have threads of communications from top management down and hopefully bottom up too, it about moving to more participatory approaches, and really good HR is the key to some of the issues really.’

Company C: ‘Our manager meets with the product directors every 3 months so that’s a meeting where we update all the buying directors, so its like a drip feed down and we do all the teams as well.’

Discussion

This was a question posed to understand the implementation of the individual retailer CSR commitments throughout their business’. This was achieved through both observations and the interviews conducted. Within Company A as the initial case study, both top management levels and lower levels of employees could be investigated. In comparison to the subsequent retailer interviews (Company B, C, D

and E) where only one employee was interviewed, the implementation could only be questioned, not compared across level like that in the initial case study. All of the three responses described a top down approach of communication within the company, relying on more senior members of staff to inform employees on lower levels and grades. However this approach was seen to not be overly effective as evidenced in the interview with Participant 4 in Company A.

14. Similarity

Retailers feel they are always compromised on price and margins

Evidence

Company A: The team are heavily restricted to costs when putting the ranges together.

Company B: 'I think they are (retailers are going to have to up their game) because one of the challenges as a business is that we're still being challenged on price and margins.'

Discussion

Price was again a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews, which again reflection the idea that companies primarily have to be a successful business before ethics and sustainability can be considered. However this pressure or cost reduction could raise concerns as reduced margins could result in compromises made in the garment supply chain. Company B mentions that retailers will have to up their game, acknowledging the fact that these factors combined (ethics/ sustainability and cost) are going to be a challenge for retailers to attain.

15. Similarity

Retailers feel a responsibility as a retailer to educate/work with their factories and suppliers should compliance issues occur

Evidence

Company B: 'You have to incentivify the suppliers to actually bring them into the process, but ultimately it's coming back to, who's responsibility is it anyway? Is it the Chinese government, Vietnam government, Cambodian government? Its about having laws, lets face it all these countries have laws, its about the regulation and the enforcement.'

Company C: ‘What do we do about child labour? Zero tolerance, what we don’t do is; you’ve got child labour? See you later. Right you’ve got child labour, what we do is we have a local NGO who will then look after the interest of the child so they’ll go to that child and see what type of education or training and then what we’ll do is go to the family and see what the reason for that child working is income, finances etc., so what we don’t want is that loss of income and that child then going into a worse case of child labour, so a member of that family, we try and put them in the place of work where the child was etc.’

Company D: ‘We buy from them because they turn out a good product and we buy from them because we still have a responsibility to those workers in that factory and we need to work towards changing the mind sets and educating those factories.’

Discussion

This similarity again reflects on the element of responsibility, however this time this looks at the situation from the point of view of the garment manufacturer. Company’s B, C and D all expressed that ceasing relationships with a manufacturer due to lack of compliance could have a serious negative effect on the producing community. Instead, all three retailers described the process undertaken to inform and educate suppliers of the complaint methods of manufacture. Company C discussed this education process in detail, assuring long-term working relationships and commitment from manufacturers.

16. Similarity

Head office employees are regularly updated with ethical training/education

Evidence

Company A: ‘The only form of direct contact would be the monthly newsletter which is sent to all members of staff giving an overview of business.’

Company B: ‘From time to time, I sit down and do presentations on... we do an annual report and we ask for feedback about that, I do weekly summaries which are then fed back to the buying teams in particular.’

Company C: ‘What we’ve been able to do is link our teams with our code of practice activities and we sit down with them every three months and we go through all the factory suppliers and discuss all the issues.’

Company D: ‘There’s a whole day induction, and we have a slot in that, then a few weeks later, we let them settle in and embed themselves in the company and then about 2 months later, we’ll have them back and we go over.’

Company E: ‘All employees are familiar with our CSR commitments. One of them is “Be ethical”, and we should all be familiar with our Code of Ethics. It varies depending on the role, whether it’s about being ethical in relation with colleagues, external suppliers, customers or others.’

Discussion

This similarity again refers to the implementation of CSR commitments, with all five retailers discussing during the interviews the lengths to which they go to as a company to inform and educate their staff of their CSR actions. Whilst all five employees go into detail of the measure taken to ensure this, again due to the varying employee level of interviews with Company A, there is doubt if these measure are effective enough.

6.3.3b Differences

Differences identified by the study are factors that two or more of the interviewees from Company A, B, C, D or E disagreed on, or that could be described as conflicting opinions. In some instances, interviewees also presented the counter argument to the differences found, on which occasion this has been detailed.

1. Difference

The opinion that consumers apply their knowledge of social issues within the garment supply chain to inform their purchasing decisions

Evidence

Company B: ‘I think consumers are aware and I think there is a growing awareness... How much that affects their choices, I think that depends’.

Company C: ‘You can see through the rise of fast fashion, I mean you can go now and buy an outfit for a fiver, I mean that’s not informed choice, so I wouldn’t say that they’re informed at the moment’.

Company D: ‘I think yes to a certain extent (consumers using their knowledge when purchasing), but when they see something that they really fall in love with, they will buy it’.

Company E: ‘My experience is that the average consumer is becoming more and more conscious and they want to make a better choice when making a purchase, whatever it is they buy’.

Counter Argument:

Company A: 'Consumers want the retailers to do the hard work for them in order to be more ethical and sustainable in their purchasing behaviour'.

Discussion

This discussion of consumer implementing knowledge was a reoccurring topic during the interview process and has been previously mentioned during the similarity section. Whilst Company B, C, D and E acknowledge that consumers are becoming more aware of ethical and sustainable issues, Company C and D also discuss the possibility that consumers despite having this knowledge do not implement it when it comes to making decisions. However as mentioned by Company A in the counter argument, their research sees consumers wanting retailers to eliminate this decision making process, taking the overall responsibility of implementation of ethics and sustainability in the merchandise sold.

2. Difference

Consumers understanding the communication format used by the retailers in-store

Evidence

Company B: Well I think from a marketing point of view, I think the business thinks that (the swing tags used) they do (consumers take notice of them), else they wouldn't do it.

Company C: 'I don't think they understand (the ethical trade label), there's a lot behind it, isn't there? Even if you look at forced labour, there's the conventions etc. Ok, ethical trade to them means they got paid properly, but ethical trade is a lot more than that'.

Counter Argument:

Company D: 'I don't believe there is anything in store actually, again we have to be careful to not use our CSR as a marketing tool'.

Discussion

Both Company B and C utilise communication methods in store in order to inform their customers of their CSR actions. However the conflicting opinion comes when the question of the customer understanding the information that is being provided.

Company B believes that the understanding of their swing tags is understood by consumers, whilst Company C does not think that their customers understand to the complexities behind the message being communicated in store. In comparison to Company D who do not inform consumers of their CSR commitments in store at any level due to their conscious effort to not use ethics as a marketing tool.

3. Difference

The use of the ETI (Ethical Trading Initiative) base code as the individual retailers code of conduct

Company B: ‘Our monsoon code of conduct is the ETI base code. So we have taken the ETI base code and it may say the Company B code of conduct but essentially word for word it is the ETI base code’.

Company C: ‘Apart from the ETI, believe me, we do a number of initiatives, but that’s just because we’ve got local teams and we’ve always trusted our local teams. So’ our audits are done by our own people and that means that the business is taking responsibility, what we’re not doing is saying to someone, you know what the CSR bit, you go and do for us, just make sure we’ve got a piece of paper’.

Counter Argument:

Company E: As a non-ETI member, they have their own code of conduct, i.e. not based on the ETI code.

Discussion

All retailers interviewed with the exception of Company E are compliant with the ETI base code. From the communication study carried out prior to the subsequent retailer interviews, it was unclear if the retailer ethical code of conduct was simply the ETI base code or if they had developed this code further and adapted it to suit their business. The conflicting answers to this question came with Company B, who use the ETI base code as their code of conduct and Company C who claim that they have substantially developed the ETI base code. The counter argument presented here with Company E is through the development of their own code of conduct without the ETI base code as a starting point.

6.3.3c Anomalies

Anomalies are any prominent information provided throughout the interviews that contributes to the study, yet is only mentioned by one company.

1. Anomaly

Company C have a unique channel of communication with their customers in the form of a mail order catalogue

Evidence

‘Well the catalogue is amazing, it goes to like 2 million people and in previous ones, if you look in the back there is always two pages of codes, initiatives, what we’ve done etc. and we have a lot of feedback from that’.

Discussion

This piece of data stood out from the other interviews carried out due to their catalogue being a unique form of communication used. This is a publication sent direct to customer homes where they can browse at their leisure. This implies that the CSR commitments included in the catalogue may be a more effective form of communication due to customers having easy, convenient access to the information.

2. Anomaly

Company E are the only non-ETI member of the five retailers studied

Evidence

‘Our Code of Conducts, Code of Ethics and Chemical restrictions list are our sustainability foundation that applies to everything in our stores. In addition, we work continuously on water- and energy savings in production, community investment, BCI, SAC and more’.

Discussion

As previously mentioned Company E are the only retailer of the five interviewed that is a non-ETI member. This was therefore an anomaly identified in the data, as the development of their own code of conduct is used. This has been highlighted as it may influence or provide rationale for future analysis of the data provided.

6.4 Conclusion

Whilst concluding the empirical findings, this chapter provides an overview of both parties studied during the investigation. Through the analysis of the communication between these two parties, the relevance of the study and the potential conclusions reached became clear. With this stage of research being broken down into a three-step process, the logical narrative and iterative nature has been explored with the approach, findings, analysis methods and conclusions presented.

The methods used to obtain to the data collected were widely varied, reflecting the mixed method approach used throughout the investigation. This was also a consequence of both the consumers and retailers being studied simultaneously. During Chapter 3 of the thesis, the methodological overview and the rationale was given, whilst this chapter aimed to delve deeper into the details of the methods used, highlighting process, findings and conclusions throughout.

As this chapter presents the final stage of the data collection process, some early conclusions have been reached, with full discussion of these being presented in the following chapter. Whilst a lot of focus has been on the communication between the retailers and the consumers, the analysis of all five retailer case studies aided in the development of findings, with the potential for a framework of recommendations to be put forward for the individual companies involved.

Early conclusions show that many of the communication channels available to retailers are not being utilised to their full potential, whilst some retailers appear to prefer to communicate very little to their customers. This lack of communication could have a negative impact on the consumer awareness levels of issues effecting the garment supply chain. In turn, this approach could be influencing purchasing behaviour and consumer choice of both product and brand. From the online consumer survey carried out, participants indicated that they had an active interest in the communication of such issues, but felt that it was overall the responsibility of the retailer to inform and pass on relevant knowledge. The concluding interviews carried out with the four subsequent retailers saw numerous companies admit that whilst they are active in their commitment towards change in the garment supply chain, they realise they are not perfect in this mission.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Future Work

7. Introduction

The following section will discuss the results found from all five stages of the primary data collection. As mentioned previously, each research question will be addressed individually, which is then broken down by methodological stage. This has been done in such a way that indicates the research stage the data answering the individual questions has been collected. The results will be discussed in terms of the interpretation of the data and the conclusions that can be reached. Secondary literature will also be included at this stage, where a link to existing research and the on-going development of work in this area can be made. These findings, interpretations, conclusions and relationship to literature will be presented in narrative format in this chapter, however full details of these can be referred to in Appendices 4 to 8.

7.1 Conclusion Discussion

7.1.1 Research Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?

Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group

When approaching this overarching research question, several of the methods utilised raised the issue of socially responsible products being seen as not on-trend or fashionable. In addition to this, several consumer participants expressed the opinion that it was the aesthetics of ethical products that was preventing them from purchasing further. This thought reflects the dated stigmas that the ethical market is obviously struggling to shake off. Whilst this is only in the opinion of the consumers surveyed, it could also be due to the lack of knowledge or uninformed assumptions. However, it could be argued that retailers should be bringing on-trend, affordable fashion to the mass market, whilst employing a socially responsible business philosophy. When referring to literature, this finding has previously been evidenced by several authors (Niniimaki, 2010; Ritch and Schroder, 2009), with a lack of trend-led product being also said to be responsible for limited consumer interest in ethical issues overall. This finding directly reflects another finding from the primary research conducted, which states that consumer's priority when purchasing fashion is the aesthetics of a garment. This was found during the Garment Requirements activity in the consumer focus group, where participants were asked to create a hierarchy of factors they look for

when purchasing fashion. 13 of the 15 people surveyed agreed that aesthetics was their priority factor, indicating that they would not purchase a garment, regardless of its ethical stance, if the garment did not look good. Whilst aesthetics is a subjective factor, it also indicates that consumers are individuals and cannot be grouped together in a simple typology (Clouder and Harrison, 2005; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Szmigin et al., 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009; Mintell, 2009). This however is contradicted during the interview with Participant 1 from Company A (Section 5.3.1, page 141), where it was discussed that consumers are happy to be categorised into groups or tribes to give them a sense of belonging.

An interest in ethical issues, and indeed ethical purchasing behaviour has shown in the primary data collected to require consumer drive and motivation. Taking this into consideration, a lack of consumer drive or motivation could be directly affecting an individuals purchasing behaviour. This finding also suggests that the drive for purchasing responsibly must come from the consumer and not other parties involved, for example, the brand or retailer. It also assumes that consumers have access to information to develop the drive and motivation to purchase ethically. This is reflected by Ritch and Schroder (2009), who believe the fully informed consumer is unattainable, whilst Devinney et al., (2010) believe that there is a number of influential factors during the decision process and it is not just a lack of drive and motivation that could effect purchasing behaviour. This also follows on to another finding, which states that it is a consumer's knowledge of social issues that drives responsible purchasing. However, again this finding relies heavily on the consumer actually being informed, and referring back to Ritch and Schroder (2009) who also believe that consumers do not have access to enough information regarding ethical issues in order to be able to make a fully informed decision. Whilst in literature, there appears to be two distinct views on the level of consumer knowledge impacting their consequential behaviour; those who believe consumers are informed and ready to purchase in alignment with their views (Szmigin et al., 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Strong, 1996; Cowe and Williams, 2001), and those who believe that consumers are not adequately informed and cannot therefore purchase responsibly (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Baggini and Fosl, 2007; Ellen, 1994). This research also finds contradictory views from various methods used, suggesting that this is a difficult area to draw upon reliable conclusions and it is therefore in need of further exploration. This may be due to many factors including that consumer opinion and behaviour is very unique to each individual, subjective in nature and as investigated during this study, influenced by many contributing elements.

During the initial consumer focus group exercise, participants were asked to provide a small amount of unidentifiable personal data, including age, gender, occupation and salary. When analysing the results, it was found that purchasing behaviour did not alter in relation to personal background. No patterns were identified in the data, meaning that participants from all backgrounds purchased both fast fashion from the high street and second hand. This finding can also be identified in literature with many authors acknowledging that consumers are unique individuals which thus makes predicting purchasing behaviour very difficult (Devinney et al., 2010; Szmigin et al., 2009). Barrie (2009) goes as far to say that individual needs have to be identified in order to influence consequential purchasing behaviour. The conclusion that can be reached from both the primary and secondary data collected is that personal background is not a direct indicator for purchasing behaviour.

When considering factors that could influence purchasing behaviour, in addition to personal background, several other elements were tested during the consumer activities. These included retailer, garment type and price. Another reoccurring result that became evident in several tasks was that there was a negative correlation between price and ethical attributes. Thus as price decreased, ethical value increased and vice versa. When interpreting this finding, it can be assumed that consumers do not feel that a higher monetary value means that a garment is more socially responsible. This indicates a certain level of knowledge and awareness on the part of the individuals and goes against the prior assumptions made by the researcher. When considering price in relation to purchasing behaviour, it is easy to assume that price may dictate many of the decisions made by consumers. Cowe and Williams (2001) question if a consumer can purchase an affordable product that is also socially responsible, believing that ethics are often overwhelmed by price. Whilst Ritch and Schroder (2009) think that the recession has had a huge impact on ethical fashion purchasing, with consumers now preferring to purchase at the lower end of the clothing market. This relates directly to the growth of the fast fashion market, where consumers want catwalk inspired fashion, as quickly and as cheaply as possible. However taking into consideration the reoccurring finding of ethical fashion being perceived as not trend-led or fashionable, this may be a dominant influential factor inhibiting further ethical purchasing.

A method that has been suggested by participants to further inform consumers of ethical issues affecting the fashion industry, is the use of in-store visuals to communicate knowledge to shoppers. However, Berry and McEachern (2005) believe

that the best way to educate consumers of these issues is outside of the store environment and use only in-store visuals to reinforce the key messages. Whilst in Stage 5 of the methodology, retailers express the feeling that they must approach the marketing of social and environmental issues with care in order to avoid green washing or being seen to use such communication to their competitive advantage. This will be discussed fully later in the chapter.

Stage 2 – Initial Retailer Case Study (Company A)

This stage of the methodological process saw four interviews with selected Company A employees, each participant selected due to their area of expertise and knowledge. This area of knowledge was directly related to the research questions and areas of inquiry established prior to the time spent with the retailer. When addressing the question, *what influences ethical fashion purchasing?* from this methodological perspective a wider, on-going debate emerged. This refers to the question of whether it is the consumer or the retailer that controls the fashion industry. Within this question, two prominent findings arose; retailers are in a powerful and unique position to influence the fashion industry and a disparity between if it is the role of the consumer or the retailer to take action on the implementation of ethical issues. When interpreting these findings from the perspective of Company A, they suggest they are in a powerful position and that they can, and perhaps are, influencing both their suppliers and manufacturers and the customers purchasing their goods. This element of control in the industry is paramount when discussing change, with the retailer being the pivotal party in the move towards a more socially responsible future. Following on from this, when interpreting the role of responsibility being with the consumer or the retailer, it would appear from the previous finding that it would be the responsibility of the retailer to initiate change as they feel that they are able to create such an industry transformation. However this approach could affect both the direction and agenda of the action being taken, considering that retailers are ultimately profit making businesses and will be a priority of responsible business practices.

Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey

During the survey of 111 participants, questioning was based on communication methods and the effectiveness in sharing ethical issues to consumers. The branding of CSR strategies was also discussed. M&S and their branding of Plan A was given as an example at this stage, with the majority of participants thinking that this technique was

somewhat effective as a communication method. This result illustrates that consumers must acknowledge the message behind the branding to some degree, with the consistency and brand recognition adding to the impact the message may have. When referring to literature, the Fairtrade label was used as an example of brand recognition, creating trust and repeat purchasing of a socially responsible behaviour.

To follow on from this, in the same study, the majority of consumers also said that they rely on campaigns and initiatives to be informed of social issues within the garment supply chain. This indicates that not only do participants think that this is a successful communication method, but also that consumers rely on third parties to inform them of these issues, in preference to obtaining the information themselves. Whilst this finding can be concluded by assuming that retailers have the power to inform consumers of ethical issues through the method of campaigns and initiatives, literature believes that campaigns can often fail in getting the true ethical message across, in an attempt to make such issues more popular (Devinney et al., 2010). With this in mind, this research believes whilst campaigns and initiatives cannot be the primary method of communication of ethical issues, they certainly could aid in getting the message across, reinforcing messages communicated by alternative methods.

Stage 4 – Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

The communication study was carried out from the perspective of a customer, with both the store and the website of each of the five case study retailers surveyed. When approaching the results of this study from the perspective of this research question, several conclusions were reached. When analysing the information on CSR strategies and activities communicated on the company websites, there was a distinct lack of product and CSR connectivity. This lack of connection indicates to consumers that there is little relationship between the CSR activities being carried out by a company and the merchandise they sell. If the retailers are not making this relationship clear, customers will also fail to make the link between CSR activities and the product they purchase. This lack of connection is often also emphasised by the information regarding the companies CSR activities directing the reader to a micro-site, taking the potential purchasing customer away from the merchandise website. Whilst it can be concluded from the results found that there is a lack of relationship indicator between the CSR strategy of a brand and their merchandise, which could effect purchasing behaviour. Niniimaki (2010) reiterates the point by stating that there is a direct

correlation between the quality of the information provided to customers and the decisions being made.

This study also highlighted the level of communication of CSR strategies by each of the five retailer case studies. This also demonstrated that one of the five retailers surveyed chose to communicate no information in store to their customers (Company D). Whilst it was found at this stage of the methodology, when interviewing a CSR representative from the company in question later in the data collection process, the rationale given was to avoid green washing or being seen to use this as a marketing tool. Miller (2009) reiterates this point stating that marketing in its very nature is used to encourage consumption and purchasing and thus goes against the philosophy of ethics in clothing. However, this research believes that through the use of careful social marketing techniques, retailers could use their position to influence purchasing behaviour for the better. Therefore it can be concluded that some retailers avoid the communication of their CSR philosophy in order to avoid using ethics as a marketing tool or be seen to be green washing.

Stage 5 - Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

In this final stage of the data collection process, all results found from the work carried out with the five retailer case studies was brought together in order for a cross-comparison to be made. This approach highlighted that the majority of retailers believed that their customers had trust in them as a company. When interpreting this finding, it can be assumed that the retailers surveyed think that customers trust the individual retailers to act in a responsible manner when it comes to manufacturing goods. It also indicates that retailers believe that they should take a certain degree of the decision making process away from the consumer, whilst through brand trust a customer can leave their ethical worries in the hands of the company. Whilst this signals that it is the role of the retailer to influence ethical fashion purchasing, Ritch and Schroder (2009) believe that through consumer demand, the high street could follow in the footsteps of the supermarkets in the increased provision of ethical goods.

The retailer cross-comparison also found that the majority of retailers surveyed acknowledged that consumers purchase clothing for aesthetic qualities and that ethics is a secondary priority. This shows that retailers understand what motivates consumers to purchase clothing and that socially responsible factors are seen as desirable, but not

necessary. This is also heavily acknowledged in literature with Niinimäki (2010) believing that value can be created through clothing, thus extending the lifecycle of a garment by directly addressing the needs of consumers. It is the combination of aesthetics and ethics that Arnold (2009) thinks will make ethical produce successful. To conclude, in order to move the industry to a more socially responsible future, companies could aim to communicate ethics through the channel of aesthetics in order to influence purchasing behaviour.

7.1.2 Research Question 2: Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in ethical fashion purchasing?

Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group

The first activity in the consumer focus group asked participants to contribute key words and phrases that best described their perceptions of the term ethical. This exercise led to a finding that participants have a crucial misunderstanding of the term, often combining or mixing it up with words associated with the environment. This illustrated that many consumers do not understand the difference between social and environmental issues affecting the garment supply chain. However the results from Stage 4 of the methodological process, the retailer to consumer communication study, showed that retailers more actively communicate sustainability messages in preference to those more social in nature. This preference of communication could be partly responsible for the misunderstanding illustrated by participants and the inconsistent nature of their purchasing behaviour. In terms of the intention-behaviour gap rationale, the lack of definition between social and environmental terminology could contribute to the disparity found previously in research studies to the inconsistent nature of a consumer's intention and behaviour to purchase responsibly. This misunderstanding of terminology is heavily covered in literature, highlighting that the lack of industry definition is only aiding the confusion of consumers understanding of these social issues (Bray et al., 2010; Szmigin et al., 2009; Devinney et al., 2010; Confino, 2013).

The second finding at this stage that contributes to the rationale for the intention-behaviour gap relates back to a point made earlier regarding the influential factors behind ethical fashion purchasing. The fact that consumers feel that that a lack of trend-led, fashionable ethical product is preventing them from purchasing further could also be contributing the disparity of purchasing intentions and actual behaviours. When

interpreting this finding, consumers could have the intention of purchasing responsibly, however the aesthetics of ethical products could lead to that intention not becoming actual behaviour. This is again supported by Niinimäki (2010) who believes that a lack of fashion ethical product is leading to a lack of interest overall in ethics in the fashion market. This leads on to the next finding, also previously mentioned, that a lack of consumer drive and motivation to purchasing ethical goods could lead to inconsistent purchasing behaviour. This inconsistency could again contribute to the intention-behaviour gap, with consumer's behaviour being unpredictable and unexpected.

During the questionnaire activity in the consumer focus group, participants were asked if they thought that the high street or online stores offered the best provision of ethical goods. This led to the result of the majority of participants thinking that online websites offered a better provision of ethical garment ranges. This again could contribute to the rationale behind the intention-behaviour gap, with consumers perhaps having the intention of purchasing responsibly but the lack of ethical provision on the high street leading them to purchasing non-responsible alternatives. This is again heavily noted in literature with many authors highlighting that the high street has not kept up with changing consumer needs ((Portas, 2011; Confino, 2013; Ritch and Schroder, 2009) and a lack of ethical products available is affecting consumer purchasing decisions made (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Bray et al., 2010; Niinimäki, 2010; Arnold, 2009; Scholl et al., 2010).

7.1.3 Research Question 3: How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour

Stage 1 – Consumer Focus Group

The first finding from the consumer focus group when addressing this research question, relates to an earlier point made regarding consumers misunderstanding the term ethical and confusing social issues with those more environmental in nature. Whilst this finding may contribute to the intention-behaviour gap as previously discussed, it also indicates the impact this misunderstanding of knowledge may have on consequential purchasing behaviour. When interpreting this finding it indicates that consumers not only have low awareness levels of ethical issues affecting the garment supply chain but also that they struggle to differentiate between social and environmental issues. Consequentially, consumer's low awareness levels and

misunderstanding of the knowledge they do have, could have a negative impact on the purchasing decisions made.

However, during the same focus group activities, participants did show that they do possess a certain level of awareness or knowledge of socially responsible issues. This was demonstrated during the Ethical Scale exercise where people were asked to ethically rate their garments on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very ethical and 1 is not ethical at all. Results show that no high street bought item was ethically rated higher than 6, all second hand purchases were scored between 5-9 and that all garments surveyed scored between 1-9. It was in the qualitative rationale for the scores given that participants illustrated their knowledge and awareness levels, acknowledging that high street bought garments were generally not socially responsible purchases. However this did also highlight that despite participants knowing through their prerequisite knowledge that purchasing on the high street is not always socially responsible, they purchased there regardless. This point will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. These results have led to two key conclusions; that consumers believe that purchasing second hand is more socially responsible than buying on the high street and that no garment can be ethically perfect. The latter conclusion emerged from none of the 33 garments surveyed being scored the top available score of 10. When relating this conclusion to literature, it is only recent publications that have begun to highlight the fact that consumers believe purchasing second hand to be classed as responsible behaviour. It is believed that fashion consumers are now choosing vintage clothing as the low-impact choice as it saves clothing going to landfill whilst satisfying the lust for new purchases without buying fast fashion (Siegle, 2011).

During the next stage of data collection with consumers, results showed that participants believe it to be the responsibility of retailers to inform them of ethical issues involved in the manufacture of fashion goods. 81% of the participants voted this way in the online consumer survey, illustrating that they want retailers and large companies to do the hard work regarding ethics for them. However this approach does mean that it is the retailers that can control the type and level of information that is being provided. This could mean that the information is biased towards the retailer or however that the messages communicated have been cherry picked to highlight elements preferred by the company. With Mintell (2009) questioning if retailers are custodians of the consumer conscience, it can be concluded that it is the role of the retailers to use their powerful position and take the stance of a responsible retailer in

informing their customers of social actions being implemented to ensure a socially correct fashion industry.

Stage 4 – Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

During the communication study carried out regarding methods of communication in-store and online, it was found that the majority of retailers more actively communicated environmental issues in preference to social issues. Whilst this finding was more prominent in-store, it also relates back to a previous result discussed, where consumers demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of environmental and social issues. When interpreting this data, it can be assumed that the increased communication of environmental issues contributes in the knowledge and consequently confusion of terminology and ultimately purchasing behaviour. It may also be assumed that a consumer's awareness levels of environmental issues effecting the garment supply chain will be higher when compared to social factors, and may not actively make the connection between the manufacture of garments and key social impacts. It can be concluded that the preferential communication of environmental issues in preference to social factors has implication of a consumers awareness levels and thus how this knowledge is implemented during the purchasing decision process. However when referring to literature this finding is contradicted, with Strong (1996) believing that due to persistence the consumer focus has changed from environmental to social issues in the garment supply chain. It must however also be acknowledged that this literature reference could perhaps be dated and therefore not a true reflection of today's society.

Stage 5 - Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

During the final stage of the research methodology, all retailers surveyed (company A, B, C, D and E) agreed that consumers have a certain level of knowledge and awareness when it comes to social issues impacting the garment supply chain. However the majority of the retailers went on to say that the extent of which this knowledge is implemented during the decision making process was questionable. When taking into consideration the range of data collected during this study, this point is reiterated, with consumers themselves admitting that whilst they are aware that purchases are perhaps not socially responsible decisions, however they do so regardless. It can be concluded that consumers do have an awareness of social issues in the fashion industry, however

this knowledge does not consistently affect purchasing behaviour. This area is heavily debated in literature with research carried out by Worcester and Dawkins (2005) concluding that whilst 52% of the British public claim to be concerned with ethical issues, they also admit not to be following up these concerns with appropriate purchasing behaviour. However, taking specific social issues into consideration, another study found that 57% of consumers surveyed said they would not shop somewhere if the store or brand had affiliations with child labour. More recently the 2010 Co-operative Ethical Consumerism report states that consumers are highly aware of ethical issues and are ready to put their money where their mouths are (Cowe and Williams, 2001). This level of inconsistent opinions indicates that the prediction of consumer purchasing behaviour is complex and is often effected by individual or situational factors (Bray et al., 2010).

7.1.4 Research Question 4: How do retailers implement their CSR philosophy throughout their business?

Stage 2 – Initial Retailer Case Study (Company A)

When investigating the implementation of CSR values with the retailers surveyed, it was both the methods of implementation and the effectiveness of the methods used that was explored. Results from the initial retailer study with Company A found that there was a top-down strategy of informing employees of the CSR values in the company. As a period of time was spent with company A, it facilitated interviews to be carried out with members of staff at various employee levels. This level of rigor when exploring this research question highlighted that there was a disparity between the opinion and knowledge levels of the company CSR strategy between individuals in management positions and those in less senior roles. The agendas of the differing levels of employees also differed according to their position, with the less senior members of staff appearing to be more concerned with price and margin than the implementation of CSR strategies. This series of smaller findings can be concluded by saying that a top-down implementation of company CSR strategy is not an effective communication method when it comes to ensuring that all staff members are working to the same ethical and sustainable values. This method is also potentially flawed due to it relying on the accuracy of information being passed on from person to person. It could be suggested that a more direct approach of communication through meetings or emails may be a more effective approach to this CSR implementation process.

Stage 5 - Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

When analysing data across all five retailers (Company A, B, C D and E), the reoccurring theme of retailer collaboration was found as a prominent result. The need for collaboration was highlighted, with increased leverage and ability to make a large-scale changes being given as the rationale. This similarity was particularly prominent in interviews with Company B and C (refer to Section 6.3.3a – Similarity number 4). With this approach, retailers will have more manufacturing capacity in factories, believing that this will enable them to have the power to demand change in terms of socially responsible manufacture. The notion of collaboration in order to move towards a more socially responsible industry is documented by many academic researchers and journalist reporters. It is thought that a big impact is not possible without starting the initial conversation with people, where it is also believed that it is businesses that need to work collaboratively together to push governments on social legislation (Payton, 2013). The newly formed Bangladesh Accord has been used as a recent example of good collaboration, whilst it is thought that it is this type of approach to large-scale issues that will work (Neville, 2013). Cowe and Williams (2001) believe that it is the collaboration of campaign groups and active consumers that will really make an impact. Whilst it can be concluded that collaboration of retailers will enable ethics to be driven forward within the industry, as a consequential finding, this also indicates that retailers feel that they have the responsibility over their supply chain. The majority of retailers surveyed acknowledged a sense of responsibility in the implementation of ethics and sustainability in garment manufacture. This relates directly to a finding that will be discussed during the following section of this chapter, where the majority of retailers surveyed did not believe it was their responsibility to inform their customers of the CSR strategy they implement. These contrasting areas of responsibility illustrate that whilst retailers feel it is their duty to act in a socially responsible manner, it is not their role to communicate this to their customers. The key message to be taken from these findings however is the acknowledgement on the part of retailers, the importance of the implementation of CSR within their business.

To continue the theme of responsibility, a further finding within the area of implementation is that the majority of the five retailer case studies acknowledged the need for continued working relationships with suppliers should a non-compliance issue occur. This was a prominent discussion point again during the interview process with Company B, C and D, illustrating that companies do not believe that cutting ties with

suppliers following such an incident to be an effective way of doing business and that maintaining key, long-term relationships with suppliers is paramount. This again reiterates an earlier point discussed, showing that retailers feel a sense of responsibility over the manufacturing supply chain.

Whilst we have seen that a top-down approach of internal CSR communication may not be the most effective strategy that could be used, results from all five retailers show that they regularly update their staff members of the changes or developments of the company CSR strategy. This shows that it is a priority factor for all staff members to be fully informed to ensure the successful implementation of CSR throughout the company. Although this approach is perhaps idealistic in terms of success, recent literature acknowledges that some members of staff such as the buying teams may be more resistant to change due to their key role in the success of retailer/supplier relationships (Payton, 2013).

7.1.5 Research Question 5: What methods are utilised by retailers to communicate their CSR message to consumers?

Stage 2 – Initial Retailer Case Study (Company A)

When investigating the communication of CSR strategies, both the retailer being questioned about the implementation of the methods used and the customer opinion of the effectiveness of the methods employed were explored. This two-sided perspective reflected the approach taken by the wider investigation, considering the same problem from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

During the data collection process carried out with Company A, both the Head of Sustainable Business and a marketer were interviewed, the first result of which was the acknowledgment that preaching to customers is not an effective method of communication. This illustrated that from experience, Company A understands that there are more effective methods of communicating to customers, and that perhaps they do not want to be informed in this way. This point is reiterated, highlighting that it is vital for companies to understand the unique, market level stages in order to effectively communicate CSR information, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work (Childe, 2013). Whilst Deviney et al. (2010) believe that consumers need to be knowledgeable participants in preference to being just label

readers. The acknowledgement that all consumers are different and therefore respond to communication techniques differently again refers back to the understanding of consumers being unique, individuals and not restricted typologies of people who can easily be grouped together.

Whilst it was found that preaching is not an effective communication technique, it was also found that consumers respond well to reward schemes and like good behaviour to be acknowledged. It was found that Company A use these reward schemes in-store both on a daily basis, offering customers vouchers and money off coupons in return for their participation. However it can be questioned whether these types of schemes actually encourage responsible behaviour, as the rewards promote further consumption and require customers to purchase more products in-store or online. This repeat purchasing behaviour is of obvious advantage to the retailer as a business, with the moral value of the reward schemes having to be questioned. This being said, it can be concluded that consumers like to be rewarded for responsible purchasing behaviour and these types of schemes are therefore effective methods of communication of CSR strategies.

During the time spent within Company A, the marketing message of a specific sustainable garment range was questioned. Through interviews with both a product marketer and the Head of Lingerie Technology, it was found that ethics or sustainability is always communicated as a secondary message. Company A acknowledges that ethics is not the priority purchasing criteria for customers and that aesthetics is their primary concern. This said Company A encourages ethical purchasing behaviour through strong, desirable aesthetics, with the ethical or sustainable issue being a secondary message. This approach by the retailer shows that they understand the purchasing criteria of their customers, using the communication of socially responsible behaviour to create brand trust within them as a brand. The idea of aesthetics taking priority over ethics is a heavily debated area in literature, with authors reiterating that there are a number of more important factors to consumers before ethics is considered (Foxall, 2005; Davies, 2007; Niinimäki, 2001; Freestone and McGoldrick, 2007, Carey, et al., 1999). Whilst Worcester and Dawkins (2005) think that this is a direct impact of the recession, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) think the problem lies with individuals not being concerned with social issues due to it not affecting them directly.

Through experience, Company A found that the best method to communicate ethical and sustainable messages to customers is through a multi-channel approach, which reiterates the point made earlier of reinforcing in-store messages through different methods. This finding illustrates that as a retailer they believe that it is not the approach of one-method that would be effective, but it is however a mixture of different channels utilised that will reinforce and embed certain messages to regular customers. This can therefore be concluded that in order for the successful communication of CSR strategies and activities, a mixed-method approach must be used across a number of medias. This finding is also documented by authors, where Berry and McEachern (2005) refer back to the earlier point made by saying that it is easier to educate consumers outside of the in-store experience, using in-store advertising as a confirmation of what the individual already knows, where it is also thought that an effective labelling campaign and the support of NGO's (non-governmental organisations) is the way forward for the communication of social messages (Newholm and Shaw, 2007).

Company A also believe that whilst using this multi-channel approach, consumers also want CSR messages to be simple and to the point. This result was also documented further through the input from the remaining four retailers, which will be discussed in more detail later. The acknowledgement of this fact shows the as a retailer, Company A understand that their customers want key pieces of information communicated at such a level where the message can be understood and applied to their own personal situation. However, this should also offer customers the opportunity to access further information if they wish to do so. This for example could be a reference to a website, or the option of taking a leaflet in-store when making a purchase. This result can again be found within the scope of the literature search made, showing that consumers want simple, ethical message from the retailer marketing and that an overload of information could cause consumers to ignore the potential messages (Fashioninganethicalindustry, 2010). Foxall (2005) agrees with this point, recognising that consumers are subject to so many advertisements every day that the majority are filtered out and have no impact on their decision making process. It was also found that consumers need more information and they want it quickly and easily (Payton, 2013). The contribution from literature, along with the primary research findings from the case study carried out with Company A, it can be concluded that in order for the communication of CSR messages to be effective, they have to be clear, simple and easy for the reader to understand quickly.

The final finding from Stage 2 of the research methodology was that Company A use the communication of their CSR messages and activities to create brand trust with consumers. During an interview with one Company A employee, they expressed the feeling that their customers should be able to trust in them as a brand to make the right socially responsible decisions for them, enabling customers to not have to make a decision between wrong and right purchases but having the confidence that the right decisions have been made for them by the retailer. This shows that as a company they want to show their customers they are behaving responsibly but also that they are doing the hard work within their CSR strategy for the customers. Davies (2007) from the Financial Times highlights this where the decision to buy an ethical brand over a conventional alternative is influenced by a number of other factors including brand awareness. This illustrates that the communication, through various methods of responsible behaviour contributes to the creation of brand trust between the retailer and their customers.

Stage 3 – Online Consumer Survey

When addressing this research question during Stage 3 of the methodological approach, the questioning with consumers predominantly focused on the methods and techniques that they thought would be most effective when retailers communicated CSR information. The first prominent finding from the work carried out was a point that has been discussed previously with regard to a different research question; the majority of participants rely on campaigns and initiatives to be informed of ethical issues affecting garment manufacture. This illustrates that consumers believe this method of communication is effective and shows that they must engage with existing campaigns to think so. Whilst it could be assumed that this proves that retailers have the power to influence behaviour through the use of campaigns and initiatives, literature states that campaigns often fail to communicate the underlying message effectively, due to trying to make ethical issues more popular with readers (Devinney et al., 2010).

Furthermore, whilst participants showed they most likely rely on campaigns and initiative to inform them of ethical issues, they also thought that the most effective method that could be used by retailers is swing tags on garments. 81% of participants of the online consumer survey agreed with this, illustrating that consumers must engage and take notice of the information provided on existing garment swing tags. This approach would also overcome an issue discussed earlier in the chapter, where

retailers often fall foul to not relating the CSR messages on garments with the merchandise it refers to. The communication of such information on swing tags would show a direct relationship with the garments, creating greater connectivity between the customer and social issues. Within literature, the effectiveness of a label is something that is heavily debated. Two key issues are considered when this is discussed as a viable communication method; the authenticity of a label and the consumer recognition and understanding of the issues being communicated (Black, 2008; Ritch and Schroder 2009; Berry and McEachern, 2005; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Devinney et al., 2010). Berry and McEachern (2005) reiterate this point through the acknowledgement that voluntary labels can be questioned on their reliability and authenticity as there are too many labels to rely on just one. However diverse the labelling debate, most researchers, academics and other parties are in agreement that there needs to be dramatic changes and advancements in the garment labelling sector (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Fashioning an ethical industry, 2010; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Berry and McEachern, 2005). Ritch and Schroder (2009) also believe that one universal label regarding ethical measures needs to be introduced, with Bray et. al., (2010) believing that in addition to the issues previously discussed, scepticism of product labelling on the part of the consumer could also be an influential factor. This input from previous research therefore raises questions regarding how effective a labelling system could be, however the debate itself shows that informing consumers via a label has potential to be successful, but refinement in execution is needed.

Regardless of the method used to communicate to consumers, participants expressed that it is a combination of both text based narrative data and corresponding imagery that would be the most effective. This finding refers back to an earlier point made, where consumers want to be approached through multiple channels, where in this case text and imagery could work together to reinforce the message being communicated. Again this reinforcement technique relates to the literature of Berry and McEachern (2005), where multiple channels can be used, with each one acting as support and confirmation of the primary message.

Participants were also questioned on the type of information they would like to be made available by retailers regarding the social issues within the garment supply chain. The most popular factors were; supplier ethical standards, retailer code of conduct and minimum wage levels. When interpreting the data, it can be assumed that consumers do have an interest in the details of the companies CSR philosophy. In addition to this it is specific information regarding the factory workers and the retailer level of

compliance that is wanted. Therefore it can be concluded that CSR information is important to consumers and that they want to be informed regarding these issues. This relates directly back to a previous discussion, where many authors believe that consumers do not have enough information regarding ethical issues, and that this lack of information may lead to uninformed purchasing decisions being made (Ritch and Schroder, 2009; Preez, 2003).

Stage 4 – Retailer to Consumer Communication Study

The approach used towards the communication study allowed for several observations to be made regarding the way retailers currently publicise their CSR messages to their customers, many of which were regarding the level or type of information given. For example, it was noted that none of the five retailers surveyed provided any information regarding factory lists and minimal details of minimum wage standards and supply chain transparency. Whilst the rationale for this could be interpreted in many different ways, the preference of the retailer varied across the board. From the details provided in the retailer interviews, it could be concluded that a lot of information was not made public due to not only the complexities of the manufacturing supply chains but also in order to prevent the retailer from being tripped up in their levels of compliance. Payton (2013) reiterates this, stating that for big companies with dozens of factories it is very difficult to trace everything. Whilst in contrast to this, it was also found that the majority of the retailers surveyed were happy to communicate information regarding supplier ethical standards and details on freedom of association on their website. This illustrated that retailers are happy to disclose information on issues which they feel happy with their level of participation, but also that complex, more detailed issues such as supplier ethical standards are better communicated on a platform such as their website apposed to in-store communication, where messages need to be short and to the point.

The issue of branding came up again during this study, where it was observed that Company A and B were the only retailers of the five surveyed that chose to brand their CSR strategy in order to enhance the communication effectiveness. This also correlated with the two retailers also being the most active in communicating information in-store. When digging deeper into this observation finding, it could be assumed that due to the visual branding of the CSR strategy of Company A and B, it is easier to communicate and thus observe within a store environment. The repetition of visual identity will also make it recognisable and easier to interpret for customers. In

literature, the issue of branding arises with Fairtrade as a brand is discussed. Ritch and Schroder (2009) believes that it is a good example of a successful labelling initiative, with the logo said to be recognizable and understood by consumers. This branding is also said to be responsible for an increase sale of goods marketed under the Fairtrade label. Therefore the conclusion that can be reached is that the branding of CSR messages enhances the communication of information to consumers.

Through the observations made within the individual retailer stores, it was seen that Company E chose to communicate their CSR strategy predominantly through a specific collection. Positioned in the foyer of the store, the ethical and sustainable message was marketed through several additional channels including posters, swing tags and advertising. The collection was also set apart from the remaining garments in-store, which could be interpreted as conveying the wrong message to customers. This highlighting of socially responsible product was also found within a printed catalogue of Company E, where a coding system was used for garments that complied with one or more of the retailers CSR activities. This coding system was then briefly explained at the back of the catalogue. Through the segregation of the socially responsible range, the more savvy customers would begin to question the ethical and sustainable credentials of the remaining collections both in the printed catalogue and in-store. Consequentially turning the otherwise positive socially responsible message into a negative marketing ploy. When speaking to the CSR representative from Company E, they explained this decision due to consumers going to store to be inspired rather than to be educated. As the rationale behind the marketing of the collection, inspiring consumers appears an effecting method of CSR communication, however the segregation of such a collection remains questionable. However concentrating on the more positive aspects of this approach to sharing information, it does support the perspectives of Niinimäki (2010) who believes that value in a garment can be created through meeting the need of a consumer and Arnold (2009) who thinks that the fashion market needs to combine ethical values with key trend aesthetics in order to be successful. Taking this into consideration, it can be concluded that the communication of ethical messages through aesthetic qualities could be an effective informative method to be used by retailers.

A further observation made during the in-store investigation, was the retailer preference of communicating environmental issues, in preference to ethical or social concerns. This directly relates back to the consumer confusion of the definition and difference between such issues, with the retailer communication preference possibly

contributing to the misunderstanding. The ease of accessible information to environmental issues could also increase the consumer's concern for sustainability issues in preference to social, however it could also be an indication that details of social or ethical activities could be communicated through alternative methods such as the website or in printed format. Whilst at this stage it can be assumed that retailers more actively communicate details regarding environmental issues, this is contradicted in literature with Strong (1996) believing that it is persistence and increased awareness levels that have changed the focus of the consumer from environmental to social. This relates back to an earlier finding discussed where it was found that consumers are concerned about ethical issues and actively want to be informed about them.

Stage 5 - Subsequent Retailer Case Studies (Company B, C, D and E)

This final stage of conclusions were developed when the findings from all five retailers surveyed were brought together using a cross-comparative approach. This therefore allowed the research question being addressed, to be answered from the perspective of the retailers. This approach also reflected the analysis framework being used throughout the study, where ethical fashion purchasing behaviour was investigated from both the perspective of the consumer and the retailer.

All five retailers were asked about the importance of communicating their CSR messages to their customers, whilst the methods used were also explored. It was found that two of the five retailers (Company A and D) thought that the communication of ethics should not be used as a marketing tool. This relates back to an earlier point discussed made by Company A, where they were conscious about using the communication of such issues being seen as potentially green washing or to their competitive advantage. When asked to elaborate further on this point, the CSR representative gave this as the rationale for not communicating any social or environmental issues to customers in-store, neither did they convey any CSR activities they are carrying out as a company. Whilst Company A believe that ethics should be a way of business not a one off promotional factor.

The final result found within the investigation refers back to debate of responsibility as discussed earlier from the perspective of the consumers. This time, retailers were directly asked if they thought it was their role as a responsible retailer to inform their customers not only of their CSR activities but also of wider ethical and sustainable

issues directly affecting the fashion industry. The majority of retailers, despite feeling responsibility over their manufacturing supply chain as discussed previously, do not feel it is their job to be the supplier of such information to their customers. This said, whilst all the retailers communicated their CSR activities to some degree or another, they did not feel this was necessary. Several of the participants interviewed went on to say that it was the role of an active consumer to seek the knowledge they wanted through alternative means such as NGO's. This relates directly to a point made by Payton (2013) who questions if it is brands that should accept responsibility for educating consumers or if it should be NGO's and government policy that should be the driving force. She goes on to make the point that if fashion brands go down the route of educating consumers, they become an NGO. Whilst Carrigan and Attalla (2001) believe that retailers should not inform, but convince their customers of their ethical integrity. This point reflects the point made by Company A, where the communication of ethical philosophy and actions is used as a creator of brand trust. Although Ritch and Schroder (2009) believe that more information is needed for consumers as they do not currently have enough information to make a well-informed decision.

7.2 Moving Towards a More Socially Responsible Future

From the research results and supporting literature, it can be concluded that retailers are in a strong and powerful position and therefore it is their influence that can catalyst real social change within the fashion industry. Retailers retain this ability to influence change due to their position, residing as a middle man between both the supplier of goods and the consumers that purchase these items in store or online. The relationship that retailers have with consumers is that not only of a provider of fashion garments but also a certain amount of control and influence over the purchasing process. With suppliers, their relationship is more customer based, where suppliers need to offer the right products at the right prices in order to maintain a business, working relationship. This again gives retailers a certain amount of power and control over the supply chain. In addition to the unique positioning of the relationships with the consumer and the supplier, retailers are often large organisations that in collaboration with others, could create leverage within the industry. It is this leverage or power to change that retailers must begin to use in order to change both the supply chain and the purchasing process to that of more socially responsible behaviour. They have the ability, through the

utilisation of their power, to influence consumers during the purchasing process, whilst also having the power to influence their supplier and manufacturer base through the supply chain.

Whilst in this powerful position, retailers are creating a barrier between consumers and suppliers, which is resulting in consumers often having little appreciation and the inability to relate to the social conditions in which fashion product is often made. With relatively low knowledge and awareness of the culture of a garment's country of origin, there remains a lack of connectivity between a consumer and workers employed in the garment industry. Consequently consumers have very little to no connectivity with the people who produced the garment and as a result, no empathy with their social situation. The lack of understanding means that consumer cannot relate to the culture in which garments are made or even imagine some of the poor working conditions often endured by garment workers. It is this lack of knowledge and connectivity that in the opinion of this research often inhibits a consumer from purchasing clothing responsibly. Figure 7.1 illustrates the current relationship that suppliers, retailers and consumers have and demonstrates the barrier that is being put in place by retailers between suppliers and consumers. This research suggest that with a better level of consumer understanding and awareness of the suppliers and the supply chain, consumers may shop more by their moral values and personal conscience, leading to a change in ethical purchasing behaviour.

This change in behaviour would be set to benefit all stakeholders involved, with each having advantages through moving towards more socially responsible business choices. The consequential benefits to each stakeholder has been detailed below:

- **Suppliers** – As discussed in Chapter 1, recent years have seen many social disasters such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory happen as a consequence of pressure being put on the supply chain as a result of the growth of the value sector and the fast fashion market. A change in consumer purchasing to more socially responsible product would help towards the prevention of such events reoccurring and aid in the development of better working conditions and fair living wages for garment workers.
- **Consumers** – Currently consumers are often presented with a choice, where they have to make trade off decisions between products which are ethical or

produced under good social conditions, and those which are potentially cheaper or more on trend but where details of the supply chain are not detailed. A conscious change made by retailers would eliminate this series of trade offs that often occur and consumers would be able to put their trust in a retailer to act responsibly.

- **Retailers** – As discussed throughout this investigation, high street retailers have been adapting business practices in order to be conducting their business in both a more socially and environmentally friendly way. Each of the five retailers involved within this research have CSR strategies currently being implemented and actively push these forward for further development and future activity. By improving the current relationship between their suppliers and consumers, retailers will have more demand for ethical product and can opposed to the segregation of such products, can begin to implement this throughout their business practice.

An example of this idea of increased understanding of the supply chain on behalf of the consumer would be a strategy idea from Company A, where customers could virtually see, via an application on their website, the impact consumer participation in a CSR initiative can have on the environment (previously discussed in Section 5.3.3b). The premise of this idea could also be implemented on a social level, aiding further knowledge and understanding of the manufacturing supply chain of fashion garments. In addition to this, initiatives such as the Blue Button Track and Trace scheme put into place by Made By (www.made-by.org) further supports the need for consumer supply chain transparency. Furthermore, recently launched social initiative Durated (www.durated.com), described as an informed shopping experience for high quality design, designed by stories. This website aims to provide shoppers with the narrative of the supply and manufacture of goods prior to purchase. The way this is presented is a real unique selling point, further reinforcing that customers want to know the story behind products they purchase. It is this kind of initiative that this research supports for the high street, fashion industry.

7.2.1 Contribution to New Knowledge

When approaching this study, the consumer and the retailer have been heavily considered in terms of the purchasing process. The roles they play within this decision making process have also been taken into consideration, alongside their position of

power to influence and initiate change within the industry. When considering these two parties, four issues with each can be highlighted that is currently preventing further social responsible purchasing, these are as follows:

Consumers

1. Whilst it has been evidenced that consumers do have a certain level of knowledge and awareness regarding social issues effecting the garment supply chain, they do not always implement this knowledge to influence their purchasing decision process.
2. Through both the primary and secondary data collection process, a fundamental consumer misunderstanding has been demonstrated with the term ethical. This has also highlighted the confusion on distinguishing issues that refer to predominantly environmental or social problems.
3. Although consumers do have a certain level of knowledge of social issues, it is apparent that due to a lack of information communicated, they do not have enough knowledge or awareness to make a fully informed decision regarding their purchasing behaviour, potentially leading to ill or mis-informed decisions being made.
4. Throughout the investigation a reoccurring theme has been that consumer primarily purchase for aesthetic qualities. Where ethics may be seen as desirable, it is never a necessary quality in purchased fashion items. Therefore a further issue is that many consumers do not hold socially responsible qualities as having value during the purchasing process.

Retailers

1. From the five case study retailers investigated during this study, it can be seen that there is a distinct lack of CSR communication to their customers. Through the online and in-store communication study, it became evident that some retailers chose to not communicate in-store at all, whilst apparently trying to avoid green-washing or using such communication as a marketing tool.
2. During the analysis of communication methods currently being implemented, it was seen that retailers more actively communicate environmental messages opposed to social issues. This may be directly related to the consumer's confusion of such issues as previously discussed.
3. From work carried out with consumers and reiterated from literature, it became clear during the investigation that socially responsible fashion ranges are still struggling to shake of dated stigmatisms. Consumers still believe such product

to not be on trend or fashionable, a contributing factor to a lack of ethical fashion purchasing.

4. Consumer accessibility to socially responsible product has also been highlighted as an issue throughout the investigation. Consumers believe that online boutiques offer better ethical product and that a lack of product on the high street is contributing to consumers not being able to purchase according to their initial intentions.

Taking these key issues into consideration, alongside all the knowledge, both primary and secondary collated throughout the investigation a number of key findings can be summarised to contribute to new knowledge in the subject area:

- Consumers do not implement pre-requisite knowledge of social issues into their purchasing decisions
- There is a lack of information provided to consumers in order to allow an informed purchasing decision
- Consumers have very little to no understanding, connectivity and empathy with social aspects of the garment supply chain (garment workers)
- Consumer tribes no longer exist due to the unpredictable and fickle nature of consumer purchasing behaviour
- There is a lack of CSR communication on the part of the retailers
- There is a preference of the communication of environmental issues over social
- Ethical product is not being perceived as on-trend or fashionable
- High street accessibility to socially responsible product being poor or not available at all
- Confusion over the term ethical and the distinction between social and environmental issues
- Consumers see social responsibility as a desirable but not necessary quality in a garment

When considering these knowledge contributions it can be concluded that an increase of retailer CSR (corporate social responsibility) communication, can aid in the development of a relationship between the consumer and supplier to increase connectivity, understanding and empathy, in order to influence ethical fashion purchasing.

These contributions to new knowledge refer to the barrier that retailers are currently implementing between their consumer and supplier, giving them as a company the ultimate powerful position. It also suggests that further communication from retailers can help develop a relationship and therefore consumer understanding and empathy with the people who manufacture the items of clothing they purchase. This readjustment of interrelationship roles will aid the development of the ethical fashion market and allow consumers to implement their moral values, through increased knowledge and awareness to make more informed purchasing decisions.

7.2.2 Future Work Recommendations

Taking into consideration the problems highlighted previously with consumers and retailers, there needs to be a series of incremental changes put into place in order to ensure long-term change. The development of a relationship between consumers and supplier calls for further transparency in the garment supply chain, providing the consumers with a level of understanding of the condition in which the product they purchase has been made. This approach allows the creation of transparency and personalisation of garment manufacture, adding a human element to the supply chain.

This connection of suppliers to consumers could manifest itself in many different formats. For example, retailers could initiate consumer events allowing face-to-face contact with garment factory workers. This could be in the form of an in-store meet and greet initiative or more formally in a conference format, both facilitating life stories to be communicated directly from worker to consumer. Whilst this life-story approach is already being used by some companies, the website positioning and communication method being used could be limiting the full potential of the approach used. A communication technique currently being used outside of the fashion industry is Body Shop, who use press events to allow suppliers the company are currently working with, to come and share their story. Whilst this could be seen as a biased approach to promote the retailer, it also gave face-to-face contact between farmers who have an existing relationship with Body Shop, members of the UK press and ultimately the brand customers. It is to be acknowledged that the press do have an influence over consumers, however it is ultimately the consumers who make the purchasing decisions, regardless of the information provided by sources such as the press. This technique could be much more effective should consumers shopping in-store have this kind of face-to-face access.



Figure 7.1 - Supplier to Consumer Relationship

Outdoor clothing brand Patagonia is a good example of a retailer currently trying to give their customers transparency of their manufacturing supply chain. As a brand they actively encourage their customers to think before they buy, believing that it would be wrong to have such strong environmental and social morals whilst encouraging the public to purchase more. On their product website, Patagonia provide customers with a supply chain map, where details of the factory such as address (along with a photo of the factory), number of workers and the type of Patagonia product that specific factory currently produces. This approach entitled The Footprint Chronicles, allows consumers a step closer to the workers manufacturing the good they may potentially purchase, adding a certain degree of understanding and connectivity.

Another good example of best practice would be Made-By, who have developed a series of tools allowing consumers access to information regarding manufacturing supply chains. Up until December 2012, their Track & Trace scheme allowed consumers to see the different elements of the specific supply chain including manufacturing countries and suppliers. However the fact that this scheme has now been discontinued, may indicate that the complexities of the supply chain make this approach difficult as a sustainable method of information. Made By's Sustainable Supplier Database does however provide partner brands with the information needed to choose the right supplier they need.

Whilst strengths and weaknesses can be identified in existing schemes currently in place to provide consumers with a level of connectivity to the supply chain, there are several practical applications that this research could suggest for moving forward. In addition to the previously suggested face-to-face contact method, retailers could utilise communication methods deemed most effective from the work carried out with consumers during this investigation. The majority of participants thought that the most effective method of in-store communication was swing tags, therefore an emerging technique that could work would be the personalisation of the garment manufacturer through swing tag format. Initiatives entitled 'Brought to you by...' or 'Stitched for you by...' could allow scope for a series of life stories to be used, giving details of several factory workers as examples of people who have contributed to the manufacture of the garment. This scheme uses the real-life stories of workers as previously seen, however communicates them to the consumer audience in a much more effective way. Whilst it is to be acknowledged that the personalisation of the

supply chain is potentially challenging due to the many complexities involved, careful, rigorous implementation of such schemes could be used by conscious retailers.

Taking into consideration a time scale in accordance to implementation of these changes, short and long-term approaches have been used. From the analysis process used leading to the conclusions of the study, it was identified that there are four key areas of change that needed to be addressed, each of which encompass the problems identified for consumers and retailers, discussed earlier in the chapter. Prior to the consideration of time and implementation, these four areas for change have summarised in a problem-action table as seen below (Figure 7.2).

	Finding	Action
Consumer Knowledge	Consumers do not implement pre-requisite knowledge of social issues into their purchasing decisions	Retailers to use their position to create relationships between consumers and suppliers
	There is a lack of information provided to consumers in order to allow an informed purchasing decision	A direct connection to be made between product and CSR message
	Consumers have very little to no understanding, connectivity and empathy with social aspects of the garment supply chain	The creation of understanding and empathy through the development of a relationship between suppliers and consumers
	Consumer tribes no longer exist due to the unpredictable and fickle nature of consumer purchasing behaviour	Acknowledge that consumers are individual and that purchasing behaviour cannot be predicted or pre-empted through groupings
CSR Communication	There is a lack of CSR communication on the part of the retailers	CSR messages to be communicated through the aesthetics of a garment
	There is a preference of the communication of environmental issues over social	The use of innovative methods and approaches of communication to enhance the balance of issues
Product Provision	Ethical product is not being perceived as on-trend or fashionable	Building CSR activity into the way the retailer conducts their business, applying strategies to all goods sold, avoiding segregation of responsible products
	High street accessibility to socially responsible product being poor or not available at all	
Ethical Perceptions	Confusion over the term ethical and the distinguish between social and environmental issues	CSR messages to be simple and communicated in an easy to engage manner
	Consumers see social responsibility as a desirable but not necessary quality in a garment	The development of relationships with suppliers in order to create value in ethical attributes

Table 7.1 – Key findings and Actions

7.2.3 Short-term Changes

These suggested short-term changes are actions that can be implemented within a two year window. They aim to be relatively simple, quick and cheap to implement and can be put into action internally within a retailer. As short-term solutions, what they propose will not be an ideal long-term answer, but more of an incremental step that will allow for more long-term actions to be implemented in the future.

- **A direct connection to be made between product and CSR message**

From the online and in-store communication study carried out, it was seen that when retailers communicate CSR messages to their customers, they make very little connection between the message being shared and the products being sold. This is often due to the method of communication being used or that users are diverted away from the merchandise website to a micro, more business orientated site. Retailers could not only increase their level of communication here but also begin to engage the customer further through the product aesthetics. This approach would better inform consumers of social issues affecting the garment supply chain, allowing them to make a more informed decision. As a relatively simple change to make through a series of small changes such as CSR information being better positioned on the product website, this is a short term change that could be implemented quickly for maximum benefit.

- **CSR messages to be communicated using product aesthetics as a vehicle**

Throughout this research the idea that consumers purchase predominantly for aesthetics has been a reoccurring theme. This has also been highlighted in the problems found, where one of the factors inhibiting further ethical purchasing is a lack of trend-led or fashionable socially responsible product available. Whilst the segregation of ethical and non-ethical is not encouraged by this work, the communication of ethical messages through aesthetics could be a short-term solution that could be implemented relatively quickly. The Eco-Conscious Collect at H&M would be a good example of this, where the sustainable message is brought to the attention of customers through a limited range collection. Not only would this approach increase the retailer's communication of CSR messages, using specific ranges or collections could

aid in growing awareness and consumer knowledge until more long-term and innovative solutions can be put into place.

- **The use of innovative methods and approaches to better communicate ethical or social issues in fashion**

Evidence from the primary collection process has shown that ethics need to be disseminated to a wider audience with care in order to avoid green-washing or to appear to be using ethics as a marketing tool. Whilst swing tags and communication through aesthetics can provide relatively short-term more effective methods, long term, retailers need to think of more innovative approaches to really engage consumers and push the industry forward. With this innovative approach, retailers could begin to communicate social issues in alignment with more environmental focused problems, moving away from sustainability concerns being more readily publicised. This approach could also begin to differentiate between the key differences between environmental and social issues, providing consumers with further knowledge to address their confusion.

- **CSR messages to be simple and communicated in an easy to engage manner**

Again this is an adjustment of current communication methods that is relatively simple can be implemented in the short term. Consumers and retailers alike through this study believe that any CSR messages or activity shared should be simple, allowing the consumer to engage at a level that is best suited to them. It is simple, to-the-point pieces of information that the consumer will retain for future use. This action aims to address the consumer confusion regarding the term ethical, and again begin to distinguish ethical issues from environmental.

7.2.4 Long-term Changes

These suggested long-term changes are going to take between two to five years to implement and require real time and commitment from all parties involved. It is these along with collaboration from a number of stakeholders that will really begin to move the industry to a more socially responsible future.

- **Retailers to use their position to create relationships between consumers and suppliers**

As previously discussed, retailers are in a unique and powerful position in the industry, with the ability to influence both consumers in the purchasing process and suppliers through the supply chain. However they also act as a barrier between consumers and suppliers, resulting in the two parties having no relationship or understanding of the other. This is potentially having a negative effect on ethical fashion purchasing, as consumers have no connectivity or empathy with the people who produce the clothes they purchase. This research believes that retailers through further communication of CSR messages, using some of the innovative methods previously discussed, could help in the development of this relationship. This interrelationship development is a long-term commitment that would need the full cooperation and engagement of both retailers and suppliers. With this increased knowledge of suppliers, it is hoped that consumers would begin to purchase with their true moral values and apply their conscience when making purchasing decisions.

- **Building CSR activity into the way the retailer conducts their business, applying strategies to all goods sold, avoiding segregation of responsible products**

This actions refers to the way a retailer as a responsible company integrates CSR commitments and actions into their business. Whilst in the short-term the segregation of ethical ranges may work towards enhancing the consumer awareness of issues affecting the garment supply chain, alongside customer engagement, in the long-term larger changes have to be made. This incremental step can be seen as the ultimate goal for retailers, moving towards implementing the social philosophy of the company through every operational area of the business. This would aim to address product provision issues such as accessibility of ethical product on the high street and also the lack of trend led, fashionable product made available. This new approach would eradicate the ethical and non-ethical approaches through the assurance that the implementation of CSR through the company has resulted in all products being sold being produced responsibly.

- **The development of relationships with suppliers in order to create value in ethical attributes**

This action reflects one discussed previously, where a case was made for the development of a relationship between consumer and supplier. This action however lays emphasis on how this relationship could bring value to ethical attributes in garments, and the consumer appreciation of this. From the research found within this investigation, it can be seen that consumers purchase predominantly for aesthetics and whilst ethics is a desirable attribute, it is not currently seen as essential. This indicates a lack of consumer value in ethical attributes, however through increased awareness and insights into the supply chain, it is thought that this value in socially responsible manufacturing would be developed. As this stage relies on the development and implementation of the relationships between consumers and suppliers, it can be seen as a long-term action that will rely on other incremental steps discussed before it can be successful.

7.3 Future Work

As previously discussed, whilst this investigation has answered several key research areas contributing to development in the area of ethical fashion purchasing, it has also highlighted areas for further development and inquiry. The following discussion will elaborate on these areas for further research, providing scope for future development in research papers or funding bids.

Within Chapter 3 of the thesis, the limitations of the methodological approach taken were discussed. For the proposal of future work, addressing a number of these limitations and delimitations would be the first suggestion. With the research carried out with consumers, further investigation could be conducted with a wider scope of consumer groups, involving participants from a larger range of different backgrounds. The consumer focus group completed saw participants predominantly from a higher education background (students, tutors etc.), however carrying similar tasks with a varying groups could provide further insights into the purchasing process. The group initially used also had a certain level of prerequisite knowledge of ethical issues affecting the fashion industry due to the exploration of the intention-behaviour gap, it would be interesting to again test similar lines of inquiry with individuals who do not necessarily have this primary awareness. This contrast of participants could also allow for a comparison to be made, to further investigate how consumer knowledge or

awareness levels influence their purchasing behaviour. This type of consumer research could again be taken to a wider level by introducing a further attribute to be tested, considering the geographical location of the participants. The initial consumer focus group was carried out in Edinburgh, however this could again be carried out in several national or international locations to determine if geography is a contributing factor to ethical fashion purchasing behaviour.

With the research carried out with the five retailer case studies, again variations could be further tested to provide scope for further work. For the purposes of the study, five retailer participants was deemed appropriate, however it would again be interesting to see the effect the choice of the companies used has had on the final results. All the retailers surveyed were high street businesses, providing mid-market, women's wear to the mass market. Further investigation could adapt this criteria, with market level, gender of clothing and company size tested for the effect this has had on the conclusions reached. Again this retailer approach could be taken to a national and international level, not solely concentrating on the provision of fashion to a UK market.

As this thesis concentrated heavily on the communication and relationship between consumers and suppliers, a further point which could be elaborated on further in the future is the inclusion of consumers in the communication study. In the investigation, this was conducted by the researcher from the point of view of a customer, however future work could be to carry this exercise out with consumers, providing a more accurate and unbiased set of results to how a consumer finds and perceives CSR information being provided by retailers. This would also facilitate the two predominant parties studied during the investigation and CSR communication methods to be researched in tandem, gaining an insight into the workings of the techniques currently being used.

7.4 Conclusion

This investigation set out to investigate the process of ethical fashion purchasing from the perspective of both parties involved: the consumers and the retailer. Positioning this research on the high street, allowed questions to be posed regarding the provision of ethical or socially responsible fashion available to consumers, alongside the

communication methods used to inform customers of retailer CSR values. Through a mixed methods approach utilised a number of interesting conclusions were reached.

From working with groups of consumers it was found that they generally do not understand the term ethical and the complexities the use of this term can indicate. Further to this, it was also found that consumers also confuse terms or phrases that used in reference to environmental and social issues. This fundamental misunderstanding could reflect the fickle nature of consumer fashion purchasing, not being helped through an overall lack of CSR communication on the part of retailers. In addition to this, it was observed that retailers more widely communicate issues regarding the environment in preference to those that refer to ethical or social activity. Throughout the study, it was evidenced that consumers purchase based on aesthetic qualities of a garment, with the participants surveyed acknowledging that they perceived purchasing second hand at charity or vintage stores to be more ethical behaviour than when purchasing on the high street. This finding demonstrates that whilst there is some confusion and lack of clarity, that consumers do have a level of awareness and knowledge when it comes to understanding ethical or non-ethical purchasing behaviour. However, during the Ethical Scale exercise conducted, it was also found that participants did have a certain level of ethical awareness they did not always implement this when it came to making purchasing decisions. This was demonstrated by participants ethically rating high street bought product, low on the ethical scale, with the rationale given as the purchases were reflecting the morals of the fast fashion market.

When looking at the communication of CSR messages and activity, from the retailers surveyed, the majority of whom acknowledged that consumers purchased purely for aesthetics, and thus communicated this accordingly. For example, two of the five retailers surveyed chose to communicate aesthetics through garment ranges that were predominantly a beautiful product that also happened to have ethical or environmentally responsible qualities. This again reflects a different on-going debate, of who is responsible to drive the industry forward to a more socially responsible future, that of the consumer, or of the retailer. From the data gathered it could be concluded that retailers are in a unique and powerful position and have the ability to influence both consumers during the purchasing process but also the suppliers in the garment supply chain. Therefore, this research believes that it is the role of the retailer to not only inform consumers of their CSR activity, and thus improving consumer awareness and knowledge of such issues but to also drive the industry forward for

change. From the work carried out with retailers, it was found that whilst they acknowledged responsibility for their manufacturing supply chain, they did not think it was their role as a responsible retailer to inform their customer base of their CSR strategy. However it was also found that consumers rely on initiatives and campaigns to inform them of ethical issues affecting the industry, whilst on the other hand it can be argued that if retailers take on the role of educating the consumer, they move towards playing the role of an NGO (non-government organisation).

It can be concluded that whilst there are still some on-going debates to be addressed further in future work, this research posed and answered some vital questions when working in the area of ethical fashion purchasing. The investigation was unique in its approach due to the problem being addressed through the study of the consumer and retailer simultaneously. Although several of the issues addressed have been previously explored, both the conclusions reached and the approaches taken have in existing research not significantly contributed to solving the problems identified. It is hoped that the innovative approach taken in this investigation and the findings and conclusions reached will contribute to the development of work in this area. Furthermore through increased CSR communication and the development of a relationship between consumers and the manufacturing supply chain, the creation of understanding and empathy will influence ethical fashion purchasing, driving the industry forward to a more socially responsible future.

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Appendix 1

**Online Consumer Survey –
Participation Request Evidence**

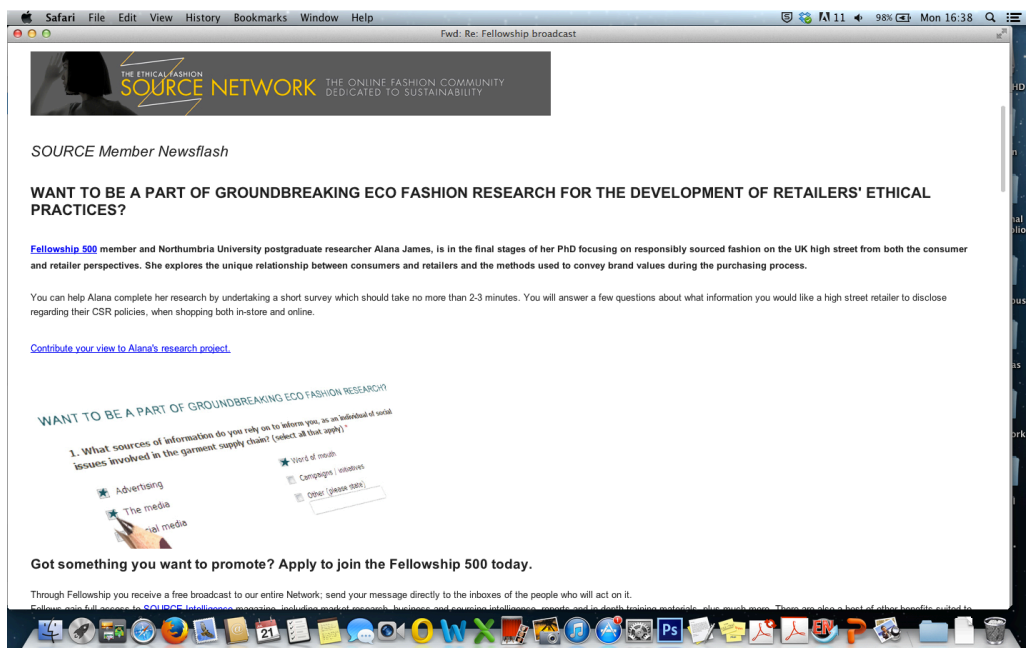


Figure A1 – Online Consumer Survey – Participation Request (Email)



Figure A2 – Online Consumer Survey – Participation Request (Twitter)

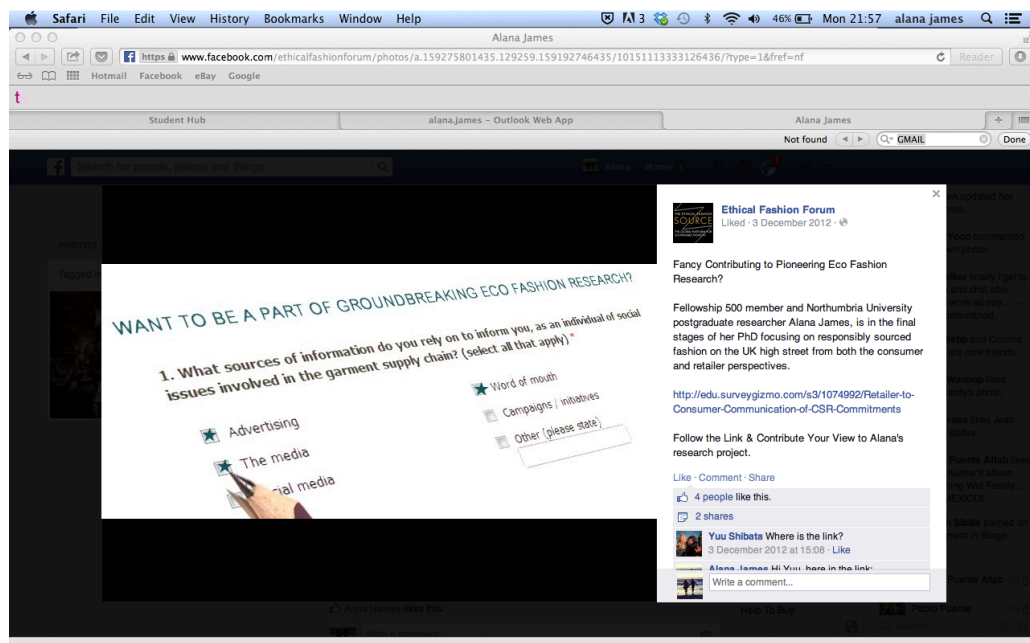























Figure A3 – Online Consumer Survey – Participation Request (Facebook)


Appendix 2
CSR Communication Study – Online

What CSR information do retailers provide consumers with via their website?

	Supplier Ethical Standards A set of minimum standards of compliance given to suppliers prior to manufacture	Factory Lists Specific information given regarding the factories used to manufacture products for the retailer i.e. names, location etc.	Retailer Code of Conduct A set of values that the retailer works to reflecting the philosophy of the company as a brand	Audit Process Details The process undertaken by internal/external auditors to assess the ethical standards of a factory	Minimum Wage The minimum amount of money workers can be paid in accordance to living costs in specific countries	Freedom of Association Giving workers the right to come together with others to collectively pursue common interests	Supplychain Transparency Making all stages of the supply chain explicit and public	Summary
Company A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of detail regarding their CSR action plan given, however specific details such as audit process or suppliers are not included. The website is very engaging for customers but the more knowledgeable consumer may require more information. Specific types of products mentioned even though the CSR website directs consumers away from the product website.
Company B	 The retailer Code of Conduct must be adhered to.	X	 In alignment with the ETI base code - however this is not detailed.	X	 Legal minimum wage mentioned, however country specifics not detailed.	 Compliant, with promotion used as business case.	 Homeworkers are acknowledge due to the nature of the embellishment work - no further details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very engaging website that communicates the look and feel of the brand well. The details that are provided appear in a word document format which does not communicate effectively the CSR work they are carrying out. The website throughout appears quite product focused, with the highly embellished nature of many effecting the CSR values.
Company C	 The supplier Code of Conduct must be adhered to.	 The number and type of factories included, however no specific details given.	 Next code of conduct detailed. ETI base code also acknowledged.	 Summary of audits included in their annual CSR reports.	 Legal minimum wage mentioned, however country specifics not detailed.	 Compliant and mentioned in their Code of Conduct	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good level of detail, however very business orientated with no product link or imagery. Very un-engaging for readers. Navigates the consumer away from the product website to a corporate version, providing no direct link with the products they sell and the values they promote.
Company D	 Details given in the Code of Conduct document.	X	 Available to download from the company website.	 Auditing process mapped and explained (Code of Conduct)	X	 Details given in the Code of Conduct document.	 A summary of suppliers given but not specific details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All brands are covered in the Company Code of Conduct with specific brands not individually mentioned. A good level of detail is given but documents are wordy and jargon loaded, generally not very engaging. No product link made to the CSR work carried out by the retailer.
Company E	 The company Code of Conduct must be adhered to.	X	 Available to download from the website.	 The details of the auditing process are provided.	X	 Detailed in the completed commitments in 2011.	 A summary of the roles provided - not specific details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website appears engaging to the consumer with a number of communication channels used. A good balance of statistics and summary information used. Navigation through the site is fairly complex. Directs consumers away from the product website to the corporate version.


































X = No


 = To some extent

 = Yes

Appendix 3
CSR Communication Study – In-store

How do High-street Fashion Retailers Communicate their CSR Commitments to their Customers In-Store?

	Swing Tags Labels attached to the outside of a garment, usually featuring price and brand name	Care Labels Fabric labels which are attached in the side seams of a garment	Carrier Bags Any plastic or paper bags which are given to customers to carry their bought goods	Leaflets / magazines Any paper based publications made available to customers in-store	Window Displays Any posters, window vinyls or visual merchandising able to be seen from outside the store	Posters / Advertisements Any internal interior decorations or posters able to be seen in-store	Initiatives Events or concessional ranges featured in-store to promote the company CSR strategy	Summary
Company A Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 22/01/13	 Only seen on Fairtrade garments.	 Features Wash at 30 Degrees & Recycle	 CSR strategy logo and website address featured.	 CSR initiatives and events fully featured.		 CSR initiative banners and commitments displayed.	 CSR initiatives featured heavily throughout the clothing departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company A communicate certain aspects of their CSR strategy to their customers well. The recently launched CSR initiative could be seen in several places in-store, with feature also in their monthly magazine. Ethical commitments were less well publicised, with only the Fairtrade swing tags being used.
Company B Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 22/01/13	 All Company B garments have a specific CSR strategy branded swing tag		 The CSR strategy brand features on all bags	 Leaflets are fully recyclable, bio degradable from well-managed forests and use chlorine free paper.		 Small signs next to Fairtrade and charity partnership garments.	 Profits from Fairtrade garments used in a charity partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Company B store communicated the brand philosophy well with the CSR strategy brand appearing on separate swing tags and being explained. Other initiatives could be seen throughout the store, where consumers could choose to read or not. The nature of specialist homeworkers needed for embellishment was also explained through the use of swing tags.
Company C Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 22/01/13		 Features wash it at 30 degrees		 Featured in the catalogue but not smaller pamphlets		 Ethical trade logo behind the till points		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-store Company D communicate very little to their customers, however they do have a unique channel of communication in the form of their catalogue, providing consumers time to browse this at home. An ethical trade logo is featured in store but provides no explanation or further information.
Company D Eldon Square Newcastle upon Tyne 22/01/13		 Features Save energy, wash at 30 Degrees		 Not Available				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company D communicated very little to their customers in store, with their featured care labels only being used on some garments. Several channels are not being utilised, with no social aspect being mentioned.
Company E Northumberland street Newcastle upon Tyne 22/01/13	 On the ethical and sustainable range the swing tags explain the rationale and commitment targeted			 Use of sustainable materials indicated using a green dot, not fully explained.			 The ethical and sustainable collection featured in larger stores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst Company E heavily rely on their specific ethical and sustainable collection to communicate their CSR strategy to customers, very few unrelated messages are featured. The coding feature within the catalogue was a good way to relate product to CSR strategy, but the way in which the product complied with this was not fully explained.

 = No

 = To some extent

 = Yes

Appendix 4

Findings and Conclusions

Research Stage 1

	Research Question	Finding Statement	Interpretations (different meanings)	Conclusions	Evidence (in the thesis)	Relationship to Literature
<p>METHOD: STAGE 1: CONSUMER FOCUS GROUP</p> <p>A series of four group activities with between 17 and 35 ethically aware consumers, with each activity addressing one or more of the study research questions</p>	<p>Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?</p>	The majority of participants expressed the opinion that ethical fashion is not perceived as fashionable or on trend	1. The ethical fashion market is still struggling to shake off dated stigmatisms of responsibly sourced clothing - this could be effecting the purchasing behaviour of the fashion conscious market	The aesthetics of ethical garments, prevents consumers from purchasing responsibly	Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 Pg. no. 102	In addition to a price reduction consumers would also like further information and more choice in the range of clothing available (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). Niinimäki (2010) believes that the lack of trend-led ethical clothing is responsible for the limited consumer interest in ethical issues.
		The consumer has to possess the drive and motivation in order to purchase fashion responsibly	1. A lack of this motivation could be preventing consumers from purchasing responsibly - also related to perceived effectiveness 2. The drive for good behaviour must come from the consumer 3. How and where from do consumers get such a drive?	Ethical Fashion purchasing relies on the consumer having drive and motivation for social issues	Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 Pg. no. 102	A moral relativist, who believes that all people do not hold or obey by the same moral and ethics during their day-to-day lives (Baggini & Fosl, 2007). Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt (2010) believe that the term ethical consumer needs to be approached with caution as there are many influential factors that can effect the decision making process. A lack of ethical behaviour is said to often be due to low awareness levels and an overall lack of knowledge (Ellen, 1994). Growing levels of ethical awareness is due to academic interest, increased media levels and a greater choice of ethical products (Newholm & Shaw, 2007). Ritch & Schroder (2009) believe that a fully informed consumer is unattainable.
		Participants background (age, gender, occupation and salary) did not appear to directly impact their purchasing behaviour	1. All participants buy both second hand and high street, fast fashion 2. The market level participants shop at did not differ in accordance to background details 3. Background is not a influential factor in purchasing behaviour	Purchasing behaviour is not directly effected by personal background (age, gender, salary, etc.)	Chapter 4 Section 4.3.3 Pg. no. 107	It is to be acknowledged that every consumer is individual regardless of their background and interests, and therefore the key is to identity their specific needs (Barrie, 2009). There is little consistency in demographics and consequential behaviour (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010). Szmigin, Carrigan & McEachern (2009) reflect this individual approach recognizing that a flexible decision making process needs to be utilised, treating each case as individual whilst considering the contextual and social factors effecting different situations.
		There was a negative correlation when comparing price to ethical rating or garments (as price decreased, ethical rating increased)	1. An increase in price does not reflect a higher ethical perceptions 2. Monetary value does not contribute to the creation of the personal value of a garment	Price does not reflect value in ethical perceptions	Chapter 4 Section 4.3.3 Pg. no. 111	Cowe & Williams (2010) also question this trade-off of ethics for price asking are ethics overwhelmed by value for money, as price dominates most shopping decisions. The recession has had a huge impact on consumers and their purchasing behaviour, with a large proportion of consumers now favouring the value end of the fashion market (Ritch & Schroder, 2009).
		The majority of participants (13/15) thought that aesthetics is the most important factor when purchasing fashion	1. If a garment is not aesthetically pleasing, consumers will not purchase, regardless of ethical attributes	Consumers purchase fashion based on aesthetics	Chapter 4 Section 4.4.3 Pg. no. 115	Consumers are said to care more about the colour of a trainer, for example, than the condition in which it had been produced (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010). Niinimäki (2010) believes that the lack of trend-led ethical clothing is responsible for the limited consumer interest in ethical issues.
		Social issues were said to be the key promotional driver for consumers to purchase fashion responsibly	1. This is only applicable when consumers decide they want to purchase responsibly (key driver when purchasing responsibly not most important factor)	Consumers knowledge of social issues motivates responsible purchasing	Chapter 4 Section 4.5.3 Pg. no. 121	It is acknowledged that consumers do not currently have enough information and understanding of the term ethical to make a fully informed purchasing decision (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). A moral relativist, who believes that all people do not hold or obey by the same moral and ethics during their day-to-day lives (Baggini & Fosl, 2007). It has been found that there are more ethically conscious consumers than previously thought (Szmigin, Carrigan & McEachern, 2009), with 57% of consumers claiming that they would not shop somewhere if the store or brand had affiliations with child labour (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). It is said that well-informed consumers are challenging retailers in their ethics (Strong, 1996), taking a much more hands-on approach to demanding the availability of ethical goods. A lack of ethical behaviour is said to often be due to low awareness levels and an overall lack of knowledge (Ellen, 1994). The 2010 Co-operative Ethical Consumerism report states that consumers are highly aware of ethical issues and are ready to put their money where their mouths are (Cowe & Williams, 2010).
		The majority of participants (11/15) think that the interior appearance of a store can influence their purchasing behaviour Advertising was the most popular answer when participants were asked to indicate how they think retailers could boost consumers ethical knowledge	1. Consumers take notice of in-store visuals when shopping 2. This could be utilized by retailers to influence purchasing behaviour and increase consumer awareness levels	In-store visuals could encourage consumers to purchase responsibly	Chapter 4 Section 4.5.3 Pg. no. 125/6	
	<p>Question 2: Why does the intention-behaviour gap exist in ethical fashion purchasing?</p>	Consumers illustrated a key mis-understanding of the term 'ethical', through the contribution of terminology associated with the environment	1. Consumers do not understand the difference between social and environmental terminology 2. This could be due to environmental issues being communicated more by retailers/organisations etc.	The misunderstanding of ethical issues causes inconsistent purchasing behaviour	Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 Pg. no. 101	The definition of ethical has become an issue with factors often being subjective or situational (Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2010). The lack of precision in defining this area has resulted in an array of inter-related terminology being used (Szmigin, Carriagan & McEachern, 2009). The term ethical has been utilized to cover a range of activities in terms of the clothing industry including; worker rights, transport, chemicals used and the actual process of the garment (FEI, 2010). Due to the whole of the supply chain not being covered by many certification, it can be contradictory and misleading for the consumer (FEI, 2010). The term ethical is far too broad in its definition, too loose in its operations and too moral in any other stance (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010). Its not that people dont care but they feel overwhelmed and confused (Confino, 2013)
		Participants said the reason they often did not purchase responsibly was due to ethical clothing not being fashionable or on-trend	1. Consumers could have the intention to purchase responsibly, however due to the poor aesthetics of garments available, behaviour may differ, thus the IB gap occurs	Poor design/aesthetics causes consumers to purchase inconsistently	Chapter 4 Section 4.5.3 Pg. no. 123	In addition to a price reduction consumers would also like further information and more choice in the range of clothing available (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). Niinimäki (2010) believes that the lack of trend-led ethical clothing is responsible for the limited consumer interest in ethical issues.
		The majority of participants said that style and price were the key factors inhibiting consumers from purchasing fashion responsibly				
		The consumer has to possess the drive and motivation in order to purchase fashion responsibly	1. A lack of motivation, or perceived effectiveness could provide reasoning behind inconsistent ethical purchasing behaviour	A lack of drive/motivation to purchase ethically can cause inconsistent purchasing behaviour	Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 Pg. no. 102	A moral relativist, who believes that all people do not hold or obey by the same moral and ethics during their day-to-day lives (Baggini & Fosl, 2007). Ellen (1994) thinks consumers are not as knowledgeable as originally thought, and not aware enough to make an informed decision. This cynicism has also been said to extend towards the brand or retailer behind the ethical claims, with Cowe & Williams (2010) believing that corporate cynicism, consumer disillusionment and the disinterested generation of consumers could kill off the ethical movement.
	<p>Question 3: How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?</p>	The majority of participants (14/15) thought that websites online provide better ethical ranges than high street stores	1. This could provide potential reasoning behind the IB gap, as consumers may not have access to ethical ranges on the average high street	Access issues to ethical products on the high street contributes to consumers inconsistent purchasing behaviour	Chapter 4 Section 4.5.3 Pg. no. 124	Supermarkets have been forced through consumer demand to provide ethical alternatives, could the high street go the same way? Ritch & Schroder (2009) There has been a lot of literature published regarding the high street not offering adequate amount of ethical alternatives or options (Ritch & Schroder, 2009, Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Portas (2011) highlighted that the high street has not kept up with the number of large changes that have occurred in recent years. The ethical food and cosmetic market appear to be catered for but fashion remains lagging behind (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that consumers do not need to be inconvenienced and that ethical fashion products need to be readily available for purchase. A further issue that is often said to impede further ethical behaviour is the lack of choice and availability (Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2010, Niinimäki, 2010, Arnold, 2009, Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Scholl et. Al. (2010) believes that the high street provides a lack of ethically friendly products. Brands have failed to align themselves with changes in society (Confino, 2013).
		Consumers illustrated a key mis-understanding of the term 'ethical', through the contribution of terminology associated with the environment	1. This indicates that consumers do not have a good awareness level of ethical issues 2. Consumers do not differentiate between ethical/environmental 3. This mis-understanding could influence behaviour in a negative way	Consumers do not understand the difference between social/environmental issues effecting the fashion industry	Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 Pg. no. 101	The definition of ethical has become an issue with factors often being subjective or situational (Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2010). The lack of precision in defining this area has resulted in an array of inter-related terminology being used (Szmigin, Carriagan & McEachern, 2009). The term ethical has been utilized to cover a range of activities in terms of the clothing industry including; worker rights, transport, chemicals used and the actual process of the garment (FEI, 2010). Due to the whole of the supply chain not being covered by many certification, it can be contradictory and misleading for the consumer (FEI, 2010). The term ethical is far too broad in its definition, too loose in its operations and too moral in any other stance (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010).
		All garments surveyed were ethically rated between 1-9, with no high street garments rated higher than 6 and all second hand garments between 5-9	1. Indicates that second hand is perceived as more ethical than purchasing fashion on the high street 2. No garment was ethically rated as perfect	Purchasing second hand is more ethical than buying new garments on the high street No garment can be perfect in	Chapter 4 Section 4.3.3 Pg. no. 107	Fashion consumers are choosing vintage as low impact clothing (Siegle, 2013). Vintage is the antithesis of throwaway fashion and displaces the need for new virgin fibres (Siegle, 2013). It saves clothing from going to landfill and satisfies a lust for new purchases without buying fast fashion (Siegle, 2013).

Appendix 5

Findings and Conclusions

Research Stage 2

	Research Question	Finding Statement	Interpretations (different meanings)	Conclusions	Evidence	Relationship to Literature
METHOD: STAGE 2: INITIAL CASE STUDY A three-week internship carried out with the ethical trade team in Company A. Observations and semi-structured interviews with company employees occurred.	Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?	Company A believes that as a retailer they are in a unique and powerful position to influence both their customers and their suppliers	1. Company A could influence consumers to purchase responsibly 2. Company A could influence their suppliers to be more socially compliant	Retailers hold the key to influencing ethical fashion purchasing	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.1 Pg. no. 142 Section 5.3.3 Pg. no. 145	Fox (2005) asks if it is the retails giants that dictate how we shop, or the other way around. Brands with a strong vision, USP (unique selling point) and ethos are said to be the most successful, not those who extend and adapt their range of supplied goods to fit a market (Arnold, 2009). Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt (2010) highlight that the shift retailers are making to Fairtrade or organic goods does not indicate consumer choice but illustrates that it is ultimately the retailers decision to make this change. If the choice lies with the retailers then it may be on their part to only provide ethical choices to consumers (Szmigin, Carrigan & McEachern, 2009). This again relates to a different discussion point debating the effectiveness of consumer demand on improving worker rights (FEI, 2010). Consumer group 'style and social statuses - seeking aspirational's represents a significant opportunity for forward thinking brands to unite consumerism with environmental and social values (Confino, 2013).
		There is a disparity in participant opinion if the responsibility of CSR action lies with the consumer or the retailer	1. Employees within the same company could be working to different agendas 2. This could effect the success of the CSR work being carried out 3. This could effect the direction of the work being carried out			
	Question 4: How do retailers implement their CSR philosophy throughout their business?	When approaching implementation of CSR strategy across employee levels, there is a disparity in opinion between top management and lower level workers	1. Could indicate that what the company say they're doing and what they're actually doing is different 2. This also highlighted the disparity between the company employee beliefs of the CSR philosophy 3. Could indicate that the priorities of employees at various levels differs	A top down CSR implementation is not an effective communication strategy	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.4 Pg. no. 147	As consumers begin to become not only more aware of social issues effecting the fashion supply chain but to also care about such factors, retailers need to se the benefits behind the application of ethical values through their CSR programmes (Wales, Gorman and Hope, 2010) It is thought that there is a relationship between CSR and the financial performance of a company (Zadek and Chapman, 1998) The application of CSR to a business has in the past been described as long-term profit maximising (Carroll, 1999; Davis, 1973).
		Employees are updated with CSR strategy developments from a top-down approach (management down)	1. This relies on the accuracy of the parties passing on information 2. Information could become diluted or altered 3. Could indicate that the importance of the information being passed on is not great			
	Question 5: What methods are utilized by retailers to communicate their CSR message to consumers?	Company A understands that preaching to consumers is not an effective method of communicating ethics	1. Consumers do not want these messages communicated in this way 2. Company A realises that there are more effective ways of informing customers of their CSR actions	The communication strategy of ethical issues needs careful consideration	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.1 Pg. no. 142	However diverse the labelling debate, most researchers, academics and other parties are in agreement that there needs to be dramatic changes and advancements in the garment labelling sector (Ritch & Schroder, 2009, FEI, 2010, Newholm & Shaw, 2007, Berry & McEachern, 2005). Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt (2010) believe that for an ethical market to take shape, consumers need to be knowledgeable participants, not just label readers. Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that consumers react better to negative information in preference to those of a positive nature, whilst Arnold (2009) thinks that clever positioning of advertising could be a more effective technique. 'It is vital for companies to understand the unique, market level nuances to effectively participate in the CSR interchange. A one size fits all approach just wont work' (Childe, 2013).
		Customers respond effectively to reward schemes and incentives when encouraging responsible purchasing behaviour	1. Company A uses these strategies to encourage responsible behaviour 2. These schemes promote further consumption through vouchers as rewards, whilst this is positive from a business perspective, does it promote the wrong message?	Consumers like to be rewarded for responsible behaviour	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.3 Pg. no. 146	Effective CSR communication is said to have an effect on consumers perception of a certain brand or retailer (Worcester and Dawkins, 2005).
		Ethics of a product is always marketed as a secondary message	1. Company A understands that consumers purchase on aesthetics 2. Ethics is seen as a bonus but not a necessity when making a purchase 3. Ethics are communicated to enhance brand trust	Ethical attributes of a product is desirable but not necessary	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.2 Pg. no. 144	Since the economic downturn in 2001 the ethical consideration on the part of the consumer has dropped considerably (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005). 'People start from self, spread to family and community and only then to planet, we are programmed to protect ourselves and others close to us' (Arnold, 2009). Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that the consumer importance of self continues to emerge, where if unethical behaviour affected them personally, they may care more. Foxall (2005)maintains that awareness of an issue will only come if consumers think it is sufficiently important compared to other imperatives in their lives. Chris Davis(2007) from the Financial Times highlights this comparison of price to other influential aspects; 'The decision to buy an ethical brand over a conventional alternative is also influenced by a number of other factors including; brand awareness, the importance of other product criteria, the extent to which buying and ethical product implies an inconvenience or product compromise, if at all, and of course price' Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that the most important purchasing criteria is price, value, quality and brand familiarity. The fact that ethical is not one of the purchasing priorities indicates that consumers will look for all of these factors in a product before ethics is even considered. Niinimaki (2010) reiterates this point claiming that people subconsciously make decisions benefitting either their individual or collective needs. Whilst working within a purchasing criteria a series of trade offs occur, deciding what factors are compromised for others (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007). Carey, et. al (1999, p.289) describes this as a decisional balance scale, where trade offs between anticipated gains and losses associated with behaviour are decided.
		A multi-channel approach is used to communicate CSR initiatives or events (social media, email, leaflets etc.)	1. No one method would be effective, it is a combination of the channels used that is the most successful 2. Each method supports another in consistently reinforcing the CSR message	It takes a combined method approach for communication to be successful	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.3 Pg. no. 146	It is also thought that cooperation from NGO's (non-government organisations) is needed to develop an effective labelling and advertising campaign (Newholm & Shaw, 2007) It has been proven that it is easier to educate consumers outside of a store situation and have in-store advertisement as a confirmation of knowledge (Berry & McEachern, 2005). Arnold (2009) claims that the fashion market needs to combine ethical values with key trend aesthetics in order to be successful.
		Consumers want simple CSR messages communicated to them	1. Consumers want key pieces of information communicated to a level that can be understood and applied to their situation 2. Access to more details should be given as an option	Effective CSR messages should be clear and simple	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.3 Pg. no. 145	Whilst CSR awareness levels in the average UK consumer remains fairly low (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005), it is thought that a quarter of the population have investigated a companies CSR commitments at least once (Cowe & Williams, 2010). Research shows that consumers want clear, simple ethical messages from retailer marketing and that an overload of information could cause consumers to switch off and ignore the potential messages (FEI, 2010). Foxall (2005) agrees with this point, recognising that consumers are subject to so many advertisements every day that the majority are filtered out and have no impact on their decision making process. Consumers need more information and they want it quickly and easily (Payton, 2013).
		The marketing of CSR messages is used as a creator of brand trust between the customer and the retailer	1. Shows the consumer that the retailer is acting in a socially responsible way 2. The consumer can trust the retailer to do the hard work of CSR for them	The communication of responsible behaviour is used as a creator of brand trust	Chapter 5 Section 5.3.1 Pg. no. 141	Chris Davis (2007) from the Financial Times highlights this comparison of price to other influential aspects; 'The decision to buy an ethical brand over a conventional alternative is also influenced by a number of other factors including; brand awareness. Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that the most important purchasing criteria is price, value, quality and brand familiarity.

Appendix 6
Findings and Conclusions
Research Stage 3

	Research Question	Finding Statement	Interpretations (different meanings)	Conclusions	Evidence	Relationship to Literature
<p>METHOD:</p> <p>STAGE 3: ONLINE CONSUMER SURVEY</p> <p>Six multiple choice questions delivered in an online survey, broadcast by The Ethical Fashion Forum to their network of ethically aware consumers, industry experts and business owners</p>	Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?	The majority of participants think that the branding of a retailer CSR strategy is <i>somewhat effective</i> in terms of informing their customers of retailer actions (59/111 - 53%)	1. As a communication method, consumers take some notice of the message behind the branding 2. Consistency of the CSR message may reinforce the trustworthiness	The branding of CSR strategies is somewhat effective in informing consumers	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 174	The Fairtrade label is a good example of a successful labelling initiative, with the logo said to be recognizable and understood, with this being reflected in an increased sale of goods (Ritch and Schroder, 2009).
		The majority of consumers rely on campaigns and initiatives to inform them of social issues within the garment supply chain (89/111 - 80%)	1. Initiatives and events are a successful method of communication 2. Consumers rely on 3rd parties to provide	Retailers have the power through campaigns and initiatives to influence consumer behaviour	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 170	Campaigns often fail due to the true underlying message being hidden in an attempt to make ethical issues more popular (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010).
	Question 3: How do consumer levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?	The majority of consumers believe that it is the responsibility of the retailers to inform them of issues within the garment supply chain (90/111 - 81%)	1. Consumers want retailers to do the work in terms of informing them of ethical issues 2. The retailers are in control of what message they communicate	As a responsible retailer, companies need to take the lead in informing their customers of ethical issues in the garment supply chain	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 171	Mintell (2009) questions 'are retailers custodians of the consumers conscience?
	Question 5: What methods are utilised by retailers to communicate their CSR message to consumers?	The majority of consumers rely on campaigns and initiatives to inform them of social issues within the garment supply chain (89/111 - 80%)	1. Campaigns and initiatives are an effective method of communication for social issues 2. Consumers take notice of the messages being communicated	Retailers have the power through campaigns and initiatives to influence consumer behaviour	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 170	Campaigns often fail due to the true underlying message being hidden in an attempt to make ethical issues more popular (Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010).
		The majority of participants think that swing tags would be the most effective method of communication in-store (90/111 - 81%)	1. Consumers must read the information provided on swing tags 2. The use of swing tags would relate the CSR message being communicated directly to the merchandise	The utilisation of swing tags could be an effective method of in-store communication	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 172	Two key issues are considered when labelling is discusses as a viable communication method; the authenticity of a label and the consumer recognition and understanding of the issues being communicated (Black, 2008, Ritch & Schroder 2009, Berry & McEachern, 2005, Newholm & Shaw, 2007, Devinney, Auger & Eckhardt, 2010). Berry and McEachern (2005) reiterate this point through the acknowledgement that voluntary labels can be questioned on their reliability and authenticity as there are too many labels to rely on just one. However diverse the labelling debate, most researchers, academics and other parties are in agreement that there needs to be dramatic changes and advancements in the garment labelling sector (Ritch & Schroder, 2009, FEI, 2010, Newholm & Shaw, 2007, Berry & McEachern, 2005). Ritch & Schroder (2009) also believe that one universal label regarding ethical measures needs to be introduced. Bray, Johns & Kilburn (2010) believe that in addition to the issues previously discussed, skepticism of product labelling on the part of the consumer could also be an influential factor.
		combination of text and imagery would be the most effective format to receive information regarding the CSR strategy of retailers (72/111 - 65%)	1. Consumers are best informed through multiple channels of information 2. Consumers want imagery supported with text to reinforce messages	Consumers want a a multichannel communication approach when being informed of ethical issues	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 173	It has been proven that it is easier to educate consumers outside of a store situation and have in-store advertisement as a confirmation of knowledge (Berry & McEachern, 2005).
		The majority of participants want the following information made available by retailers: Supplier ethical standards (104/111 - 94%), Retailer code of conduct (80/111 - 72%) and Minimum wage levels (77/111 - 69%)	1. Consumers do want more information regarding CSR activities of retailers 2. Specific social information regarding workers is wanted 3. Consumers want to know what level of compliance retailers are implementing with their suppliers	Social issues are important to consumers and thus they want to be informed about them	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1 Pg. no. 175	It is acknowledged that consumers do not currently have enough information and understanding of the term ethical to make a fully informed purchasing decision (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). Preez (2003) believes that in order for consumers to be successful they must have an understanding of consumer behaviour and the variables affecting their behaviour.

Appendix 7

Findings and Conclusions

Research Stage 4

	Research Question	Finding Statement	Interpretations (different meanings)	Conclusions	Evidence	Relationship to Literature
<p>METHOD:</p> <p>STAGE 4: RETAILER TO CONSUMER COMMUNICATION STUDY</p> <p>An investigation into the in-store and online communication methods use by retailers (Company A, B, C, D and E) to communicate their CSR messages to consumers</p>	<p>Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?</p>	Company A, C and D (3/5) made no connection/links between their CSR strategy and merchandise on their website	1. CSR issues are communicated as a separate issues, indicating that they have no relationship to the merchandise being sold 2. If retailers do not make the link between CSR and products, consumers will not either 3. Where CSR is communicated via a micro-site, this takes the customer away from the purchasing site - potentially influencing online purchasing behaviour	A lack of connection made between CSR strategy and merchandise may influence the way a customer purchases	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177, 179 and 180	Niinimaki (2010) believes that there is a direct correlation between the quantity of information provided and more well-informed, educated decisions being made.
		Company A and B (2/5) choose to brand their CSR strategy to enhance their communication to customers	1. The branding may make the companies CSR messages more recognisable and easier to understand 2. Brand trust will be built into the consumers interpretation of the CSR message being communicated	The branding of CSR strategy may be an influential factors in in-store and online purchasing behaviour	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177 and 178	The Fairtrade label is a good example of a successful labelling initiative, with the logo said to be recognizable and understood, with this being reflected in an increased sale of goods (Ritch and Schroder, 2009).
		Company D communicates no social/ethical CSR messages to their customers, online or in-store	1. Is it easier to communicate environmental issues than social issues? 2. Do Company D carry out any social CSR activities? 3. Company D communicate very few CSR messages	Some retailers are conscious in their communication of their CSR strategy to avoid being seen as a marketing tool or green washing	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 180 and 186	However it could be argued that marketing in its very nature is to encourage levels of consumption and materialism and thus going against the philosophy of ethics and sustainability in clothing (Miller, 2009).
	<p>Question 3: How do consumer awareness levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?</p>	Company A, C and D (3/5) made no connection/links between their CSR strategy and merchandise on their website	1. This demonstration of a lack of connectivity 2. This approach does not encourage consumer awareness levels 3. May impact behaviour when customers are re-directed to a micro site for CSR information	There is a distinct lack of CSR to product relationship demonstration from retailers	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177, 179 and 180	Niinimaki (2010) believes that there is a direct correlation between the quantity of information provided and more well-informed, educated decisions being made.
		The majority of CSR messages communicated in-store referred to environmental issues in preference to social/ethical issues	1. Consumer awareness levels of environmental issues may be higher when compared to social issues 2. Consumers may not associate garment production with social implications	Environmental issues are more widely communicated by retailers than social issues	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 183 - 187	It is this persistence and consequently awareness levels that have changed consumers issue focus from environmental to social (Strong, 1996).
	<p>Question 5: What methods are utilised by retailers to communicate their CSR message to consumers?</p>	When considering all five retailers, Company A provided the best in-store (5.5/7) communication of their CSR strategy, however the worst online communication (0/7)	1. Company A thinks that in-store is a more effective method of communication 2. Whilst their website provides a lot of information about the companies CSR strategy, the criteria of the study is not fulfilled	Some retailers may drive forward certain methods of communication in preference to others	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177 and 183	Berry and McEachern (2005) reiterate this point through the acknowledgement that voluntary labels can be questioned on their reliability and authenticity as there are too many labels to rely on just one.
		No retailer gave detailed information regarding <i>factory lists</i> or <i>minimum wage</i> on their website	1. Due to the complexities of the supply chain, this information would be difficult to provide 2. The minimum wage would vary from country to country 3. This information may be commercially sensitive 4. Retailers may think that customers do not want to know this information	Retailers do not want to make public information on factory lists on minimum wages due to complexities from country to country	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177 - 181	For big companies with dozens of global factories, it is very difficult to trace everything (Payton, 2013).
		The majority of companies (4/5) provided full details on their <i>supplier ethical standards</i> and <i>freedom of association</i> on their website	1. These may be seen as the most important social aspects to communicate to consumers 2. These areas may be easier to communicate using websites as a method	Retailers are happy to communicate details on supplier ethical standards and freedom of association to their customers	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177 - 181	
		Company A and B (2/5) chose to brand their CSR strategy to enhance their communication to customers - also most active in-store communicators	1. Branding of CSR strategies may be more effective in in-store communication 2. May be used to create trust and reliability / recognizable 3. CSR branding may align with the in-store visual identity	The branding of CSR strategy enhances the communication to customers	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177, 178, 183-184	The Fairtrade label is a good example of a successful labelling initiative, with the logo said to be recognizable and understood, with this being reflected in an increased sale of goods (Ritch and Schroder, 2009).
		The majority of companies (3/5) chose to communicate some information regarding the transparency of their supply chain on their website	1. Companies may not want to reveal too much information so to not get caught out with compliance issues 2. Supply chains may be complex - varying countries etc. for each garment 3. Companies may not want to tell consumers the origin of their products	The details of the supply chain cannot be made public due to its complexities	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 177 - 181	For big companies with dozens of global factories, it is very difficult to trace everything (Payton, 2013).
		No retailer used window displays as an in-store method of communication	1. Retailers may not see this as an effective way of communicating CSR messages 2. Retailers may prefer to show products in window displays	Retailers prefer to attract customers by aesthetics in window displays, In preference to ethical messages	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 183 - 187	It has been proven that it is easier to educate consumers outside of a store situation and have in-store advertisement as a confirmation of knowledge (Berry & McEachern, 2005).
		Company E were the only retailer to communicate their CSR strategy through a garment collection	1. Company E may think this is the most effective way to communicate to their customers 2. May want to inform consumers in a subliminal way 3. Company E may understand that customers buy predominantly for aesthetics	The communication of ethical messages through a range of clothing could inspire customers whilst communicating a serious message (through the priority of the customer)	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 186-187	Niinimaki (2010) raises the issue of value in clothing, and suggests that this can be created when meeting the need of consumers, consequentially extending the lifecycle of garments. Arnold (2009) claims that the fashion market needs to combine ethical values with key trend aesthetics in order to be successful. What fashion brands can do best is to find ways of persuading consumers to want guilt free clothes that look gorgeous (Payton, 2013)
		The majority of CSR messages communicated in-store referred to environmental issues in preference to social/ethical issues	1. These issues may be easier to communicate 2. Consumer may be more concerned by environmental issues 3. Social issues may be communicated through an alternative channel	Retailers more actively communicate environmental issues in preference to social issues	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 183 - 187	It is this persistence and consequently awareness levels that have changed consumers issue focus from environmental to social (Strong, 1996).
		Company E used a coding system to inform customers of the ethical/sustainable factors attributed to individual garments	1. This may be the level of detail consumers require 2. Consumer may respond more effectively to specific garments that are compliant in preference to the strategy being built into the way the company does business	Coding ethical items in paper based publications could inform customers of relevant issues	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2 Pg. no. 186-187	The idea of integration is also highlighted by Niinimaki (2010) where it is questioned why there appears to be two separate markets; ethical and non ethical, and why this gap remains so. This also refers back to the idea of there being two separate markets opposed to one inclusive morally correct industry (Niinimaki, 2010). A continued argument within the industry is a companies application of their CSR commitments in specific highlighted ranges (FEI, 2010).
				Segregation of ethical product could indicate a lack of social responsibility in other garments		

Appendix 8

Findings and Conclusions

Research Stage 5

	Research Question	Finding Statement	Interpretations (different meanings)	Conclusions	Evidence	Relationship to Literature
<p>METHOD:</p> <p>STAGE 5: SUBSEQUENT CASE STUDIES</p> <p>Four semi-structured interviews with CSR representatives from each company, where established areas of questioning had previously been developed from the findings from the work carried out with Company A</p>	<p>Question 1: What influences ethical fashion purchasing?</p>	The majority of retailers (4/5) believe that their customers have brand trust in them as a company	1. Retailers believe that customers trust them to act responsibly 2. Retailers think they should take the decision away from customers (not choosing right/wrong - rather trusting retailer to make the right decision)	The brand trust a consumer has in a retailer influences their purchasing decisions	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 189	Supermarkets have been forced through consumer demand to provide ethical alternatives, could the high street go the same way?' Ritch & Schroder (2009)
		The majority of retailers (4/5) believe that ethics is a secondary priority to consumers during the purchasing process	1. Retailers understand that customer purchasing clothing for aesthetics 2. If there is a responsible attribute to the garment, this is seen as a bonus 3. Responsible attributes are seen as desirable factors no essential	To communicate ethics, the primary priority channel of aesthetics could be used to influence behaviour	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 192	Niinimaki (2010) raises the issue of value in clothing, and suggests that this can be created when meeting the need of consumers, consequentially extending the lifecycle of garments. Arnold (2009) claims that the fashion market needs to combine ethical values with key trend aesthetics in order to be successful. What fashion brands can do best is to find ways of persuading consumers to want guilt free clothes that look gorgeous (Payton, 2013)
	<p>Question 3: How do consumer levels of ethical issues impact on their purchasing behaviour?</p>	All retailers (5/5) believe that consumers have a certain level of awareness when it comes to social issues in the garment supply chain	1. Due to media coverage, all consumers have a certain level of knowledge 2. How/if they use this knowledge when purchasing fashion is questionable	Whilst consumers possess knowledge regarding social issues in the garment supply chain, this does not always influence behaviour	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 193	A moral relativist, who believes that all people do not hold or obey by the same moral and ethics during their day-to-day lives (Baggini & Fosl, 2007). It has been found that there are more ethically conscious consumers than previously thought (Szmigin , Carrigan & McEachern, 2009), with 57% of consumers claiming that they would not shop somewhere if the store or brand had affiliations with child labour (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). A lack of ethical behaviour is said to often be due to low awareness levels and an overall lack of knowledge (Ellen, 1994). However, 52% of consumers in the UK admit to be ethically aware but are currently not actively purchasing ethically (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005). The 2010 Co-operative Ethical Consumerism report states that consumers are highly aware of ethical issues and are ready to put their money where their mouths are (Cowe & Williams, 2010). Recent research exploring consumer ethical attitudes and behaviour, has lead to the identification of a distinct disparity in the individuals purchasing intentions and the translation of these intentions into actual behaviour (Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2006, Shiu & Shaw, Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2010, Cowe & Williams, 2010, Worcester & Dawkins, 2005, Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt, 2005, Auger & Devinney, 2007, Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2010). 52% of the British public claim to be concerned with ethical issues but admit to not following these concerns up with appropriate purchasing behaviour (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005).
	<p>Question 4: How do retailers implement their CSR philosophy throughout their business?</p>	The majority of retailers (3/5) acknowledged that they cannot be perfect in their actions from an ethical and sustainable point of view	1. Due to the complexities of the supply chain, retailers think this prevents them from being 100% compliant	The complexities of the garment supply chain prevent retailers from being perfect	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 188	For big companies with dozens of global factories, it is very difficult to trace everything (Payton, 2013).
		Company B and C believe that to create maximum impact collaboration with other retailers must occur in order to have greater leverage in the supply chain	1. Capacity within factories gives retailers more power to demand change 2. Working together with other retailers can move the industry forward to a more socially responsible place	Collaboration is key in driving forward ethics in the fashion industry	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 190	It is also thought that cooperation from NGO's (non-government organisations) is needed to develop an effective labelling and advertising campaign (Newholm & Shaw, 2007) It is thought that campaign groups along with active consumers could be the applied pressure needed to make significant changes (Cowe & Williams, 2010). 'We'll never make a big impact unless we can get culture change as well, and in order to do that you have to part of the conversation with people' (Rowley, 2012). 'We fully agree with the intent of the agreement (the Bangladesh accord), we believe that a collaborative approach to issues in Bangladesh is right' (Neville, 2013). Businesses could work collaboratively to push governments on legislation (Payton, 2013).
		The majority of retailers (3/5) acknowledge a sense of responsibility when it comes to ethics and sustainability in the industry	1. Retailers feel that during the production of their goods, they are to be held responsible 2. As the provider of goods, they feel they should produce these in a responsible manner	Retailers acknowledge the importance of CSR implementation	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 196	Effective CSR communication is said to have an effect on a consumers perception of a certain brand or retailer (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005). Bad or negative CSR can have an adverse effect, with consumers consciously choosing not to shop somewhere due to a companies negative ethics reports (Smith, 1999). This reflects the suggested relationship between a companies ethical credentials and a product being purchased from the store on the part of the consumer (Viriyaividhayavongs & Yothmontree, 2002). CSR has been seen to have a positive effect on consumer behaviour, with 1 in 6 shoppers saying that they would boycott a store if their ethics were not up to standard (Cowe & Williams, 2010). An active role in solving social and environmental issues is now essential for companies, CSR should be imperative, not a luxury (Childe, 2013).
		The majority of retailers (3/5) have a top-down approach when communicating their CSR strategy internally	1. This approach becomes diluted, with details lost 2. It relies on the understanding and the accuracy of the parties involved 3. Potentially not an effective way of communication due to priorities and agendas differing between employee levels	The extent to which internal communication of CSR strategies are effective is questionable	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 196	Fashion buyers may be more resistant to change to a more responsible future (Payton, 2013).
		All retailers (5/5) regularly update their internal staff with regards to their CSR strategy development	1. This is done using various methods such as group meetings, emails etc. 2. Retailers believe that all employees believe in the CSR philosophy of the company 3. Lower level employees are compromised with margins and lead time deliveries, not CSR implementation	Retailers want all staff to be fully informed of their CSR strategy so successful implementation can occur	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 198	CSR begins with an assessment of a business and their customers, suppliers, the environment, communities and employees (Simply CSR, 2008). Fashion buyers may be more resistant to change to a more responsible future (Payton, 2013).
		The majority of retailers (3/5) feel a responsibility to work with their suppliers should a compliance issue occur (to help solve)	1. Retailers don't see that leaving a supplier when there has been a breach in compliance as a productive way to work 2. Retailers work alongside their suppliers to maintain a good, long-term working relationship and create trust	Retailers feel responsibility over their supply chain	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 197	
	<p>Question 5: What methods are utilised by retailers to communicate their CSR message to consumers?</p>	The majority of retailers (3/5) believe that consumers want simple messages communicated to them regarding issues within the garment supply chain	1. Consumers want messages to be to the point with more information made available if needed 2. If information is too complex or delivered at the wrong level, consumers will switch off	In order for customers to understand / engage with CSR, simple messages should be used	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 191	Whilst CSR awareness levels in the average UK consumer remains fairly low (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005), it is thought that a quarter of the population have investigated a companies CSR commitments at least once (Cowe & Williams, 2010). Research shows that consumers want clear, simple ethical messages from retailer marketing and that an overload of information could cause consumers to switch off and ignore the potential messages (FEI, 2010). Foxall (2005) agrees with this point, recognising that consumers are subject to so many advertisements every day that the majority are filtered out and have no impact on their decision making process.
		Company A and D believe that ethics should not be used as a marketing tool	1. Could explain their lack of CSR communication in store (Company D) and online (Company A) 2. Ethics should be built into the way they do business, not a one off promotable factor	Retailers are conscious not to use their CSR communication to their competitive advantage	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 194	However it could be argued that marketing in its very nature is to encourage levels of consumption and materialism and thus going against the philosophy of ethics and sustainability in clothing (Miller, 2009).
		The majority of retailers (3/5) do not think that it is their responsibility to inform their customers of ethical issues	1. Retailers do not feel the need to communicate any of their CSR activities 2. Information should come form other sources and be actively sleeked by the consumers as individuals	Retailers do not feel the responsibility to communicate / inform their customers of ethical issues	Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3 Pg. no. 195	It is acknowledged that consumers do not currently have enough information and understanding of the term ethical to make a fully informed purchasing decision (Ritch & Schroder, 2009). Carrigan & Attalla (2001) believe that further education and awareness must take place and that retailers must convince their consumers of their ethical integrity. Should brands accept responsibility for educating consumers, or should NGO's and government policy be the driving force? (Payton, 2013). If fashion brands go down the route of educating, they become an NGO.

Appendix 9
Company A – Interview Notes

Company A - Participant 1

Interview Notes

Participant 1 – Head of Sustainable Business

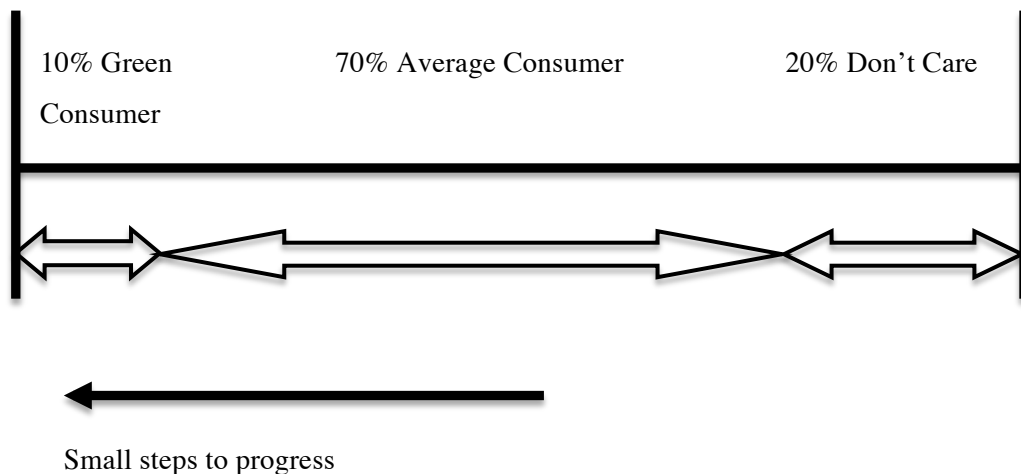
24/08/12 – 10.15 – 11am (Company A HQ - 8th Floor central coffee area)

Key Areas of Discussion:

- Participant 1's role within the company
- How sustainable practice is implemented throughout the business
- If Company A CSR commitments are successful – why other retailers are not tending to follow suit
- The distance between products and CSR Commitments

The Customer Typology

Participant 1 began the conversation by describing the typology of consumers as found through research carried out in an internal sustainable consumer study. It found that 70% of consumers could be described as average, whilst 20% are said to have no care or consideration for ethical and sustainable issues and only 10% can be described as *green consumers*. Two further segmentations / issues could be applied – those who *don't believe they can help* and those who are *willing but don't know how*.



In Participant 1's opinion it is small steps that need to be taken towards the green consumers end of the spectrum (the left on the above diagram) that will enable the industry to move to a more sustainable business practice. Participant 1 continued to

discuss the idea that consumers are happy to be categorized into groups as it provides a sense of belonging, it is on this premise that Company A incorporates simple consumer tribes in order to fully describe their purchasing behaviour.

Brand Trust

From the internal research conducted, it appeared that consumers want the retailers to do the hard work for them in order to be more ethical and sustainable in their purchasing behaviour. Participant A believed that Company A consumers can leave their worries at the door and merely trust them as a brand to make the correct decisions for their consumers. This theory relies heavily on the brand/retailer to make the correct decisions in order to be able to lean on brand trust and reassurance.

Despite Participant 1's confidence in their consumer already being able to do this, as a impartial spectator, it could be questioned if consumers yet feel this trust for any brand due to a constant see-saw effect of media fed information. Can the high street consumer indeed trust any retailer/brand to make the correct ethical/sustainable decisions for them?

Retailer / Consumer Communication

Due to their sustained period of work in the ethics and sustainability area, Company A has realised that merely preaching their message to consumers is not an effective way of communication. Their experience has lead them to the conclusion that people respond effectively to incentive and reward schemes – a feeling that they are being rewarded for their good behaviour. The charity partnership initiative has been particularly successful for Company A where customers are given vouchers in return for recycling their unwanted clothing.

Participant 1 believes that retailers are in a unique and powerful position and are able to influence both the suppliers of their products and the customers who purchase the products.

Participant 1's Role in Company A

As the Head of Sustainable business at Company A, Participant 1 covers 4 key areas of responsibility:

- Stakeholder Engagement – taking charge of partnerships and collaboration within their CSR strategy – engaging with companies with the correct philosophy and vision
- Problem Solving – Participant 1 believes that 150 of their CSR commitments are achievable, whilst 20-30 are more challenging and will only be achieved in time
- Teams have been allocated to address these more challenging commitments and are currently being supervised by Participant 1
- E-Commerce Communication – this includes media coverage and press releases. Participant 1 referred to himself as the face behind their CSR commitments
- Strategy – the ultimate plan to move the business forward and ensure that Company A continue to push the boundaries in terms of ethics and sustainability

(There are 8 team members within the CSR team segregated into separate categories; waste, climate change, community, charity etc.)

The Future

Participant 1 put Company A's current sustainable development into a time frame context and illustrated this through a visual representation. He also put this into terms of his career within the sector, expressing that his career has seen the start of sustainable development in business but it is future careers such as mine, which will make it successful.

In Participant 1's opinion Company A are currently operating at only 10% of their full ethical and sustainable capacity and it is only with the persistence of their CSR commitments that the capacity will grow.

Company A - Participant 2

Interview Notes

Participant 2 – Head of Lingerie Technology

09/08/12 – 3 – 3.30pm (Company A HQ - 3rd floor Central Coffee Area)

Key Areas of Discussion:

- How is the carbon neutral message communicated to consumers?
- Do you think consumers understand this message?
- Do you think consumers consider this ethical message when purchasing the products?
- How was the range advertised in store?
- Is the carbon neutral manufacturing strategy feasible to be rolled out across other departments? Are there any plans to do so?

Background

Participant 2 began the interview with giving a little background and context to the development of Company A's current CSR strategy. The CEO of Company A was inspired when reading a book on holiday which prompted them to do something about the ethical and sustainable issues surrounding retailers. Consequently an advertising campaign was launched to bring certain issues to the attention of Company A's customers. Following this success, the CSR strategy, as implemented in Company A today, was launched. The CEO also realised that not only one issues could be targeted but the project needed to encompass a range of issues unlike those previously seen by Gap for example, that focused purely on sustainable water issues.

When launching Company A's CSR strategy, they felt that they were setting a precedent in the industry and setting the bar higher for other retailers to look to. This also came as an advantage as they had no other companies or previously run projects to compare themselves to.

Eco factories

One of the commitments made by Company was to create eco factories which scored very highly on all auditable sectors of the companies factory standards. This was first

achieved in South East Asia, with this area being specifically chosen due to both the country being completely reliant on energy imports and staff familiarity with the area.

Carbon neutral lingerie

The common bra has 24 components in order to be functional, therefore Company A knew that running a lingerie collection as a trial for a carbon neutral project would be challenging as sourcing for these specific components come from all over the world.

Other reasoning behind the garment choice included, in Participant 2's opinion, the fact that lingerie is a beautiful, sexy product and could therefore not only deliver on a consumer appeal level but would also receive high publicity. Once the final products were Carbon Trust certified the collection was launched.

The Carbon Offset Details

In order to offset the carbon used in the manufacture of the range, Company A bought offset credits through a project run by the Conservation Carbon Company. This involved planting over 6000 trees in desolate land in South East Asia whilst working in collaboration with many local farmers. This facilitated the carbon offset for the range, which for the bra design within the collection was 2kg per item. Through this project alone Company A offset the equivalent of 1440 tonnes of carbon.

All of the trees planted were able to generate income for the local farmer i.e. the fruit or substance from the plants could be sold on at a profit. This was to not only boost the local economy but to also develop entrepreneurial businesses for local people. This community based approach is said to be advantageous due to the local people wanting to take care of the scheme and put something back into the community.

The Collection

The carbon neutral lingerie collection was marketed purely on design, the thinking behind this approach was to make the garments beautiful to appeal to consumers. The eco credentials were a secondary message to the consumers and was seen as an added bonus to the beautiful products. Participant 2 also added that women buy lingerie based on aesthetics, comfort and ultimately price, not if the product is ethical or not.

The marketing of the product was again based purely on aesthetics, the ethical message was however put on the swing tag to inform consumers. In addition to the swing tag notification the carbon offset scheme was publicised on the company website and paper based magazine which is the most widely read publication in the UK.

The collection also received some good press coverage, which added to the positive brand projections of the company. This media attention was from both a fashion and eco point of view, Participant 2 added that everyone loves a success story.

The Future

The carbon neutral lingerie collection was seen as a learning curve for Company A and is not a scheme that could be successfully rolled out across other departments.

Company A paid for all the carbon offsets and consequently was not a very profitable system for them as a company. The learning element of the project allowed them to identify the CO₂ content of each the bras components and therefore how this could be significantly reduced in the future. The carbon neutral range was also used to enhance the Company A brand philosophy and the retailer/consumer trust relationship.

Summary

Participant 2 believes that good business is about being a brand, being good and also being profitable. In his opinion the CSR philosophy works throughout the store, where nothing is sinister or acting as a publicity stunt. He also believes that the workers believe in the strategy philosophy and everything the company stands for.

Company A - Participant 3

Interview Notes

Participant 3 – Product Marketer

17/08/12 – 10-10.30am (Company A HQ - 3rd floor Central Coffee Area)

Key Areas of Discussion:

- How are the positive messages of the CSR strategy communicated to consumers?
- Is the carbon neutral ranges marketed differently?
- Is the ethical message of these ranges communicated effectively?
- In your opinion are the awareness levels of ethical issues in the company products high enough?
- Could you elaborate on the methods of communication used

The Team

A meeting was arranged with Participant 3, Product Marketer from Company A to hear more about their position within the company but also to access the effectiveness of current methods of retailer/consumer communication. This also covered how the ethical and sustainable message of their program was also illustrated to the Company A target audience. Participant 3 works directly with the CSR team to achieve the best possible communication tools along with two other colleagues who cover the CSR section of the website and media coverage.

Research

Following a research project carried out internally last year, several key messages were highlighted. These included consumers expressing the desire for information on *simple* green issues, they also appeared to be more interested in what they could do for future generations rather than what could be done to create change for current society. Perhaps this expression was the realization that change may be a long and complex journey, not an instant result.

From this research Company A noticed a shift in their previous thinking in striving for sustainable change, this was a movement from what Company A can do, to what

consumers can do. This power shift from retailer to consumer meant that their CSR strategy needed to concentrate their time on the facilitation of large-scale projects where the consumer made the real difference.

CSR Projects

With this shift in mind, Company A began to plan large-scale, consumer driven events such as a recycling initiative in collaboration with a charity. The charity scheme asked customers to return old, unwanted Company A clothing to the charity stores in return for a gift voucher which could be redeemed when spending over a certain amount on clothing, home ware or beauty. This was also publicized as a much larger event, where people were encouraged to bring their old, unwanted clothing back to the Company A store to put in a clothing collection bank and again receive vouchers in return. This event was also marketed using the celebrity endorsement. Participant 3 explained that people were keen to take part in events such as this due to it being a relatively easy task to incorporate into their busy daily lives, yet they were giving something back to charity. In the long term, clothing bins are planned to be located in both the charity and retailer stores to encourage as many people as possible to take part.

The marketing for this specific project was mainly website based as the publicity commenced only one week before the event took place. This was thought to be a more effective method of marketing due to people often forgetting future events if communicated too early. With this in mind, the internet is a perfect way to market upcoming events to customers as it is an instant form of communication. On the website the event was placed as a banner advertisement not only on the Company A website but also on other fashion websites such as the Guardian fashion pages.

During the past clothing collection events the contributions have mainly been low value, basic garments; vests, t-shirts etc. Whilst the volumes of such garments have been fairly high, the resale value of these items within the charity store is relatively low, some of which are not in a state to be resold. Company A therefore made the decision to change the marketing images used to show the celebrities with better quality, higher value products such as shoes, bags and coats. Previously visuals had been used with the celebrity endorser holding basic garments to be recycled, the new marketing material sees them showing old shoes and a handbag to be taken the clothing collections. This shift in marketing visuals should hopefully reflect the garments collected and consequently see more money raised for charity.

One further element of the scheme was to encourage women to also return their old bras, this is a separate charity partnership where the returned goods are sent out to Africa to be used by local women. This scheme took a while to take off due to it being seen as quite controversial, as underwear is not generally recycled.

The Website

To run in conjunction with the event the marketing team developed a new application that can be used on the company website. This sees the customer being able to select different types of garments to be dragged and dropped on to a mannequin visual, the approximate resale value in the charity store is then shown, allowing the user to see exactly how much they will be donating to charity. This amount is then represented in terms of what that money can do for the causes being collected for, through the charity collaboration.

In addition to the website banner, the week-long event was being marketed through a series of postcard flyers being distributed in store. These see witty comments being passed between friends all encouraging people to recycle their unwanted clothing. For example, *that old dress that reminds you of your ex.... Pass on the bad luck* and *Give those hibernating heels a reason to dance.*

In more general terms the Company A CSR message is spread across many different medias and platforms: Facebook, Twitter, the retailer newsletter, mobile banner advertisements, SMS text messaging, the Company A website and point of sale in store. All of which direct the users directly to the CSR micro site to read more around the project.

One final method of communication applied is thank you campaigns. This is where the success of the project and events are accessed, results are disseminated to the public and a *Thank You* campaign delivered. Participant 3 concluding by saying that these campaigns were effective due to the participants feeling good about their contribution to such projects, inspiring them to contribute again in the future.

Company A - Participant 4

Interview Notes

Participant 4 – Assistant Buyer (Mens Casual Shirts)

18/08/11 – 10 – 10.30am (3rd floor Menswear studio)

Key Questions:

- How do the CSR commitments influence the decisions made by the buying teams?
- How are you and the rest of your team educated and informed about the CSR commitments?
- Are you given regular updates on the projects progress and targets?
- Are there many fabric considerations working within mens casual shirts?
- Does the CSR philosophy come through strongly as a Company A employee?

Participant 4, assistant buyer in the mens casual shirts was interviewed for her point of view on how Company A infiltrate the key CSR messages through the business to each individual business unit team.

Ethical Considerations

Participant 4's initial reaction to the notion of ethical or sustainable ranges was the fact that there would be a big impact on the garment/departments margin. This was a common theme throughout the interview which indicated that the entire team are very restricted with costs and appear to work with this is the forefront of their minds. They commented that to be able to apply ethical or sustainable ranges within the department the cost would need to be absorbed elsewhere, either by the company or the customer.

It appeared to Participant 4 that last year there was a big push from higher departments on the CSR commitments which saw a the shift from the use of traditional to BCI cotton (cotton grown in accordance with the Better Cotton Initiative). However this change was done at the time when cotton prices were surging and therefore BCI cotton was the cheaper choice. This change was quite quickly reversed due to the cotton price stabilizing. It was suggested that a more cost effective way of purchasing cotton would be to buy BCI cotton in mass in order to reduce the price and increase availability.

Ethical Ranges

Within the mens casual shirts department there is currently no plans for a dedicated eco range however the modal used in a lot of the products within the *soft* range is compliant with one of the sustainable raw materials in the CSR commitments.

Participant 4 explained how they saw no direct benefit to the consumer in purchasing ethical products, yet she thought that this may vary between men and women. It was suggested that women are more conscientious shoppers and therefore ethical and sustainable products may be more appealing to them. She continued to suggest that the womens wear department takes more action on these issues and is where the constant development of the CSR commitments lie. There are numerous organic and Fair Trade cotton ranges, offering women further ethical choice when purchasing clothing.

The Future

Although Participant 4 thought that the ethical development in womens wear would be more effective in the long term she did however add that more and more factories were wanting to go for eco-factory status. This is a Company A accredited achievement and is currently held by only three factories. Despite this being a long-term goal for many factories this is an expensive and long term commitment on the part of the factories. The drive for this must therefore come from Company A as the retailer and desire on the part of the supplier to remain a supplier in the future.

Summary

The objective of interviewing an assistant buyer within one the business units was to get an insight on the ground to see how the CSR commitments and sustainable strategy is infiltrated throughout the business. This can therefore at a later date be compared and contrasted to the thoughts and opinions of people within higher positions in company.

From early analysis it has become clear that the opinions of people according to their position within the company varies greatly. It appears that higher ranked individuals are driven by quite an idealistic view and the work that is being achieved in response to this. They think that the CSR message is effectively communicated to workers lower

down the hierarchy and that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet so to speak. In reality workers appear to be driven by value margins and lead times.

From the interview conducted with Participant 4, it is clear that the CSR achievements and commitments are communicated only to higher levels – in this case that would be the participants line manager who is head of buying within the mens casual shirt department. These messages are then drip fed down the chain to assistants where the initial message will surely be diluted and much briefer than initial communicated.

Feed back of the success of failures of the CSR commitments is again feedback to higher members of staff to then be passed on down the line. The only form of direct contact would be the monthly newsletter which is sent to all members of staff giving an overview of business in more general terms.

Appendix 10
**Subsequent Retailer
Interview Transcriptions**

Interview Transcription – Company B

Interview conducted on Thursday 11th October 2012 at Company B HQ, West London.

Interviewee: DJ

Global Ethical Trading Manager at Company B

Interviewer: AJ

Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University

START OF INTERVIEW

AJ: This will stay completely anonymous, as will the company.

DJ: Alright, I'll do my best to answer.

AJ: Ok, well shall I tell you a little bit about what I'm doing.

DJ: Go on then

AJ: Would that be easier to start with?

DJ: It would be

AJ: I'm looking at fashion purchasing on the UK high street, in particular responsibly sourced fashion, or ethical fashion you might say, and I'm kind of approaching it from two different directions, from the point of view of the retailer and the point of view of the consumer. So obviously I've kind of investigated the consumer side of things so now I'm interviewing people like yourself.

DJ: Well I'd be interested to hear what your findings are in terms of the consumer, because from our side, we don't really know a lot about consumer perceptions of what actually influences their choices, and what percentage of consumers are really sort of switched on to ethical sourcing.

AJ: It's one of my first questions.

DJ: Yeah, yeah, you know, so... yeah well fine, so any feedback from that would be very useful to actually support our how we actually drive ethical, you know champion ethical compliance from this side really. Because obviously it's a finite resource

AJ: Of course

DJ: And we have to compete with everything else, you know ultimately it's a question of what added value does ethical sourcing bring to the business, and its how do you quantify it really.

AJ: Do you think customers are aware of social and environmental issues within the garment supply chain?

DJ: I think they are and I think there is a growing awareness, particularly with children coming through school and obviously the media, there is this kind of what's happening in the wider world, so there's no doubt that I think there is a growing awareness. How much that affects their choices, I think that depends.

AJ: Definitely. Does Company B do any kind of research, any consumer research?

DJ: What on ethical sourcing?

AJ: On... I dunno, you were saying that you were not too sure about consumer perceptions?

DJ: We do research from the marketing perspective, in terms of designs, but a lot of where we are in terms of where we design and the products, is very much driven by the owner, obviously who came up with the idea of buying from India, with sort of the very rich Indian, bohemian type designs and I think that that's very much our trade mark, in terms of where we're at and although styles might vary from time to time we tend to drift a little bit away from it, but then come back to it and of course we've got the 40th anniversary coming up, you know we're going back to our heritage in terms of the roots and how the business started, you know, so a lot of that is where we are and I suppose that a lot of that influences the product and the designs and where we actually source from, albeit we are a globally sourced business now.

AJ: Do you think it's the kind of role of a retailer to inform a consumer of these issues, or do you think it comes from elsewhere, or...

DJ: No, I don't think it is necessarily our responsibility to inform per se, you know, we source where we source from and we have to do that against standards, it doesn't matter whether its quality standards or environmental standards or ethical standards and obviously the price, and it has to be fit for purpose, so how we source, its about actually, you know creating a product that really catches the eye of the consumer, whether they like it and want to purchase it and they feel good about wearing it, and I suppose that's really where its about creating that image about a product, and you know, the perception of quality, the fit for purpose, and I suppose you can say that about ethics too. When does a consumer buy into ethics? And I suppose to some extent it depends upon price maybe, I dunno, it may not be. You know, someones buying a Burberry product or a Company B product, you know, how much is their choice influenced by how ethically sourced that product is. If your buying low end, for example your buying at Primark, how much are Primark consumers influenced by ethics? I would probably say not a lot.

AJ: Not a lot at all

DJ: But that doesn't mean that the consumer is naïve, because a lot of consumers will say look I've got, or if their being challenged because they're limited or if they haven't had a pay rise, the cost of food going and everything else, and everyone's got a limited budget, you have to make that money go as far as you can and sometimes people will trade off, they'll say well fine, I know perhaps that product isn't quite as ethically sourced as it should be but I've got to...

AJ: Other things take a priority?

DJ: And they've got to make that choice, and it's a question of how do you kind of manage that and cater for that. But I think from our perspective, in our business I think that consumers, you know we're not at the top end, we're not at the bottom end but consumers pay quite a decent price for our products and therefore I think with our consumers, there is the expectation that it is reasonably, ethically sourced and that's where I come into it. I think whilst without being cynical a lot of it you could say we were doing for entropic reasons, which is fine but we're also doing it for brand

reputation and to protect the brand and I suppose, in all honesty the greatest effort from my side of things is to protect the brand image and ensure, its all about damage limitation and how we manage that.

AJ: I was in one of your stores on Oxford Street yesterday and I noticed the CSR branded labels that are on every garment, do you think consumers take any notice of them or understand them?

DJ: Well I think from a marketing point of view, I think the business thinks that they do, else they wouldn't do it, and its about, coming back to what I was saying earlier in the late 60's, early 70's, and the love theme and you know, the San Francisco types, flowers in your hair, that's the type of image, and I think its about really maintaining that image. A lot of our consumers, whilst we have younger end that are coming in, we've got a lot, who are a lot like me, probably getting a bit too old now and can probably remember that era (laughs) and its all about the association with that era. I know there's a number that aren't but it's all about building up that image and I suppose that's where its at really.

AJ: As well as looking at consumers and retailers I'm looking at the communication between the two and the relationship between the two, I've been looking at how retailers inform consumers both online and in-store about their ethical policies or brand philosophy, you might say..

DJ: Just finishing off from the previous question. If we're challenged or if a consumer or a stakeholder asks about a product then obviously we will support and be open and transparent about where its coming from and so on and so forth but I don't necessarily think that we would want to get on our soapbox and say that everything is totally and wonderfully ethically sourced because I don't think as a retailer, no matter who they are, that can put their hand on heart and say that this is absolutely bonified because somewhere within the supply chain, and I'm talking about, ok they might have their CMC operation fine but its about the fabric, the dying operations, its about the yarn manufacture, the cotton or whatever it is, somewhere along the supply chain you can guarantee there will be an achilles heel and that's the problem. On one has to say where does our degree of responsibility lie? Is it purely with factories, which manufacture our products, or is it the fabric that we buy, the dye houses, the yarns that go into it. Your probably aware of all the problems with Uzbekistan cotton, these issues go much further back in the supply chain, your looking at spinning, cotton

picking. To actually manage the totality of the supply chain is very difficult and the amount of resources that that would require to actually do that, and given that your in the fashion business, things are changing quite frequently so its very, very difficult to do that. So going back to your question, I'm not sure if that answers it?

AJ: Yeah I think so, definitely. I've been reading on your website, obviously I've been through it all, that you're an ETI member and that you comply to their code of conduct, but it mentioned the Company B code of conduct, I was wondering if you could elaborate on that a little?

DJ: Our code of conduct is the ETI base code. So we have taken the ETI base code and ok, it may say the Company B code of conduct but essentially word for word it is the ETI base code.

AJ: Ok I didn't know if you were going to have elaborated it or if it was just... that's great. I also read your ethical trade report from 2010 and it stated that you integrate ethical trade into company culture and business practices.

DJ: We try to.

AJ: Can you give me a summary of how you do this?

DJ: Well it starts off with employees that come into the business, induction, we basically tell them about the philosophy of the business and they're basically given an overview of ethical trading and what we try to do in terms of managing our supply base, the minimum standards that we're looking for, so that's everyone really, which includes buyers. Even staff at point of sale, because we know that from time to time they may have to be the interface between a consumer that becomes irate, so its about how they handle that. So really its about saying that we're trying to be a ethical company and sometimes it doesn't always work because we get let down by certain suppliers or some things happen and nobodies perfect, but this is what we're trying to do. So we're actually laying down markers, if a new buyer comes in for example, say we recruited a buyer from Primark, not that we ever would, but all buyers are being challenged on price and margin, when they're actually interfacing with the supplier of manufacturer, its all about, fine, so we're getting good product, but where is it actually coming from? What social criteria is put in place, has it been audited, has it been assessed against other standards, so they're also asking other questions that are

probably not quite within their remit and when I say not quite within their remit, it is their remit, because ultimately its not just about price, you have this ethical criteria that has come in now, which means it doesn't matter how good or how cheap it is, if its high risk or if they have child labour, no freedom of association or whatever, bonded labour, its not good for business and you could well damage everything that we've just talked about, all the love, all the ethos about the business, you know, you can just destroy that in one 30 minute media report.

AJ: Are staff kind of updated if there are any changes, or do you have...

DJ: Yeah, we have ethical champions within the business, and from time to time, I sit down and do presentations on, you know we do an annual report and we ask for feedback about that, I do weekly summaries which are then fed back to the buying teams in particular, it doesn't go out to the stores but internally within the business. Our primary sourcing regions are India and China, still our biggest sourcing regions and we have a team in India and we have a team in China and I have VC's with them, we look at the supply chains and we what's called risk rate suppliers, low medium and high risk suppliers. Its about managing the high risk suppliers, are they engaging, what are they doing and particularly in India, because of the product we sell, a lot of it is embellishment, hand work, which is subcontracted or perhaps goes to home workers and its about controlling that extended supply chain, make sure its done properly.

AJ: How do you kind of.. I know you don't audit home workers, but how do you kind of ensure that that's...

DJ: When you say we don't audit, I mean we do visit home-workers, we work with our sub-contractors. Have you heard of the ETI Home Workers Code of Conduct?

AJ: Yes

DJ: Well we worked on the development of those guidelines with the ETI and basically its all about mapping, its about documenting goods in and goods out, you know, its not rocket science, but basically home workers can record the work they've been given, the work that's gone out and the payment that has been given and ultimately its about the price that they have to pay because when we agree a price with out supplier, we get to a point when we've got open costings, we are saying that the home working is guaranteed at least the minimum wage and what we're saying within

that cost is that we have transparency, the piece rate and how many contractors or sub-contractors are in that because if they're doing a service, they'll obviously get a percentage of that money but ultimately that the home worker gets that minimum wage for that work and what we do is we check it from time to time with our people in India and we're just setting up an independent verification system to show that the system is working. So you know, its relatively new but its about putting discipline into the system and we modify the home worker guidelines, we produce what's called a workers reference handbook and this is specifically for India and Indian home worker supply chains but you can also use it in a factory base as well, but it essentially details the laws of the land, health & safety aspects, its about payments and social insurance and requirements, so its in that bracket of being an idiots guide to what they're worker rights are.

AJ: And every worker is given one of those?

DJ: I wouldn't say every worker is but we have issued it to most of our factories, we tend to apply it to factories which don't have good HR, some factories are quite basic, an what we find is in India and China they don't have good HR and its about putting in HR systems and you have threads of communications from top management down and hopefully bottom up too, it about moving to more participatory approaches, and really good HR is the key to some of the issues really.

AJ: Going back to consumer awareness issues we were talking about before, do you see that retailers are going to have to up their game almost? Do you see the movement increasing?

DJ: I think they are, because one of the challenges as a business is that we're still being challenged on price and margins and what your seeing in China, for example, your seeing wage costs going up considerably, people are starting to question if China is going to remain a country where textiles are sourced from, what's going to be the next region? Is it going to be Vietnam, Cambodia or Burma so everyone's looking for the next low cost producer and everyone's trying to run ahead of the game and that in itself means that fine, we're finding a low cost producer but that means you have possible exploitation of those workers, minimum wages, health and safety issues, migrant labour, everything that goes with it. So when you say are they going to up their game, there's always going to be that challenge of finding goods that are reasonably priced but also ethically sourced so I think there's going to be more of a

reconnaissance, where people are going out and saying fine, low cost operation but what's it like, can we go in there now, whereas some people have jumped in and sorted it out later so its being a bit more pro-active I think and that's the difference, retailers having to be more pro-active rather than being reactive.

AJ: Do you think that once we're out of this double dip recession, do you think consumers will take a bit more of an interest in ethical/social issues?

DJ: Yeah, well personally I don't think its every gone away really, its not gone away, its that people have been challenged and for whatever reason at the moment its probably gone a little bit off the boil, in as much as, I think the media has really done itself a disservice with The News of the World, phone tapping and this, that and the other and with Primark, basically Primark were set up. The media has actually shot itself in the foot, to some extent consumers are now a bit cynical about what they're actually hearing, I mean can we trust these stories? Whereas 18 months ago, a story would have broke in the media and we'd have said fine, we wouldn't have had to ask 'how true is this?', has it been engineered? Whilst we've had a bit of a hiatus over the past 12 months mainly because the media has got itself a bit of a bad reputation really and I think they've not got any reason to do that, I mean why? Because I think ultimately, they have a job to do in exposing all this wrong doing, I mean the Pakistan fire for example, horrendous, absolutely horrendous and it had been audited, but basically there's a factory that has iron bars at the windows and people cant evacuate the building and that's the main reason I like doing this job, because it actually saves lives. Even basic health and safety, apart from people getting a better basic living standards, it actually saves lives. I mean look at the factory that collapsed in Bangladesh, so yeah, at the moment the media have, I mean I probably think its not fashionable at the moment, to expose sweatshop labour, there's probably not a lot of mileage in it but I think it will come back and that puts a hell of a lot of pressure on the brands.

AJ: Maybe consumers have become a bit like numb to it all, and they've heard it all before...

DJ: Yeah I know, you become anaesthetised to it, they do...

AJ: I wanted to say that in the nicest way possible... I just think that sometimes you read a story in the media and your like another one, another sweatshop, its almost like no surprise anymore, it shouldn't be the case but...

DJ: No it shouldn't but I think it's a question of how quick you can change and in all honesty, whilst a lot of the pressure is being put on retailers like ourselves, one has to question our capacity to influence, as if we're buying less than 5% lets say from a factory and your saying that your wage costs are below minimum wages or your health and safety standards need to be improved, all of which has cost implications, they'll say you know, I don't want your business, its about how you can get factories to change, because ultimately its about getting the factories to engage with you really, its about having the clout, I mean if you have 50% of their business, its worth while them doing it. Quite often I will challenge suppliers and they will say you haven't given us any orders, we're not doing anything, so basically they shut up shop and don't want to implement anything until basically we give them an order and they start to move forward a bit. It's very delicate and you have to incentivify the suppliers to actually bring them into the process, but ultimately its coming back to, who's responsibility is it anyway? Is it the Chinese government, Vietnam government, Cambodian government, its about having laws, lets face it all these countries have laws, its about the regulation and the enforcement. They all have minimum wages and those minimum wages are going up significantly but lots of these operations still manage to exploit people, even in our own backyard, you know, Leicester.

AJ: Picking up on something you said then, you said there needs to be incentives for suppliers, do you think there maybe needs to be incentives for consumers to purchase responsibly and maybe that's why, I dunno, I've read some literature about the incentives for consumers...

DJ: What do you mean? I mean in terms of fashion products, I mean your particular clothes, why did you choose to buy them, go on? What influenced you to actually...

AJ: Obviously aesthetics, price, erm...

DJ: Do you look at labels?

AJ: I do actually, I do actually look at labels but I think that's because of what I do, I don't think I did previously but I do now, but even if you do look at a label and see

where a garments made, unless the consumer has the knowledge. It might say made in Turkey, but which factory in Turkey, it could be a really bad factory. I almost feel that consumers are not informed enough to make an informed decision, if that makes sense? They don't have that awareness level to implement it when they're purchasing.

DJ: What about the Made By label, what do you think about that?

AJ: Yeah, I think its doing some good, the traceability element to it is obviously credible but do consumers actually go onto the website to see where their products are from and the various steps of the supply chain.

DJ: The point I'm trying to make is that there you have a label, which is really giving transparency to the supply chain, which is saying that this product satisfies certain ethical standards, which is great, but we don't make any such claims, we have put out our Esthetica range in the past but it has been very limited. You would maybe think that if consumers really thought it to be that important then the Made By label would really begin to grow, but what is it? Its there but it doesn't seem to be... whether it needs a bit of marketing or a bit of a push, I don't know, I mean I think it's a great idea and I think for us, if we could see the consumers buying into that and it increasing sales then I think we'd probably go for it but again that would mean that we would need to put in more work with all the traceability stuff that goes with it. At the moment there's no evidence to suggest that its actually having any impact, yet there are consumers out there, a small percentage that will always ask those questions, that will always want to look closer at things, but they're not you typical consumer at this junction.

AJ: That's my issue.

DJ: So the question is how can you get that C change, that defining moment where consumers suddenly become... this is now and they want it as a prerequisite.

AJ: I have a lot of trouble with this idea of who's responsibility is it, like with the Made By label, yes your handing over a certain amount of responsibility to the consumer to say this is our standard, you go onto our website and look it up, or should it be the retailers that are saying there's a green light above our door, we're working to these certain standards and the consumer should be able to have that brand trust with retailers, to kind of believe what they're doing.

DJ: Well that's my belief, our product should almost be beyond reproach, because the supply chain is so vast and there's a lot of issues there, albeit we are trying and it's very challenging, but the nature of the products we have and the diversity of the products we've got, to then have the Made By label across everything would really put a lot of pressure on us to have complete transparency. I'm not saying I wouldn't like to go down that route, at some point I think we should, but it is about the added value and if we did that, would it increase our sales? Would it increase our profitability, you know how would it benefit the business and there's no evidence to say that it would, and I think those are the issues or should we just do it for entropic reasons? Well fine, entropic reasons are fine but if you don't have a business. I mean ultimately it is down to sustainability isn't it? Everything that we try to do, whilst profit might be a dirty word, if we don't have a commercially successful business then we can put pressure on our suppliers to make changes and its trying to sort of create that balance and that harmony really.

AJ: Definitely, I think it is balance because some of the work I've done with consumers reflected balance also. I asked them to give me a hierarchy of what they look for in a product, I know you questioned me to what I look for when buying clothes, but I found there was this big divide between necessity & need and this kind of nice aspect. So the necessities were obviously aesthetics, price, material and quality but then this kind of diverse angle were factors such as handmade, Fairtrade, organic and locally sourced. So it was almost as if they were saying these are the things I need from a product, and yes it would be nice if it was ethical, but its not a necessity which I suppose is the harmony you speak of.

DJ: Yeah but if you look at maybe Fairtrade, particularly on the food side of things, if you look at bananas, its almost a necessity isn't it? Cocoa it's a necessity, tea is a necessity and virtually every major retailer, even Nestle, even though it was hard to get them deliver, they're all into the fair trade concept. But if you look at cotton, it hasn't taken off has it? We have C cotton but its just stagnated at C cotton and looking at the Fairtrade Foundation and FLO and looking how they can engineer that and I think everyone's aware that there are issue with cotton, environmental issues, ethical issues, child labour issues but its about how you can manage that in a fairly transparent way and that the consumer will buy into that. At this junction it is not happening, I mean we've had the Eco label in the EU for god knows how long and its just not taken off has it? Ok you've got the Erkertex label which is in France and Germany and Europe,

its probably more related to kinds clothing because of children sucking on chemical filled clothing...

AJ: It's a totally different argument isn't it?

DJ: It's a different concept isn't it? But are you concerned about Erkertex and the environmental impact of you clothing, you know? Probably not.

AJ: I come across this argument quite a lot in things I've read, there's this argument between food and clothing, maybe Fairtrade has taken off in food quite so vastly because people have been presented with that choice, I mean when you go in to the supermarket you've got two bananas, one Fairtrade banana and one non Fairtrade banana and it's the same with coffee, so I see what you saying about cotton but 9 times out of 10 consumers aren't given the choice, you know there's two dresses, ones Fairtrade and ones not. So, I dunno, I've come across that argument quite a lot.

DJ: Well I know what the reason is, and it's a technological reason, everyone regards cotton as cotton and its not, there's many, many types of cotton and different types of cotton go into making different types of fabric and if your comparing it to cocoa, its very simplistic, cocoa goes into making chocolate and its quite straight forward. But if you look at cotton it can be some very complex blends, it can be a very fine voiles and with Fairtrade, its not thus far been able to manage all the huge varieties in the supply chain, into the spinning factories which then make yarns with different counts and different yarn qualities, which then make fabrics which are then engineered into high end fashion garments, so with the supply chain Fairtrade has not been able to manage that and get to grips with the complex supply chain. So its much more complex and that's the reason its not happened and it is about having that management and that transparency because like us now, we've got the Uzbek cotton scenario and its nigh on impossible to know where that cotton has ended up unless you've got complete and utter traceability and its just not possible. And Fairtrade cotton, what do you tend to get, you get cotton t-shirts, you get fairly simplistic products so its there in basic products but its not actually reached high end products has it?

AJ: Well I think that's all my questions for today, I think I'll leave you to your day.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview Transcription – Company C

Interview conducted on Thursday 18th October 2012 at Company C Offices, Central London.

Interviewee: AR

Corporate Social Responsibility at Company C.

Interviewer: AJ

Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University

START OF INTERVIEW

AJ: So, I'm in year three of a three year PhD, so moving into the last few months which is going to get hectic. I'm based in a design school but I'm looking at fashion purchasing on the UK high street, particularly responsibly sourced fashion. I'm looking at it from two different angles; from that of the consumer and that of the retailer, so I'm at the stage where I've conducted quite a few studies with consumers and now I'm interviewing people like yourself to get the retailers perspective. So, I'm kind of looking at 3 key areas; on the part of the consumers I'm looking at their awareness levels of the negative, social impacts of the garment supply chain and also how aware they are of what retailers are doing towards that. I'm looking at what retailers are doing to begin with and how they implement it through their business, and the final thing that brings all this back together is how the two parties communicate with each other. So, do you think the Company C customer is aware of the negative social impacts in the garment supply chain?

AR: I think as with all consumers only to an extent, I think with consumers, particularly with Company C, because its an established brand and its been on the UK high etc. but its also seen as being very respectable, a lot of that responsibility they put as a trust, and that as a brand they will do and buy in a certain way and that the impacts wont be negative etc. So, I think that they are aware but whether they are proactive, I think there's a gap, it's not like as in with the Fairtrade, with the sugar etc. I would say people buy it with a specific knowledge, they think ok if I buy this, this is going to happen, although saying that, I think people do, they do think that Company C is not

going to be a company where you can buy 5 t-shirts for a pound. Do you know what I mean? You know, that kind of stuff. I would also say, that it in all honesty, consumers are fickle but there is a lot more awareness out there because of the technology forms that are kind of coming out. Another thing, I think consumer are aware that Company C is acting responsible because of our work on the ground, I think a lot of information will filter through, I mean we do a lot of work with the global unions, particularly with civil society, so I think with those issues, I think, you know like Labour Behind the Label, people know that Company C kind of has a robust process in place, this and this and these kind of standards are met. There's a bit of both but I wouldn't say that consumers are generally aware anyway, that's not because of Company C, I just think that generally. I think percentages might start to increase, particularly now we have to think about the fires, people are dying and now campaigns are starting to become a little bit more savvy on being able to immediately access, not only the information but images, powerful stuff, so that I think will, and I think in all honesty it will be difficult for companies to hide in the shadows. Company C has done a lot and has been in the spotlight because it has done a lot, but its not a level playing field anyway because those companies who are not doing anything are able to, I'd say, stay in the background, but that is going to change, I think its going to change anyway.

AJ: So do you think they kind of use that awareness of not only the Company C brand but do you think they use their awareness of what they see in the media and social websites or whatever, do you think they use that information to inform what they buy? Because I know you mentioned this gap, which is...

AR: I think no, they don't. I mean there's apps out now where you can check and there's the good guide etc. and things are beginning to build a bit of momentum, there's other organisations that are beginning to spring up, they're really new at the moment, but like Labour Voices and people like that, where workers voices are coming to the western world consumer market, that is going to be more powerful, but I don't think at the moment that.. You can see through the rise of fast fashion, I mean you can go now and buy an outfit for a fiver, I mean that's not informed choice, so I wouldn't say that they're informed at the moment. However the risk reputation, I mean if you look at the 1980's at Gap, Nike, there's still that in consumers minds and they're still fighting off that image. I mean Nestle in itself, people like that. I think consumers will become more aware because of the environmental and labour rights are beginning to come together a lot more.

AJ: I think something that I'm finding in my research is the lack of connectivity, as you were saying I think now there's a lot powerful images, people can actually see what's happening, but there's something quite different from seeing it and thing *oh that's awful*, to actually having empathy and thinking I am going to purchase differently because that is happening.

AR: I mean you cant blame... other companies might turn round and say *well there's a recession happening...* You can make informed choices at any level, it doesn't necessarily have to impact because even if you make it a choice, you can... its not gonna cost consumers anything to say *I'm going to buy that, cos I need to buy that and it's a bargain* etc. But what I will do is make a point of saying, to the customer service etc. can you just send me the fact that this has not been made in this condition or whatever, you know? There other stuff they can do, but I don't know if they find it easy enough at the moment.

AJ: I think the fact that people aren't informed enough to make an informed decision I think is an issue, so would you say it is the responsibility of the retailer to inform consumers to a certain degree or do you think its coming from other channels?

AR: Right this is where we get to, its problematic, its complicated, there's no simple answer and...

THE INTERVIEWEE ANSWERS HIS RINGING PHONE

AR: Sorry I do apologise, sorry where was I? Yeah, so it's complicated, right so yeah, that's the bit... You look at the sourcing countries and there are a lot of stakeholders that kind of have to be involved and I think there's government responsibility and there's business responsibility, and even the UK government has responsibility etc. As a company I think we have a big responsibility because ultimately they are manufacturing our products and within that sphere of influence, within that factory, that is certainly our responsibility, I mean look at Bangladesh and you look at the fact that the trade associations, BGMA and people like that have kept wages at an atrocious level but that's then, that responsibility then feeds back to the government, I mean what is the government to do in that? Unfortunately where there is no civil society and your going to have to make those kind of changes to such a... I mean like the infrastructure or epidemic issues. So in China there's corruption around audits and that's why we have our own teams, so how do you deal with that? But there's a

number of players that have to be round the table to be able to deal with that, so I wouldn't say that's its not our responsibility to inform consumers but because its complicated, and then if you... and I'll be honest, I think that the trade unions and the NGO's have a specific role to play in saying actually we are for those who are doing something or for those who raise their heads above the ____, what we are not going to do, its turn around and slam them down, but what we'll do is say you not doing this, you not doing this but actually those people are not doing anything as well and I think its their responsibility as well and NGO's, I think they're lacked a co-ordinated strategy on CSR and they'll have missed the bolt on a lot of stuff. I think in the 1980's they were good, them raising awareness etc. but the discussions and the developments have moved on maybe too quickly and they don't have the knowledge now. If you look at a lot of companies, to be honest with you, there's people in there with more experience and knowledge of worker rights, training and standards and code of conducts etc. within the company than there are in the NGO's, whereas this used to be the other way round before because you would be going to them and asking what's happening on the ground

AJ: So there's kind of been a shift in that knowledge?

AR: Yeah, there's been a shift in that knowledge, that's not to say, obviously there's partners but that's why for Company C its been integral for the CSR to be, you have local teams and then those local teams interact with the local unions and the local NGO's etc. because if your going to have change, you've got to make sure its kind of at a local level, to have an understanding of not only the culture but also of the dynamics and how change can best be made to help progress for those people you are trying to help instead of, what a lot of companies were doing before is sending a guy from central London to go to Honduras and he cant even speak Spanish, do you know what I mean? And now the fact that auditing, you know people know that auditing was a necessity, but now it has come to realisation of the little impact auditing has had and the huge resource we have all put into it which should have resulted in a lot more impact than has actually happened and now I think there's a lot more of the conversation of how do you go beyond auditing because auditing is such a small snapshot. Sorry, a long winded answer is to say is that to inform consumers and customers you have to do that in a nuance way and there doesn't seem to be that resource or that capacity in the NGO's and the trade unions, who you would assume would be the ones to do that.

AJ: Yeah they should be at the forefront.

AR: Yeah they should be at the forefront of it, and its them who can do that, whilst for companies its also the issue of credibility and we say we're doing A, but then you go to China and there's no Freedom of Association but then is a consumer going to actually understand that?

AJ: Probably not.

AR: No probably not, exactly, so do you know what I mean? Unfortunately not.

AJ: So, I've been on your website and I know you're an ETI member, but do Company C do anything above and beyond the ETI base code to kind of elaborate on your own code or...

AR: We do a huge amount.

AJ: Can you give me a summary?

AR: The one thing we have done is that we don't farm out our CSR responsibilities, so we have local teams in the key sourcing countries, they are local people who can build relationships with the factory suppliers, the workers etc. And we then do is that we have regional managers in the key sourcing areas who will then... so for example in India, our regional manager sits on the trade association boards and he'll kind of say look these are the standards we're working to, this is what we need to ensure that we can say to our consumers that people are meeting our standards and requirements but you need to do A, B & C, so we're participating in a lot of those initiatives, you know we have specific ones on our key, key areas which are our Freedom of Association, we've got that in China, in India, in Turkey etc. Home workers, venerable workers, migrant workers, we've got programmes on contract labour, we're doing a huge amount on...

AJ: No wonder you're busy

AR: Not last year but the year before I did a full review and we had 28 other initiatives going on, which is huge and what we've been able to do now is to screen those and now that we have all the learning, all the lessons that we've done, we've tried to do

that with costing here and we've tried to do that with labour there with out home workers, right what do we need to do now? For example, train contract workers, middle-men, how do you get to them? Right you put the strategy in place, build the trust, get the local NGO's to say, right this is the kind of training we need, build a template, we're involved at different levels. It's about linking them all up, so we have a programme on the ground, which is doing the actual work in reality, talking to contractors etc. putting in places, training factories in how they need to ensure that the contract workers are being paid, we're just talking about one programme but what I'll do as well is co-ordinate a strategic approach to that and say ok, lets do this and this ad then I've gone and spoken to two other big brands and said if we're going to make a big impact here, lets join together, we've already done this work, we've got 5 years experience, you don't need to reinvent the wheel, don't spend another £50,000 on a consultant who's just gonna tell you what's already out there, really this is what we need to do, these are the barriers. But we've got a plan, so we've brought them on board and as well as that, I go to, there's a panel in Brussels, which looks and guidelines, so going to them and saying *look, as retailers this is what we need to implement these kind of standards, a tool box, we need you to talk to local labour, the government etc. and try and get this registration.* So we're doing a lot of different stuff, but it all has to come together, so apart from the ETI, believe me, we do a number of initiatives, but that's just because we've got local teams and we've always trusted our local teams. So' our audits are done by our own people and that means that the business is taking responsibility, what we're not doing is saying to someone, *you know what the CSR bit, you go and do for us, just make sure we've got a piece of paper.* You know, so that's not what we're doing.

AJ: So you said that you kind of collaborate with other brands, how does that benefit Company C, that might be a simple question but...

AR: Firstly, what's key is leverage, if your going to go into a factory and try and implement anything, if Company C is there say, and they have 5% of production but if they've also got, I dunno, pick one, Inditex for example and they've 20%, that combination is going to ensure that whatever activities etc. you've not only got the business behind you to ensure that that commitment is continuing but also the resource then as a company we don't have to dilute that resource, we can put it all into one pot, but more importantly, we don have to reinvent the wheel and that has been a big problem, with companies looking at only one aspect, a little bit here and a little bit there and then people are just reinventing it, instead of saying look, we've looked at

this, you don't need to spend the Company C 3 years going and looking at the same thing and doing another need assessment, its pointless, if your really going to make a difference now, you kind of need to break that cycle, and we've been doing the same thing for ten years, 15 years but now if we do collaboration, ok so we have really good relationships with local partners and stakeholders but other companies will also have that and if you can do something together, you going to be able to build them momentum and its going to impact the industry in a much bigger way and that's really what you need to do, and more importantly, if we go and do something else, you've still got other companies who are at the same level of understanding of where we were, and we'll say we'll go and look at X, cos we know we need to look at the problem, but with your resources and your contacts etc. you can invest in that and then we can come back together. There needs to be a lot more of that kind of collaboration.

AJ: It seems like a very wise and logical way to work.

AR: It is, and its amazing that a lot of companies don't, they seem to have seen it as more of a competitive edge now and that is a mistake in itself because for all of us, CSR, the business case is there. Working conditions etc. impacts on quality, time, delivery, we know all that so for us all we need to be moving in the right direction anyway and also if external stakeholders are saying to me what are we doing on wages and they're saying to you, what are you doing on wages, then it makes sense if we're going to meet what they actually want, to come together and do something properly.

AJ: So in terms of your employees, how are they informed and how do they implement the business philosophy into their work?

AR: We have a buying school, everybody goes to that, they have half a day so we do a presentation, question and answers, we go through the whole of the code, so we go through every single... for example health and safety, discrimination, all of them, no child labour, forced labour etc. We explain about how our audits are done for example if they are going to source from a supplier etc. we'll do all the inductions etc. so your supplier will know, that we have all the systems in place internally, so lets say when they sign a new supplier, we get first visibility of that and we'll go in audit and then we'll work with mediation but unless all the buyers, merchandisers, technologists etc. are speaking the same language, we're not going to get anywhere but that is actually where Company C has been very good, what we've been able to do is link our teams with our code of practice activities and we sit down with them every three months and

we go through all the factory suppliers and discuss all the issues and what issues are there. Did you know for example that this is happening in this country, you know, by the way do you know in the EPZ's at the moment, there is this issue and this issue, it might not be anything to do with your buying but it could impact because these are the issues that are happening at the moment, there's a new government coming in and they're going to do that, and the minimum wage is this, so we'll keep them... because its about that communication and what we're trying to do at the moment is to make sure that communication is happening at all the levels, at the factories, suppliers, but particularly internally as well. Sorry, just one more thing, our manager meets with the product directors every 3 months so that's a meeting where we update all the buying directors, so its like a drip feed down and we do all the teams as well.

AJ: So in terms of in-store, are any of your in-store staff informed, do they get an induction?

AR: They don't get an induction, they are made aware that this is our code etc. but they get an in-store newsletter called In Faith or In-store or something like that and what we'll do is we'll make sure that the information in there and that will be put within each of the stores, in the staff room, on the notice boards etc. saying ok, this is what we're doing. So at that level, I wouldn't say it was integral but we make sure that at least that information is out there, we make it really known that if anyone wants to discuss anything, they can come to us because we need to come to you when we need to discuss these issues or when we have a problem because their assistance is key. A buyer sending an email has a lot of weight and they'll sit with us and say how do you want us to do this, what do you want us to do etc. So yeah, they'll help us meet those standards.

AJ: So how about your suppliers? When you get a new supplier how do you...

AR: A formal introduction, its in the terms and conditions, its in the contracts. They're given... you know, here's our code of practice, they're given a booklet, the guidance etc. We make it very clear that this is the standard that we're expecting, you now need to ensure that your factory is in tune and working towards that, if they're not already there and we are here to assist. Then we have training session in country, so in China we have HR application, management systems etc. all free that we pay for, so with CSR, we don't make any money from our code of practice, its not anything like that and we'll do a lot of those trainings and we'll do, most importantly our teams on the

ground will meet suppliers and factories on the ground as well, but we also do the formal induction for the first time in the UK.

AJ: And I guess if you meet with a factory manager, its their responsibility to communicate it to their workers?

AR: Yeah, but then we'll kind of go and follow up.

AJ: So just going back to how you inform consumers of what your doing, I've read everything that's on your website, but do you do anything in-store, is there any kind of...

AR: We used to, I mean a couple of companies went down the road of the posters with the ETI base code etc. I think what's more useful, for example we had an initiative in South Africa with local women co-operatives and it went from the whole cotton farmer, all the way etc. so all that product is labelled etc. and within that label there is information, but most importantly, have you seen the directory? Well the directory is amazing, it goes to like 2 million people and in previous ones, if you look in the back there is always two pages of codes, initiatives, what we've done etc. and we have a lot of feedback from that, and of course on the website, I mean a lot of it is when we do the annual report etc. There's a school in Kenya that... they take children from a community that are going to have no access to education and its really one of those, what I'd call prestigious schools and we do is that for all the flowers people buy, all the money goes to that. All those kind of things, but then when you click on it, it will give you more information and it will explain about that. In all honesty, that is one level isn't it? It's that kind of nice, do you know what I mean? And a lot of companies are really good at just doing that kind of stuff, you know, here's £50 for an orphanage and that's about it. I think what's more important for Company C is, look we know there are issues on the ground and we know there are endemic issues and how do you challenge then endemic issues because our requirements as a business we want to adhere to, you know our code of practice isn't, if you can do it great, if you not, we're going to implement those and we're very, very good ensuring look, we're here with open, honesty, transparency, we want to work with you however, these zero tolerance, these are the issues, this is how we'll work with and support you but you need to give us that commitment. If after a long period of time you genuinely don't progress, then as a business we will make a decision and we've done that on a number of occasions, on a lot of occasions, honestly. Because you have those standards and they're global

standards, we can't say, *you know what in China... it's ok, who's going to find out*. No, everything has to be implemented so it's the one code and standards and that's the way it should be. And I think even more so now, you know with all the Ruggie stuff coming out, I think that's going to impact on business a lot more because Ruggie is going to push companies to make policy changes as opposed to doing a little bit here and a little bit there, these are real policy changes and a lot of the Ruggie stuff is now going to filter down into the trade unions, NGO's campaigning minds and they're thinking, hold on a second labour rights have moved into human rights, and human rights is a much more powerful tool because human rights just resonates more etc. so if we talk about migrant labour, the code is no forced labour, but then if you take no forced labour and put it into no trafficking, it's an alarm bell and a lot of consumers will immediately switch on so I think that's going to have a big impact.

AJ: So you said from the back of your Company C Directory, you get a lot of feedback from the information you put there, what kind of feedback do you get? Feedback from customers I guess?

AR: Yeah, we get a lot of emails and I suppose it's those who are informed in all honesty, they'll say, look we read this and what are you specifically doing on... and it's usually either child labour or on wages because those are the issues. And then we'll have a lot of students who will come and say what are you doing on union rights etc. and then you'll have those kind of conversations but I think with the majority of consumers it's the emotive issues isn't it? The child labour, I mean for us child labour is a reputational... it's really important but never mind as a company if you look at the differences in opinion of what unions feel should happen with child labour and some NGO's, there's a big difference, they're not exactly in agreement. So we'll say look, here is our process, you know we're working with local organisations to ensure this happens, this happens. So on child labour for example we have a, and we've been applauded for this, I'm not telling you because we've been applauded for it, ok so what do we do about child labour? Zero tolerance, what we don't do is, you've got child labour? See you later. Right you've got child labour, what we do is we have a local NGO who will then look after the interest of the child so they'll go to that child and see what type of education or training and then what we'll do is go to the family and see what the reason for that child working is income, finances etc, so what we don't want is that loss of income and that child then going into a worse case of child labour, so a member of that family, we try and put them in the place of work where the child was etc. There's that robustness that has to be there, I'll defend that because I know that

ultimately the child is the most important thing, the factory will then pay for that child's education up until the legal age of working, so say 16 in a certain country and that's part and parcel and all our factories and suppliers know that that is our policy and that's part of the child labour remediation, they have to do that because they had the child in the factory, its against ours standards, its against the law, you will then pay for the education up until this legal age and if then they want to come back and work, great but that's what you have to do. So what I'm trying to say is how would you tell something like that to a consumer? What a consumer would say is *have you got child labour?* No, that's what they want to hear, a one word answers and that's the difficulty because consumer awareness is... journalists and the media etc. its very difficult for them to do the research and provide the detail because sensationalism sells newspaper etc. Its like slave labour? Band, that's it, whereas if they looked at what was happening in that country and to what that company was doing, or maybe they shouldn't have been in the headline, maybe company X absolutely should be, because they haven't got any of the systems in place or they're not trying to do it, or they haven't got the integrity or they're not doing something with sincerity but you cant explain that to consumers because you haven't got the chance and you cant get that into a newspaper because they're not going to allow you to respond.

AJ: I guess Company C is quite unique in a way because you have the Company C catalogue and people will sit down of a night time and read through it, whereas a lot of companies might have a leaflet or a magazine but is someone going to sit down and read that for hours? Probably not.

AR: I do a lot of the university talks because I love doing them.

AJ: I've been to one of your talks.

AR: Have you? Oh my god, have you?

AJ: It was good, it was really good.

AR: Are you sure? Oh god, I go a bit off script, which one was it?

AJ: It was in Edinburgh and it was the Fashioning an Ethical Industry, I'm pretty sure it was that one.

AR: Ok, but I do have this really good presentation that I work on and then I get there and I think the problem in that I don't think people realise that people are a lot more intelligent than we or people would assume and I love doing the student ones because in all honesty, they're going to ask the questions that really make a difference, hold on a second, if you're going to do that I need to know A,B & C, they've got to know and that's the only way we're going to do that. I think there are a number of trade unions and NGO's but they only have a limited resource and when you're trying to deal with 30 different issues are you going to campaign on that or are you going to campaign on that, but also within the UK at the moment, this might sound a bit controversial, but NGO's have lost their skill of campaigning, there's very few now that do campaigning with a capital 'C'. I think as companies previously we would have sat down and thought *oh my god, we've got an email from _____*, but nowadays there must be 2 or 3. If I get an email from, there's particular NGO's that if I got an email from I'd think *oh my god*. Whereas a lot of them, you think, you know what, I'll give them a ring and we'll have a chat and we'll do that because we know that their campaigning has a lot less impact and a lot less stringent.

AJ: Yeah. I was talking to DJ from Company B last week and we were talking about consumers almost becoming numb to issues like this, in terms of campaigns, there are so many campaigns nowadays, there's tigers, there's cancer, there's so many that people almost put their blinkers on and are like *no*, I've had enough, do you know what I mean?

AR: Absolutely, and I think that's why, that in the future the technology platform will become really, really important. I read somewhere that 20 million phones are sold a day, smart phones in China, that kind of access to those workers lives immediately, those people being able to communicate directly, that is going to be something new and I think companies are going to have to, I think it would be silly for companies to now, not start looking, putting things into place to ensure they're doing stuff. When that information comes, you're not going to be able to dispute that, it's not going to filter down, so and so told the local partner, the local partner told the local organisation, the local organisation then told Around the Globe, Around the Globe then rang the company. There is going to be direct communication between the worker and the consumer. That in itself is going to be powerful.

AJ: I guess with technology it's the choice of the consumer, if they're got time to read it to look at it.

AR: Exactly, it's going to be easy, its going to go straight to your phone.

AJ: So I read on your website about the branded CSR logo that you have, I know you put it on numerous things but do you think consumers understand it, or take notice of it?

AR: No. On the Fair trade stuff, yeah but I don't think they understand, there's a lot behind it, isn't there? Even if you look at forced labour, there's the conventions etc. Ok, ethical trade to them means they got paid properly, but ethical trade is a lot more than that, its about, there's so much more to it, the discrimination, the gender issues, all of your other code element etc. But then should they be? And that's when it comes down to is it the consumers to put some pressure upwards? Absolutely, that would make a difference but then what pressure comes from the top? That I think is what's lacking as well, and you've got a lot of companies at the moment.. If I was a consumer, ok I've come from a very different background, I've come from a campaigning background but lets say I walked past a shop and I saw 3 t-shirts for a fiver, that immediately...

AJ: Alarm bells are ringing

AR: Alarm bells are ringing, I instantly think wow! Cotton, making it, dying it, the supplier took a cut, the factory took a cut and then you ship it over and then the person selling it here takes a cut, how the hell can they do that. There's only one person who's not going to get paid in that, and that's gonna be the work. But consumers are not going to make that link unless there's one of those big exposes, which I think then filters down to the consumer, mainstream awareness and I don't think its there at the moment.

AJ: I guess retailers like yourselves, your doing so much, which element do you communicate? You say your committed to ethical trade but there's so much behind that, that how do you get the message across of everything your doing into one?

AR: Exactly, and the other problem is, we can say we're doing this much but there's no way our supply chain is going to be perfect, absolutely no way, so it would only take one incident and if we turn around and say, look at what we're doing and suddenly a journalist turns round and says, yeah but... and then all of the trust and all of the faith

has gone down the pan. In some ways as retailers its better not to communicate it, because you can say look this is what we're doing to those who are informed as they know about the intricacies of the supply chain and the sourcing countries etc. But if you say we're doing this, this and this and look how brilliant we are and the suddenly.. You know, we source from 40 different countries and how can you monitor all of that, and how can you monitor it as a retailer because the government hasn't got the labour inspectorate and hasn't got the local labour laws being enforced etc. You cant do that, you haven't got that type of information.

Truthfully the one thing I would applaud Company A on is the fact that they have made a commitment, that in itself is going to put pressure on other retailers and to make that step up. Ok whether or not they succeed and how far they get with implementing that, some of them are really ambitious and I don't think the strategy that they've got in place is going to deliver that, but its about making that commitment. I think trade unions and NGO's might want to sit back and think, you know what, they've made a commitment because they've built themselves up and instead of knocking them all down, ok critique etc. but then turn round and say *they've made a commitment, where's the rest of yours?* Of what are the rest of you doing to ensure that that happens.

AJ: I guess that's it for today if that's ok? I've taken enough of your time up.

AR: No, no, you know what? Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview Transcription – Company D

Interview conducted on Friday 19th October 2012 at Company D HQ, Central London.

Interviewee: TC

Senior Ethical Trading Manager at Company D

Interviewer: AJ

Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University

START OF INTERVIEW

AJ: So, I'm looking at consumer awareness, which is kind of one area and how aware they are of what retailers are doing but also how aware they are of social issues as well. Another thing is how retailers implement their CSR values throughout their business and into their products and what kind of brings this back together is the communication between the two. Does that make sense? I've also got a few questions for you if that's ok?

TC: Yeah

AJ: Talking about consumer awareness, do you think the Company D consumer is aware of social issues within the garment supply chain?

TC: I think it's a mixture, I think we have a group of consumers that just want to buy high street fashion and don't care where it comes from, they're not that bothered about what kind of conditions its made in and then you have some people who think *ooh that's a lovely product, I wonder where its made* but because they love the product so much, they think *oh well, its only one piece, I'll just have that*, then you have some that are genuinely interested in it. I wish the majority of the high street, well I wish the whole of the high street had an interest in it, but hand on heart, in the current climate, I mean if you have a family, how much have you got to spend? So, yeah I think there are a group of consumers that are aware.

AJ: Do you think if they have that awareness do you think it ultimately influences what they buy?

TC: I mean as I was saying earlier on, I think *yes* to a certain extent, but when they see something that they really fall in love with, they will buy it. But I wish that we would have a lot more of our consumers coming to us and asking where is it made? How are you responsible for your supply chain? How do you manage your supply chain? I think that tomorrow customer, generation Z? Whatever we're on to now. I'm hoping that they will come through and demand to know everything about our supply chain, then that will make the corporates, they will have to be a lot more responsible if they want to sell their product. They've got to meet the stakeholders expectations.

AJ: You said you'd like more customers to contact you, do you get customers contacting you about CSR issues?

TC: Yeah, yeah we do, not enough though, I don't think its enough anyway.

AJ: Do you respond to them and give them the information they're looking for?

TC: Yeah we do, as with all the corporates we have our responsibility and a lot of the time they are directed to our CSR report because we do cover everything in the responsibilities report, if there is anything that isn't covered then yes they will get a response. So yeah, we are obligated to respond to them.

AJ: Do you think it's the role of the retailers to inform their customers about these issues or do you think it should be the media or the consumer being proactive in obtaining that information

TC: I think the corporates should advise their consumers of where their products come from, not necessarily how much they pay for them but talk about the work that's being done to make sure people, that we're working towards our factories paying the workers a fair wage. I think we do have an obligation but at the same time, we need to be careful to not be seen to be using our CSR as a marketing tool.

AJ: Definitely, I think that's quite a tricky balance really.

TC: It is, there's a fine line and at the same time, I think times are changing, I think the media should maybe the media could do a bit more, I dunno, change their approach maybe in terms of what is being done instead of just pointing fingers.

AJ: Talking about the success stories rather than just the negative kind of...

TC: And I also think the corporates should come up with a 'warts and all', you know we do so much, not everything is going to be successful. It's like buying a range isn't it? Not everything will be successful, and we can't be 100% successful because we need the other side to engage, and when I talk about the other side I mean the factories to engage with us and we need the workers to engage with us, and you know, you get varying levels of engagement and those who are not scared to engage we will have the most success with. And you could say, why are you doing business with those people who are not particularly engaging? We buy from them because they turn out a good product and we buy from them because we still have a responsibility to those workers in that factory and we need to work towards changing the mind sets and educating those factories. You can't just work with the factories who are good, there's a whole heap of factories who aren't that good and we need to change those mind sets in those factories. As you know it's a tricky and complex area to work in.

AJ: Obviously you know I've been talking to AR and DJ and we've been talking about the media and how consumers are getting almost numb to the stories and the like, I know they shouldn't at all, but it's like...

TC: Oh yeah another one. The effect is almost de-sensitising and if they talked about the success stories and the work and it would give someone a better feeling that when they walk into a retailer and they think *oh yeah, actually, they are doing those things, they might not have a 100% success story but they're working towards it and they're actually doing something so actually I will feel better about what I'm buying.*

AJ: I think there's almost a brand trust thing as well isn't there? Consumer should think, I know a little bit about what they company are doing, there's a green light above the door and I trust them to...

TC: Yeah, yeah so maybe as I was saying earlier on maybe the media could change their approach a little bit and you could also use that as an educational tool for the public.

AJ: So in terms of when you work with your suppliers how do you inform them of your philosophy within Company D, your standards, your code of conduct, how it that communicated?

TC: Well when we take on a new supplier, we take them through what our requirements are, they obviously have to sign our code of conduct and the factory has to be audited before we start work there. If there are problems in the factory then the education starts, the mind set being kicked in and we work with them to make those improvements. We have Our Responsibilities report and we're looking to source from the UK more and more.

AJ: I've been reading about your HG range.

TC: Yeah, and we're at the moment looking at some UK factory workshops, because when you actually talk to the people who run the factories, they're not aware of what they should be doing really, like Right to Work documents...

AJ: Really, in the UK?

TC: Yeah, there are a lot of migrant workers that work in the factories on the UK and the people who run these factories are not aware of the paperwork these people should have. You know the Right to Work papers, so we have to go down and educate them on what they look like, how to get them etc. All that kind of stuff. So whilst we cant touch everybody all of the time and help them all of the time, we do look at how we can educate them and we take them through our requirements. The audits that are carried out, we do actually want to move beyond auditing.

AJ: Is this the ARC initiative?

TC: Yeah and we do actually want to move beyond auditing and we want to look at auditing and the value that it brings and if you actually think about it, the value that it brings is just a snapshot in a factory.

AJ: I was talking to AR about this yesterday, about how the...

TC: AR and I are actually working very closely together, yeah it's a snapshot, it brings kind of that much value (makes small signal with hand), and how can we persuade a factory to go beyond auditing, what value could we bring them in terms of making them more responsible for the working conditions in their own factory, so we're kind of looking how we can do that.

AJ: So is it almost like self-auditing?

TC: No. Its looking at all the issues that campaigners campaign against, you know, paying a living wage, there's no freedom of association. Its looking at how perhaps we could make a factory more productive and more efficient and building a wage ladder in that factory so that we can work towards paying the workers more money. You cant do that overnight, you know, a campaigning group might say *pay more on your cost price*, but that is going to go straight in the pocket of the factory owner, so its working our ways of how we can do it. But also training on labour laws, worker rights, having worker representatives, giving them the option of true freedom of association and educating the factories to not be scared of freedom of association, there's nothing to be scared of, in fact there are business benefits behind all of it. Business benefits behind efficiency and productivity, business benefits behind paying the workers more, business benefits behind freedom of association, business benefits behind good working conditions.

AJ: I guess it goes back to the education element you were talking about earlier and getting them into that mind set. So going back to the HG initiative that your doing, is it going to be commercially viable for a high street retailer to manufacture in the UK. I'm not sure how much more expensive it is...

TC: It is a lot more expensive. We would like to support British manufacturing. Is it commercially viable? Well, I think it is because the lead times are a lot shorter, we can produce premium product so that we can keep our consumer interest, you know its made in the UK and made in an ethical factory, its made by people who do have the right to work, its made by people who make it in good working conditions. I think that it is commercially viable but I think that we have to be careful in terms of how much we do make in the UK because it does become a point where it wont be commercially viable. So its speciality pieces at the moment, and I don't think Company D can alone boost the UK manufacturing, I think all the other retailers would have to be on board as well and its something that we will continue to do.

AJ: I think consumers are quite aware of the movement that is coming back to Britain and things that are made in the UK nowadays.

TC: Yeah, you want things that are grown in the UK are we going back to that kind of cyclical way we used to live? Strawberries, we only had strawberries in May and June and possibly July, we have pears in September to November and the same with apples. Are we going to go back to something like that? I don't know.

AJ: So we've talked about how you inform suppliers but how do you inform people who work in this building? Designers, merchandisers, buyers...

TC: Oh, ok, yeah. When we have new people, obviously this is a big building, we have a lot of people working here, when we have new people, they go through an induction process and one of my team will take them through an induction on ethical, what we do, what we expect of them. You don't just get one starter, you'll get 20 starters and there's a whole induction day and we have a slot in that, then a few weeks later, we let them settle in and embed themselves in the company and then about 2 months later, we'll have them back and we go over... because you can imagine on your first day induction, they're just bamboozled! So we get them back together and go over that information we gave them originally and we give them some more training after that. So we roll this training out every 6 weeks to 2 months and its available to everybody, its compulsory. Over the last few years, obviously we keep it up to date, over the last few years everyone should have gone through this training, and so last week I did a couple of presentations to the board members of Company D and I also did a presentation to the buyers, merchandisers and the designers, so yeah we do raise awareness internally, its also written into peoples competencies, there's actually ethical competencies, so its written in their competencies and competencies help people go from job level to job level, so they have to meet... You know at the moment, its quite basic, you've got to know what is an audit is, you've got to have visited the factory. Its very basic at the moment, but it's a good start. But then of course you have to look at purchasing practice at some point.

AJ: I was talking to DJ about the responsibilities that buyers have and perhaps it's a little above and beyond their role and how they have a lot of power.

TC: I always try and drag a buyer with me when I go and visit a factory. If I'm going to a factory where I know we have a lot of production I will take a buyer along with me.

AJ: I bet it's a great insight, because unless your from that kind of background...

TC: The factory owner and the suppliers can see that we work together and we do actually talk together. Suppliers stupidly do think that we don't talk to each other, the buyers, I'll have conversations with buyers and say that I'm going to this factory and I've just looked on the system and they're graded whatever, can you give me a bit of background on them. People are slowly but surely starting to come round.

AJ: So going back to the communication between consumers and yourselves, I've read quite a lot on your website, but in store is there anything consumers can look at as a reminder...

TC: I don't believe there is anything in store actually, again we have to be careful to not use our CSR as a marketing tool, we have previously trained our in-store staff to what Fairtrade is, what organic is and that kind of stuff. They are actually trained to say go to our website because when you think about it, too much information is dangerous, so its best if we point people to our website and contact us that way really.

AJ: I've been reading a little more about your product, and I know you had jeans that were made from organic cotton, but I know on your CSR report on line, it said that Fairtrade sales were really slow, do you think there's any reason behind that? Do you think maybe people don't understand what Fairtrade is?

TC: I think probably, I don't know the pricing structure of the jeans but maybe the price when compared against the non-Fairtrade and organic, so at a guess if the price was at a premium then people would buy the cheaper product. I don't actually think our consumer would actually buy something just because it was Fairtrade, I think they would buy something because they liked it and ooh look, its Fairtrade too, I don't think they would buy it simply because it was Fairtrade.

AJ: I think consumers are familiar with the Fairtrade logo, they vaguely understand what it means, Im not sure if that is because the influence food has had on consumer understanding. I mean you buy a banana these days and its Fairtrade. From the work I

have been doing I have been test consumers on do they know what Fairtrade means, do you recognise this logo? And the majority of them do, but that's just a small element of the supply chain isn't it?

TC: I think people who have a little bit more money to spend will buy Fairtrade and they'll go into a supermarket and you see a mother with 4-5 kids, she's not going to spend that little bit extra on a Fairtrade banana, she's gonna buy a cheaper banana and I think its those people who are slightly more affluent who will spend that bit extra on Fairtrade.

AJ: So you think the recession has had an impact on the development of...

TC: Definitely, I think those people who aren't that interested in being ethical will definitely use that as a tool.

AJ: I was talking to DJ about what its going to take to get to that point where consumers do start to question, and they almost want those standards theres as a prerequisite, they want to know, and that kind of awareness, we know the recession has had an impact but, but we're not sure how its going to change. We were talking about when that balance is going to come. From some of the work I was doing with consumers I gave them a list of 8 factors they may look for when purchasing a garment and there was a clear divide of things that are necessities, things that people need from a garment and then there was this bottom section which including things like Fairtrade, organic, locally sourced and there was this very 2 dimensional approach, yes this is what we want and if it was that, it would be nice but its not a total requirement, which I guess is what you'd expect but I wanted to test it. Well I think that's all I have to ask you.

TC: Yeah? Well if there's anything else, you've got my number.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview Transcription – Company E

Interview conducted via email due to the planned Skype session being unable to be organised. Questions sent Friday 12th October with answers received on Monday 5th November 2012.

Interviewee: CM

Head of fashion & Sustainability Communication at Company E

Interviewer: Alana James

Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University

Question 1

Do you think that the Company D customer is aware of the social impacts in the clothing supply chain?

I think our customers are aware of topics communicated through the collection. Like the All for children collection for example, where we donate money to our collaboration with a charity for children in India and Bangladesh. Or Fashion for Water collection, which is produced for our collaboration with a charity for clean water support in developing countries.

Question 2

How do customer awareness levels of social issues impact their shopping behaviour?

I think the customer want to feel confident that the brand they buy from is responsible and active within CSR. My experience is that the average consumer is becoming more and more conscious and they want to make a better choice when making a purchase, whatever it is they buy.

Question 3

What role as a retailer do you think you have to inform/educate your customers of these issues in the garment industry?

I don't think customers come to Company E to be educated, rather inspired. They come to us for fashion so it's important to communicate around the collection, let fashion carry the sustainability message. It's a fine line how much information to include and it's important to be in close contact with the customers to know where they are, how much they know and how much they want to know.

Question 4

As a non ETI member, what standards or code of practice is put into place by Company E?

See our website and CSR-report, Code of conduct etc.

Question 5

How are the companies ethics built in to the products being sold in-store?

Company E does not own factories but again, all suppliers must follow our strict Code, and we do regular unannounced as well as announced audits to make sure the Code is complied with.

Question 6

How are the varying roles/levels of employees informed about the ethical values of the company? How does this information affect the role they carry out?

All employees are familiar with our CSR Actions. One of them is be ethical and we should all be familiar with our Code of Ethics. It varies depending on the role, whether it's about being ethical in relation with colleagues, external suppliers, customers or others.

Question 7

What methods of communication are used to inform customers of the companies ethical policies in-store and online? How are these methods effective?

Policies are communicated foremost through our sustainability report but there are also shorter, lighter versions at our website. They reach stakeholders but customers may not always be interested in reading about these topics. If in relation to fashion and trends, it works better.

Question 8

How effective do you think the eco labels used are in informing customers of the sustainable credentials of the range?

According to surveys they are the most trustworthy information source.

Question 9

In Company D's Sustainability Report 2011, it mentions that when using the EU flower on labelling there as a 29% increase in sales. Has there been any difference in sales when incorporating the eco collection green labelling system?

It's difficult to measure as we don't have the same products without the label, but our eco collections have been very popular with customers so far and they are more in the know about greener material now than when we started selling eco collections in 2010.

Question 10

Do you think that creating the eco collection makes customers question the sustainable credentials of the remaining Company E ranges?

Our Code of Conducts, Code of Ethics and Chemical restrictions list are our sustainability foundation that applies to everything in our stores. In addition, we work continuously on water- and energy savings in production, community investment, BCI, SAC and more. It's not only about the eco collection, we want constant improvement with everything we do. We communicate in stores, our magazine, website and in media about this and it seems most customers feel safe shopping at Company E.

Question 11

How do you think the development of the labelling index against key sustainability indicators will better inform consumers about their purchasing choice? And do you think this information will ultimately change their behaviour?

Do you mean SAC? Sustainable Apparel Coalition? I think that when it comes to our business sector, customers will always care about the look and use of the products first, the sustainability level is an added value.

END OF QUESTIONS

