
Master's in Textile Management with specialisation in Fashion Management

The Swedish School of Textiles

Thesis Number: 214.11.02

2014-06-01

SLOW FASHION AND HOW IT IS BEING COMMUNICATED

Jenny Eriksson & Natalie Karlsson

**-THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN
ENGAGING CONSUMERS IN SLOW FASHION**



TEXTILHÖGSKOLAN
HÖGSKOLAN I BORÅS

Acknowledgements

The authors of this text are Jenny Eriksson and Natalie Karlsson and are consistently adverted to as the researchers throughout the thesis rather than being referred to by name.

The researchers would like to sincerely thank Anita Radón, PhD, Assistant Professor and thesis advisor at the University of Borås, for her constructive feedback, guidance, and encouragement throughout the research process. In addition, the authors are greatly appreciative that Linda Sjölund, Johanna Nilsson, Mike Lind and Karoline Lind committed time to be interviewed and thereafter validated the results. Without their efforts this thesis would have been purely theoretical.

Borås, May 31st 2014

Jenny Eriksson & Natalie Karlsson

Abstract

Title: Slow Fashion and how it is being Communicated: The Role of Storytelling in Engaging Consumers in Slow Fashion

Authors: Jenny Eriksson and Natalie Karlsson

Thesis Number: 214.11.02 **Published:** 2014 **Supervisor:** Anita Radón

Background: The fashion industry today is one of constant and unceasing change. It is a segment of materialism, characterised by fast-paced and outsourced production, cost pressed profit structures, and never ending designs and trends. This framework together with modern day marketing communications that unremittingly stimulate new consumer wants have created a landscape of overconsumption. As a reaction to this hysteria of consumerism is the emergence of a relatively new notion, slow fashion. This ideology places emphasis on decelerating both production and consumption cycles through more conscious purchasing patterns. Previous studies confirm that although consumers are accepting of the slow fashion mind-set, their interest does not necessarily equate to engagement in terms of conscious consumption. Consequently, companies today are seeking alternative modes of communication such as storytelling.

Purpose: The objective of this paper is; thus, to investigate how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling, in better understanding how to engage consumers in more conscious and responsible fashion consumption.

Method: The study uses a qualitative method of research with a deductive approach. The research design entails multiple case studies of semi-structured interviews conducted among four slow fashion companies in Sweden. Theoretical data has been collected primarily through peer reviewed literature and other written works in electronic form. The theoretical starting point of the paper begins with concepts such as slow fashion as an ideology and its values, goals and objectives. Thereafter, storytelling, engagement and meaning are each theoretically explained and empirically investigated.

Conclusion: The study reveals that slow fashion retailers are using storytelling but to varying degrees in communicating the slow fashion ideology. There is a focus on engaging consumers through education, interaction and activating several human senses. It can be seen that consumers are engaged and interested in the slow fashion mind-set; however, it cannot be confirmed that they are actually behaving or acting as slow fashionists.

Keywords: Ideology, Slow Fashion, Communication, Storytelling, Engagement, Meaning, Conscious Fashion Consumption

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.1.1 Modern Day Fashion Industry and Consumer Consumption.....	1
1.1.2 Current Marketing Communication Strategies	2
1.1.3 Storytelling – A Tool for Consumer Engagement?	3
1.2 Problem Discussion.....	3
1.3 Purpose and Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Delimitations of the Research	4
1.5 Relevance of the Research	5
2. Literature Review	6
2.1 The Fast and Slow Species of Fashion	6
2.2 The Ideology of Slow Fashion.....	6
2.2.1 Conscious and Responsible Fashion Consumption	7
2.2.2 Sustainability Fashion – Eco and Organic Designs	7
2.3 Research Gaps in Earlier Studies of Slow Fashion	8
2.4 Communication	9
2.5 Management of Meaning	9
2.5.1 Storytelling.....	9
2.6 Engagement	14
2.7 Summary of the Theories	14
3. Methodology	16
3.1 Methods of Investigation	16
3.2 The Qualitative Method of Research.....	16
3.3 Approaches in Connecting Theory and Research.....	17
3.4 Research Designs	18
3.5 Case Studies	18
3.6 Generating and Collecting Data.....	19
3.6.1 Choice of Interviewees – The Participants.....	20
3.6.2 The Empirical Data – Semi- Structured Interviews	21
3.6.3 Secondary Data – Company Webpages	23
3.6.4 Data Analysis	23
3.7 Disclaimers Concerning Methods and Sources Used.....	23
3.8 Reliability and Validity Issues	24
4. The Results – Empirical Findings	26
4.1 Ossoami.....	26

4.1.1 Slow Fashion.....	26
4.1.2 Storytelling.....	27
4.1.3 Engagement.....	27
4.1.4 Meaning.....	28
4.2 JohannaN.....	29
4.2.1 Slow Fashion.....	29
4.2.2 Storytelling.....	30
4.2.3 Engagement.....	32
4.2.4 Meaning.....	33
4.3 Mike Lind, Uniforms for the Dedicated.....	33
4.3.1 Slow Fashion.....	33
4.3.2 Storytelling.....	34
4.3.3 Engagement.....	35
4.3.4 Meaning.....	36
4.4 Karoline Lind, Lind Store.....	36
4.4.1 Slow Fashion.....	36
4.4.2 Storytelling.....	37
4.4.3 Engagement.....	38
4.4.4 Meaning.....	38
5. Analysis.....	39
5.1 The Ideology of Slow Fashion.....	39
5.2 The Role of Storytelling.....	40
5.3 Engagement.....	44
5.4 Meaning.....	46
6. Conclusions.....	49
6.1 How storytelling is being applied by slow fashion retailers.....	49
6.2 The elements of storytelling that are being used by slow fashion retailers.....	50
6.3 Contributions of the Research.....	51
6.4 Future Research.....	51
Reference List.....	52
Appendix 1 – E-mail Template to Potential Interviewees.....	56
Appendix 2 – Interview Guide.....	57
Appendix 3 – E-mail Template: Validation of Interview Results.....	59

Table of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Author's Communication Model: Based on Theories 14

Figure 6.1 The Author's Communication Model: Empirical Findings 50

1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, background information is provided on the subject area of slow fashion and its communication. The chapter begins by describing the current state of the fashion industry and why the notion of slow fashion as well as new marketing models have become relevant in a consumptive environment of turmoil. This prelude, in turn, leads to a discussion about the problem, at hand. Thereafter, the purpose and research questions(s) are presented. The introductory chapter concludes by outlining the study's delimitations and discussing the relevance of this research.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Modern Day Fashion Industry and Consumer Consumption

Fashion lucidly projects an element of change and its industry today cannot be described as anything other than one of change; change that is veritably fast-paced. Moreover, fashion change may be viewed as strategic obsolescence, prompted by retailers and marketers alike, whom aim to continuously motivate consumers to buy new clothing (Ka Ming, Zhi-Ming & Leung, 2004). Sales are tracked electronically, manufacturing is characterized as just-in-time, and design sketches are transformed into finished products in less than a fortnight (Fletcher, 2007). These quick-paced supply chains, fuel consumption or more precisely overconsumption and consequently, spur fashion waste. Specifically, it is consumption of mass-produced fashion, constructed of inexpensive fabrics and trimmings and in a cost pressed environment of low salaries and worker exploitation that have built a robust but yet faulty pillar of growth in today's retail industry (Ibid). Fierce competition and lack of transparency in production systems have pushed down the retail prices of such trend-sensitive fashions.

Statistics confirm that consumption has increased not only in velocity but also in volume with people buying one-third more garments than they did four years ago (Fletcher, 2014). Correspondingly, other issues have arisen with fast fashion consumption in terms of garment disposal that have built a monstrous landfill of textiles (Tojo, Kogg, Kioerboe. Kjaer & Aalto, 2012). Moreover, in a contemporary world of overabundance and freedom of choice, consumers have also become irresolute in that they are "unable to decide what clothes they actually like" (Clarke & Miller, 2002).

The power and scale of these implications are profound and a cause for concern. In response to the current day fashion industry and its challenges, a contravening mind-set, slow fashion, has risen in terms of consumption habits (Watson & Nan-Yan, 2013; Leslie, Brail & Hunt, 2014). This concept will also be more explicitly defined in the following chapter, but briefly, slow fashion borrows ideas and visions from the *Slow Food Movement*, founded in Italy in the late 1980s (Fletcher 2007). This latter philosophy bonds pleasure and food with awareness and responsibility. Slow food in terms of cuisine is about natural, organic, ethical and locally produced ingredients all with an emphasis on quality and taste (Wanders, 2009) and has since grown

into a vehicle that reconnects people with their communities. Similarly, slow fashion is about creating, producing and consuming beautiful and conscientious garments while respecting the rights of workers and the environment around. In other words, the slow fashion ideology, combines the joy of fashion with a focus on awareness and responsibility. It is a conscious set of ideas that embraces both simplicity and allure in an era of sustainability.

1.1.2 Current Marketing Communication Strategies

In responding to slow fashion, marketers and fashion companies have shifted their focus to sustainable products and ethical production processes (Belz & Peattie, 2012; Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Ottosson & Parment, 2013). However, not only have businesses and marketing communication strategies promoted products as being environmentally friendly but they have done so in often an exaggerated and even deceptive manner (Ottosson & Parment, 2013), which has resulted in a backlash: a notion referred to as green washing (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012). This marketing term ranges from blatant dishonesty to manifest exaggerations as well as discreet suggestions such as when green images are connected with environmentally damaging products (Wanders, 2009). Consequently, this type of communication has not succeeded in engaging consumers in terms of sustainability and therefore slow fashion practices are still largely marginalized in the fashion industry (Beard, 2008; Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Chan & Wong, 2012; Markkula & Moisander, 2012; Palomo-Lovinski & Hahn, 2014; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Take, for example, the case of the modern-day, savvy consumer whom realizes that a garment is produced of ecological material but has not been manufactured in a factory that adheres to social and ethical work regulations. A falseness of expectations builds a mistrust in the company and its brand. This style of marketing communication has become contradictory and dangerous, as consumers now even ignore communication that contains messages of sustainability (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012), and instead select brands that do approach nor promote ecological ideas (Wanders, 2009). Researchers such as Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) also reinstate this issue, proclaiming that 'green' marketing strategies have not been successful in neutralizing or controlling overconsumption, as such approaches lack a holistic view.

In addition, sustainability marketing has not been wholly effective in steering the consumer's buying and patterns of commodity use (Belz & Peattie, 2012), as it is a form of communication that seeks to sway and convince the consumer about a company's offering of sustainable products and services (Ottosson & Parment, 2013). The company stands in the limelight as the brand hero, telling a success story that is typically ineffective because such communications lack intricate details of how "things actually get done in the world" (Denning, 2006), which will not equate to consumer engagement in terms of conscious consumption behaviours. Thus, other forms of engagement communication, such as storytelling (Sachs, 2012) are being sought by marketers.

1.1.3 Storytelling – A Tool for Consumer Engagement?

Storytelling is a powerful tool and ancient art form that not only has the ability to project a conventional fashion brand but also provides a framework for activation in terms of ideologies (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). Stories have a magnetic draw, uniting ideas and emotions that otherwise may be difficult to articulate individually or on a personal level. Stories and storytelling have a function of connecting abstruse notions of a concept into a compelling whole. In other words, storytelling is a means of making sense of the complex world and its emerging ideologies (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010); they provide a comprehensible frame of reference.

Moreover, stories not only allow mankind to synthesize information but are also strong tools in communicating authenticity and meaningfulness through their holistic approach. For example, narratives about the clothing's story can be communicated by introducing the characters or people behind both the design and production processes. Such a holistic approach, revealing the total system from design to production, has communicative power in that it allows for transparency and provides evidence, for example, that the company and its factories are acting as socially responsible citizens. This approach goes beyond those 'green' marketing strategies (Sheth et al., 2011), where the focus was simply on ethical and sustainable products, certifications and fair trade labels but nothing deeper in terms of values or true meaning. Instead through narratives, the consumer feels a sense of belonging, that he or she is part of a group with common values, which in turn, allows the customer to identify with the product making them want to retain and take care of the commodity or garment. There is an innate sense of human meaningfulness and value at play. Brands; therefore, need to base their communication on values (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010) rather than simply promotional messages. Being able to identify with the company's values, as a consumer, encourages engagement in ideologies such as slow fashion. Storytelling, therefore, appears as an effective way for brands to communicate values and ideas of engagement in terms of conscious and responsible fashion consumption.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Although storytelling has been acknowledged by researchers as a communication tool for engagement pertaining to ideologies, (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010; Herskovitz & Crystal 2010; Smith & Wintrob, 2013), there is still a lack of knowledge among fashion retailers regarding how to construct a story that generates the desired or intended results (Kadembo, 2012); in this case, conscious and responsible consumption.

Previous studies (Beard, 2008; Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Chan & Wong, 2012; Markkula & Moisander; 2012; Palomo-Lovinski & Hahn; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013) problematically confirm that although consumers willingly accept and subscribe to the notion of slow fashion, and have an innate need to build ethical identities, they do not actually adopt nor engage in conscious and responsible fashion consumption. As stated by Pookulangara and

Shepard (2013) in their exploratory research, “consumers currently do not possess adequate knowledge on slow fashion to make informed purchase decisions”. Thus, the ideology of slow fashion may be appealing but consumers are challenged in terms of truly undertaking its principles. More specifically, previous studies declare that although consumers believe in the concept of buying more consciously, these ideas are simply abstract pieces of information containing confusing phraseology that do not build ideological engagement in terms of conscious and responsible consumption behaviours (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). Another challenge in terms of communication is transparency, as consumers expect that fashion retailers should provide easy and convenient access to production information in assisting them to make more conscious purchase decisions (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). It is further suggested by these researchers (2013) that retailers need to address this gap in information by creating communication strategies that can both inform as well as enhance trust in the brand.

It is obvious that both brands and consumers are facing challenges as a result of an industry in turmoil. Consumers are interested in changing their consumption behaviours but lack knowledge. Fashion retailers are struggling to adapt their messages to inform consumers in a manner that does not create confusion nor build a mistrust concerning, for example, the subject area of slow fashion. While this evidence supports the view that other communication strategies such as storytelling are needed to communicate slow fashion, there is still little empirical research that addresses how this communication tool is being applied.

Given these problems, the researchers are specifically interested in studying the connection between slow fashion and storytelling in terms of consumer engagement.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The objective of this study; therefore, focuses on investigating how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling, in better understanding how to engage consumers in more conscious and responsible fashion consumption. The following research questions have been formulated.

- 1) *How is storytelling being applied as a tool for engagement in slow fashion?*
- 2) *What elements of storytelling are being used to communicate and engage consumers in slow fashion?*

1.4 Delimitations of the Research

The research has been delimited to focus specifically on the fashion retail industry. This study has been limited to focus on the Swedish market and companies that are acting as slow fashion enterprises. Fast fashion retailers have not been studied. This thesis; however, is not delimited to focus on any one specific target group as classified by age or gender. Moreover, this

investigation is delimited to the perspective of the retailer in understanding how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling to engage consumers in more conscious and responsible fashion consumption. The consumer's impressions have not been examined in this study. Lastly, this study is delimited to the subject area of slow fashion. Sustainable and ecological fashion are indeed a part of this latter concept but explanation as to why slow fashion is most relevant for this project will follow in the literature review chapter.

1.5 Relevance of the Research

The topic area of slow fashion is still in its introductory phases (Pookulangara & Shepard, 2013) and the connection between storytelling in communicating slow fashion appears unstudied, which makes them both very interesting to observe in understanding how the current retail system may be refined and improved. As previously described, former marketing strategies with their focus on environmental messages and communication have backfired in terms of promoting sustainable consumption. Therefore, such preceding marketing strategies cannot be deemed as principal solutions in engaging consumers in the slow fashion ideology. It, then, becomes of particular interest to understand other forms of marketing communications, such as storytelling and its role in engaging consumers to adopt the slow fashion ideology. Academically, there is a constant need to better understand theories and especially emerging ideas such as slow fashion as well as its marketing tools, in evaluating if such a mind-set is a valuable and creditable part of the solution in the fashion and sustainability riddle. From a retailer's perspective, this investigation is important in better understanding sustainable branding approaches in combination with more balanced fashion consumption. Lastly, this study may also interest the individual consumer whom wants to change their habitual consumption patterns towards more conscious buying. Therefore, this research project is relevant and current for all institutions whether in the private or public domain, as the existing state of retail affairs and buying cannot be maintained.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, pertaining to the literature reviewed, key concepts such as fast fashion, slow fashion, sustainable fashion, communication in general, management of meaning, storytelling and engagement are each examined. The key contributors in this subject area are presented as well as the different research methods that have been applied in previous studies. Thereafter, clashes of definitions and gaps in past research and literature may be investigated.

2.1 The Fast and Slow Species of Fashion

Fast species reproduce in large numbers or masses, their diversity of species and habitual patterns are both simple, and their lifecycles short. These characteristics are analogous to those which define fast fashion as being mass-produced or large-volume production, simple standardization of design and garments, as well as short lead times drawing on low-cost materials and labour to produce clothing with short lifecycles (Ibid). In contrast, slow species, such as slow fashion have longer manufacturing cycles, producing quality as opposed to quantity, with more complex and long lasting designs or patterns.

2.2 The Ideology of Slow Fashion

More specifically, it can also be deduced, from the literature collected, that slow fashion is a mind-set or an ideology. It may then be questioned, what is an ideology? An ideology is a manner of thinking. It is a comprehensive vision or means of perceiving things through a set of conscious or unconscious ideas that frame one's goals, expectations and actions (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990). The ideas that constitute the slow fashion movement were coined in 2007, by Dr. Kate Fletcher, a research pioneer in the field of sustainability fashion (Fletcher, 2012). She states that slow fashion is an ideology with a different point of departure than the consumerist business model described in the introductory chapter of this thesis (2012). The collective values, goals and objectives of slow fashion may be defined by referencing various researchers and authors (Fletcher 2012; Bourland 2011; Leslie et al., 2014).

According to Bourland (2011), the deceleration of the employment of raw materials as well as the moderation of the rate of garment production and fashion consumption are both important aspects of the slow fashion approach. The objectives of this strategy are three-fold. Limited resources are rationalized, growing environmental impacts such as landfills of textiles may be lessened and slowing down also grants the consumer time to make more conscious decisions. This ideology is as much about slowing down consumption cycles as it is about reducing the speed of production. However, it should also be noted that the concept of time in slow fashion is not based on a linear or one dimensional notion of speed. In this ideology, slow also alludes to a "moment of timelessness, where opportunities to share, reflect and be convivial, give time its quality" (Leslie et al., 2014).

2.2.1 Conscious and Responsible Fashion Consumption

Conscious or mindful decisions, are also key objectives in slow fashion, meaning thoughtful and deliberate consumption. In other words, considering clothing purchases as carefully and purposefully as shopping for new electronics or furniture (Bourland, 2011). Such tactful purchasing behavior is necessary so that the consumer will then identify with a purchased product, taking proper care of it, and even treasuring the commodity. Additionally, this approach focuses on valuing quality over quantity, seeking to remind the fashion consumer that long lasting garments have a substantial value (Ibid). Clothing, with quality, equates to higher grades of materials and trimmings, generally lasting longer and retaining their shape better both during wear and after laundering.

Understanding more about where clothing is produced, what types of materials are used, how far it travels to markets (with a focus on local materials and production) as well as learning how to properly care for garments (Ibid), are all integral parts of the slow fashion ideology and conscious and responsible fashion consumption. The consumer is encouraged to observe the larger, macro picture of a garment's true lifecycle and environmental impact. It is about valuing beauty, and the endless creative possibilities that clothing projects as a mode of artful communication in terms of expressing one's emotions, preferences and personalities. It is a mindset that embraces the idea of personal style and individual expression through clothing. These attributes have been restricted in an environment of mass produced fashion where meaningful design ideas have been diminished to millions of copies; carbon-copies (Ibid). However, researchers Sheth et al. (2011), state that the mindful or conscious consumption aspects of slow fashion assume that consumers will not be restrained by their circumstances nor environments but are in the position to select what and how much they consume.

In summary, slow fashion allows consumers to continue to enjoy fashion but in a manner that involves conscious and meaningful consumption. As Fletcher stated (2012) in a rather cliché but clear expression, slow fashion is a mind-set that entitles consumers to have the cake and eat it too. In other words, enjoy the *cake of fashion* but savor it through conscious and responsible purchases.

2.2.2 Sustainability Fashion – Eco and Organic Designs

Very much a part of this ideology of slow fashion is the notion of fashion sustainability. However, the categorical differences and similarities between the two concepts seems blurred. Fletcher, for example, defines fashion sustainability as fashion that 'fosters ecological integrity and social quality through products, practices of use and relationships' (2012). The ideas of integrity, quality and social responsibility are notions that appear present in both definitions of slow fashion and sustainability fashion. To perplex this conceptual problem even more are the terms organic and eco fashion, which are also a part of the slow fashion and sustainability fashion construct.

Organic fashion, for example, refers to clothing and accessories that have been produced, using minimal chemicals, pesticides or toxic dyes, aiming to limit environmental impacts (Ethical Fashion Forum, 2011). The meaning of organic fashion is similarly related to the idea of eco fashion. The Ethical Fashion Forum, explains eco fashion as being a broad term that is applied to all clothing, fabrics and accessories that have been produced in an environmentally conscious manner (2011). These various concepts of slow fashion, sustainability fashion, organic and eco fashion all mesh together causing puzzlement among both retailers and consumers (Beard, 2008). According to Beard (2008), the use of ambiguous phraseology causes confusion. As a result, consumers have insufficient information in making conscious and responsible decisions regarding their fashion consumption (Pookulangara & Shepherd, 2013).

In meshing through the all of the different terminologies, in this subject area, the researchers, of this paper, choose to focus predominantly on slow fashion and its communication through storytelling since sustainable fashion or eco garments do not necessarily equate to conscious and responsible fashion consumption. It is profoundly questionable, for example, how much difference is made in terms of sustainability by purchasing several organic t-shirts, from a retailer that exists and operates in the prevailing business model of mass-production and consumerist habits (Fletcher, 2012). Moreover, buying organic clothing, in numbers, does not embrace ideas of preferring quality over quantity nor does it imply anything about making mindful and conscious purchase decisions. It is analogous to sticking plaster on a scratch (Ibid) when the retail organism has a more fatal wound; over-consumerism. The focus of this research is; therefore, limited to slow fashion; a mindset that includes but extends beyond fashion sustainability and eco fashion.

2.3 Research Gaps in Earlier Studies of Slow Fashion

Recalling that slow fashion is still a relatively new idea, being first promoted by Fletcher in 2007, it is perhaps without surprise that much of the literature and previous research focuses predominantly on defining the actual concept of slow fashion as well as the other related terms as previously discussed. There exists also theoretical studies, for example, concerning the oxymoron of slow and fashion (Clark, 2008) as well as research on the differences between slow and fast fashion in terms of decision making processes (Watson & Yan, 2013) and consumer perceptions (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013), both of which were conducted through focus groups and personal interviews. Additionally, Fletcher in her book on *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles*, goes beyond these exploratory studies, examining instead different design approaches such as a service dominant logic and user involvement in altering the scale and nature of consumption (2012). The literature reviewed; therefore, suggests both new design approaches as well as conceptual definitions but there is an apparent research gap in terms of understanding how slow fashion is actually being communicated. Moreover, the search for literature and research pertaining specifically to the

communication of slow fashion through storytelling is unstudied. It is this gap in the literature, that the researchers of this paper are interested in investigating.

2.4 Communication

In general, communication has four main functions (Johansson & Malmsten, 2009); a social function, an expressive function, an informative function and a controlling function. The social function has a focus on interaction and creating a sense of belonging as well as building 'communities' among people. The benefits of building relationships and cooperating are also reflected in the social function of communication. The expressive function is about creating a personal identity, meaning who a person is and what he or she stands for in terms of integrity. Meaningful activities such as culture and sports are a part of the expressive function. Collecting information to increase knowledge and better understand the world around as well as sharing insights with others is the informative function of communication. Lastly, the purpose of the controlling function is to influence and even redirect people, groups or societies. This function is about power and convincing others as well as personal needs (Johansson & Malmsten, 2009, referring to Thunberg et. al., 1978).

2.5 Management of Meaning

Very much linked to communication and its functions, is the concept of meaning. An idea that is primarily individual as it is what each person truly feels is significant or important to them (Johansson & Malmsten, 2009). It can; therefore, be understood as an intention but also as an expressed standpoint (Ibid).

Meaningfulness in terms of brands may be represented through their mission statements (Floor, 2009). This pronouncement is the core of all brand activities, striving towards social meaning such as slow fashion. Companies that have strong mission statements grounded in a social ideology will be more driven by their values rather than simply profit (Ibid). For example, by moving towards local production, better working conditions, and garments of quality and true value, a retailer can pursue competencies that other fast fashion companies cannot because of their over reliance on outsourcing, speed and high volumes; in other words mass production. The growing influence of ethical values and consumers' increasing awareness as well as cynicism, are challenging the manner in which companies do business; hence even their communication strategies. Alternative marketing approaches, for example, are found in transmitting mutual values, and cultivating engagement, meaning and changed habits; storytelling.

2.5.1 Storytelling

Consumers are entranced by stories especially those which can be completed by their own endings or meanings. A successful story creates feelings of security and safety in the consumer (Lindstrom, 2010). It is a powerful tool that can be used to navigate and synthesize controversial

subjects as well as complex social issues (Bergström, 2012), just as flight simulators prepare pilots to manage difficult situations (Gottschall, 2012).

Moreover, scientific research has shown that storytelling is a memory aid, helping people to make sense of the world around, as well as strengthening emotional connections and allowing them to identify and recognize brand values (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). They are a sense-making instrument (Collins, 2013) in that individuals apply narratives to bring shape and meaning to their own lives (Sadowsky, 2012). Past experiences, present interactions and future anticipations may be pieced together through stories into a coherent whole (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012).

Storytelling can be used both on a strategic level as a branding concept and on an operational level as a communication tool (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010). Both grades of storytelling include external as well as internal communication. This dual communication, in which storytelling is applied, supports and strengthens one another. Storytelling is most effective when employing a holistic approach, where the core brand message is central and the core story is the base of all communication, both internally and externally (Ibid). In other words, a sense of authenticity has been created because the brand truly lives their own stories (Sadowsky, 2012), and these narratives are, in turn, consistent with the company's actions (Denning, 2006). Generating authenticity through story-telling is a fundamental principle of communication (Sadowsky, 2012).

Different storytelling techniques are used to generate brand experiences that reach into and touch the human heart. This potent strategy goes beyond sustainability marketing that focuses only on promoting ethical products and products processes. Storytelling instead creates a sense of belonging as it attracts like-minded people (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). Compelling stories engenders engagement, interest, inspiration and entertainment. In addition, stories develop a meaningful connection between people and the brand, and the narrative arc stimulates action, motivation, as well as assisting people in confronting challenges and transformational changes (Ibid). Stories are a mode of viewing and understanding the world through another lens; a powerful lens revealing alternative future states as well as empathizing with possible characters whom may inhibit these various scenarios (Petrick, 2014). Individuals can identify with problems they may confront through narratives, and can image solutions from an entirely new perspective (Ibid). In this sense, stories allow people to overcome feelings of fear to a position of power, as discussed in the article, *Using Storytelling to Manage Organizational Change* (2008). Narratives, thus prompt the search for new knowledge (Kadembo, 2012) and a perpetual understanding of the world around.

So what makes a powerful story? There is no fixed formula for a good story (Denning, 2006), which reinforces the issue presented at the beginning of this thesis, in the problem discussion; that fashion retailers are challenged by how to construct a narrative that generates the desired results (Kadembo, 2012); in this case conscious and responsible fashion consumption.

Nonetheless, there are basic guidelines that can be applied (Fog et. al. 2010). For example, looking at the history of storytelling, from Aristotle's to H. C Andersen's time (Ibid), there are several key storytelling elements that may be variegated depending on the type, context and timing of the story at hand. Herskovitz & Crystal (2010) proclaim that before beginning a story, there is a need to focus on the brand persona as well as primal character traits such as honesty, curiosity, flexibility and determination. These qualities are essential in stories, as it is these same characteristics that are even at play when individuals are making personal and important decisions. Fog et al. (2010), argue that there are four essential ingredients in constructing a good story. The first of these elements may be described as the message, the central meaning or idea of the brand in which all other stories are built upon. More specifically, the message is the premise of the brand, an ideology or moral statement that generates a central theme throughout the story. In understanding how messages are endlessly conveyed or forgotten is the concept of a meme; an idea that acts in the human mind as genes do in the body (Sachs, 2012). Moreover, the most memorable, compelling, adaptable memes and ideas survive (Ibid), meaning they will repeatedly told and engaged in.

Conflict is the second component behind a good story. A conflict is creative, exciting and noteworthy (Öhlin, 2012). Without strife, the story becomes boring and uninteresting. There must be conflict in human lives, as people innately and constantly search for balance and harmony in their existence. If, for example, a person has a problem in their life, they will seek to resolve this issue and restore an equilibrium. Simply put, conflict is important as it makes people act. A story is set in motion by the change that threatens this harmony. Moreover, the life of the story lies in the tension between an unpredictable chaos and a predictable harmony. In storytelling, the conflict is also essential in communicating one's perception of right and wrong. However, the conflict must be well balanced, as too much chaos results in confusion. A story's conflict may be resolved by submitting to the visions and notions of the opponents, creating an accordance of unity and greatness (Öhlin, 2012).

Thirdly, the characters are also key in constructing a story of engagement. The characters serve as role models and are needed in the turning point of the narrative to play out the conflict. Their fates imply and represent what will befall the audience if a similar path is followed (Ibid). Each character plays a specific role and supplements each other, forming an active part of the story. The story often starts with a "hero" pursuing a goal, which can simply be someone who pursues deeper values such as truth and self-expression (Ibid). The heroic tale provides individuals with a sense of meaning and a possibility to reach for something greater in their lives (Sadowsky, 2012). This hero is not always alone but can be in accompaniment with one or more companions, known as "the arms of support". The hero is typically pursued by an enemy or enemies, the "adversary", whom attempts to stop the star from achieving their goals. This rivalry establishes conflict in the story. "The

benefactor” or the mentor is the person or brand restoring the chaos to harmony, redirecting or strengthening the hero’s mind to face an ordeal with confidence (Ibid). A successful conflict needs a hero opposing a villain, placing the characters in a predicament (Collins, 2013). The adversary can be both physical and psychological in nature. It can, for example, be an “impossible mission” to achieve the goals set by the hero or the brand and the adversary will then represent the “fear” of the unknown and/or the “reluctance” to a change. In terms, of storytelling and the brand, the adversary character, may be considered the blind consumer where buying remains their highest purpose (Sachs, 2012) and the hero is the engaged citizen whom endorses slow fashion. The audience must be able to identify themselves with the characters, if they are to feel connected to the story and personally involved; a familiarity that prompts them to think about the issues at hand (Denning, 2006). Keeping the target audience in mind, is thus, critically important. Thus, the audience should also be able to empathize with both the hero and the problem (Fog et al., 2010). Stories, lacking a well-defined, memorable, recognizable and compelling persona become confusing while trying to find something that connects with the audience (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Since humans strive for balance in their own lives, they will be able to identify with the story’s characters and the problem being faced. As a result, the audience will recognize different feelings such as fear, joy, despair, hope etc. (Fog et al., 2010). There must also be an understanding of what motivates people and their actions, if a story’s progress will be deemed credible. When a story is believable, there will be a natural connection to the story but it is important that the characters in the story are consistent, doing as they preach (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Without this identification with the characters and a strong connection to the story, the brand and its actions will be of no interest to the audience at hand (Ibid).

Lastly, a good story much have a plot, which may be conceptualized as the progression of events in the story. The events are key for the audience in terms of experience and being able to relate to the storyline. This requires a precise structure of events in maintaining the audience’s interest. The scene is first set, followed by the progression of change and an emerging conflict, which is finally resolved in the story’s conclusion.

Storytelling does not necessary mean one narrative but can involve a multiple of stories, an arc of stories, being told at different times and with different purposes (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). These stories will each possess the elements of themes, conflicts, characters and plots. How well the elements of the stories interact is referred to as "Brand Story Anthology". Stories within this concept follow four main constructs. Each story type serves a distinct function and plays a different role in creating authentic and memorable customer experiences as well as building a relationship with the brand. The four types of stories are may be classified as heritage, contemporary, folklore and vision narratives.

Heritage stories are concerned with time and when the brand was established. Such stories connect the consumer with the founding ideas of the company and the passion in the creation of the brand. The new generation of consumers are often not aware of the importance of the events that took place when the brand was originated. Therefore, heritage stories are very relevant in the modern expression of the brand (Ibid).

Contemporary stories include the manner in which brands' express their general purpose, their connection to modern day reality, and how they will succeed in staying connected with their audiences in the future. This type of story is; therefore, very effective in presenting new ideas and campaigns as it features intersecting plotlines in relevance to the daily operations of the brand (Ibid). Contemporary brand stories can also be used to share information, both internally and externally, enhancing the brand's foundation and building communication ideas. Contemporary stories offer a broad way of communicating the brand message as well as stimulating new messages.

Folklore stories are created, driven and spread by the consumer themselves. These stories are very organic, for example, and through social media are planted into the brand story. In other words, these stories tap into the culture of a brand. These types of stories are very difficult to manage as a company has little control over what is told and conversed by consumers (Ibid). Therefore, the importance of authenticity in brands is heightened. The strategy of constructing fictitious stories to be promoted to consumers is passé. Today's internet and social media technology allow consumers to easily and effectively conduct their own research, making their own assessments, and in turn creating their own versions of a story, in validating or invalidating the brand image. Even though these stories are very organic, the brand still has a role to play in folklore stories. The company and brand must pay considerable attention to how they construct the brand messages, which the community will embrace and build upon.

Vision stories have gained importance among brands and companies today (Ibid). Such stories involve sharing a brand's vision to the public, creating a story of an eventual legacy. It may function, for example, as a lighthouse for the future in that tactics, which are connected to new management goals, new directions or aspirational territories are emitted through the guiding light of such stories. This level of transparency enables consumers to join the brand movement or fight against it while challenging the brand to constantly double check that they have indeed acted in accordance with their promises.

Recognizing that there are different types of stories a brand can employ, allows a brand to tell several stories at different times. This structure creates interest and such fascination engages consumers. In turn, passionate brand communities may be formed and a common language may be used to communicate to others. People will connect with the stories, build on them and make them their own. In this manner, the brand will go beyond communicating simply the actual product (Ibid) and will transmit something much deeper; values and engagement, resulting in meaning and action.

2.6 Engagement

Brands today strive to create a sense of belonging and thus a commitment among their customers (Bergström, 2012). In terms of social concerns and ideologies, the word engagement is preferably used instead of commitment by the authors of this paper. An engaged consumer has a perception of the brand. This preconception is an integral part of an ideal they have; meaning that any purchase made from that brand is consistent or in harmony with their own self-image (Bergström, 2012). In the past, the product has only been a symbol, superficially representing the person and what they stand for but signifying no deeper meaning. Humans have relationships with brands, the same way they have relationships with people (Bergström, 2012; Floor, 2009; Peattie & Belz, 2012). Therefore, engagement to a brand that is built on social values and ideologies means more than a simple commitment to the actual commodity but it instead signifies the sharing of similar values, which in turn creates a much deeper meaning for the customer, resulting in action. Shared values, in turn, signify shared stories and a shared worldview (Sachs, 2012).

2.7 Summary of the Theories

After having reviewed the literature and the relevant concepts of slow fashion and storytelling, the researchers of this paper, have conceptualized their understanding of these ideas in a self-created model (figure 2.1). The diagram illustrates how the brand communicates slow fashion through storytelling to create engagement and meaning among consumers. It is this theory that the researchers are interested in testing in this study.

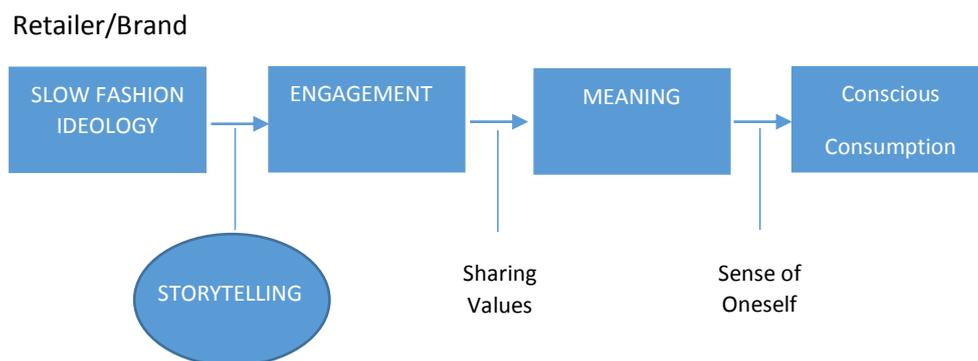


Figure 2.1 Model, proposed by the researchers of this paper

As depicted above, the brand or retailer transmits the slow fashion ideology through a communication tool such as storytelling. According to Fletcher (2014), slow fashion through storytelling is an invitation to create deeper, eudemonic well-being. Stories and characters are used to signify and share common values, creating a notion of belonging, which initiates consumer engagement in a mindset such as slow fashion. Such engagement denotes desired qualities that the consumer can identify with and recognize in themselves, in turn stimulating an interpretation or worldview of what is genuinely significant or important to them. In other words, a sense of oneself or true meaning is constructed. This comprehension of what is truly

meaningful to oneself is needed if one is to undertake more conscious and responsible fashion behaviours.

Therefore, this model will be used to examine how storytelling is being applied as a tool for engagement in slow fashion as well as what elements of storytelling are being used to communicate and engage consumers in this mindset. In investigating these questions, it is now of interest to examine the methodology employed by the researchers of this study.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the chosen methods of this study are presented. The methods of investigation and research design are first discussed. Thereafter, the process of generating data is examined. The chapter concludes by examining and critiquing the selected research sources and methods in terms of validity and reliability.

3.1 Methods of Investigation

Methodology embodies philosophical meaning and relates to the strategy that provides the framework for investigation, in this case how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling. An interview, for example, using a qualitative framework of methods has another purpose and generates different data and results than an interview using quantitative methods (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). The goal of quantitative research is to measure a size or quantity in obtaining a certain understanding or to measure the connection between different phenomena while the purpose of qualitative research is to describe the qualities of different occurrences (Eneroth, 2005). The researchers are not interested in measuring the relationship between slow fashion and storytelling, for example, but want to understand opinions, values and behaviours of participants in terms of how they are using storytelling and which of its elements are being applied in communicating and engaging consumers in conscious and responsible consumption. Moreover, the researchers have chosen to examine such phenomena from a company or retailer's perspective in understanding how storytelling (and its elements) are employed in this social intercourse. A qualitative research method is; therefore, most applicable for this study as phenomena will not be quantitatively measured in this study but it is the qualities in terms of slow fashion and storytelling that are of fundamental interest.

3.2 The Qualitative Method of Research

Qualitative methods place weight and emphasis on words and contexts instead of numbers when collecting and analysing data (Bryman, 2012). Language generates data that is very naturalistic and unstructured, and thus rich in form; however, precision is lower and less uniform than in quantitative studies so that the analysis of qualitative data does bear tones of cumbersomeness (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2011). Qualitative research involves a picture of a social reality that is dynamic, as individuals and social actors alike continuously create and construct phenomena (Bryman, 2012). In other words, qualitative studies are a paradigm of interpretation (Tjora, 2012), as the world is observed and understood through the participants' point of view. This means that the participants selected by the researchers will not be separated from their natural settings nor their environments but that the social surroundings in which they exist are instead used as an interplay of individuals in investigating how the communication phenomena of slow fashion is constructed. The essence of this research is about creating an understanding of the world and reality in which the participants exist and thereafter forming or shaping an illusion about how

storytelling and its elements are being used to engage consumers in slow fashion. So the research at hand is a manifold method (Tjora, 2012) that is characterised by feelings, creativity and pragmatism that are derived from both empirical data and theory. For example, how slow fashion is being communicated to consumers from a retailer's perspective is an actuality or reality constructed of human players where the researchers of this study prioritize flexibility and being able to seek out the world views and perceptions of each of these participants. Qualitative interviews are; therefore, the chosen method of research for this study. Through semi-structured interviews and rich, free-flowing language (verbal behaviours) can the researchers, of this study, interpret and understand the phenomena of storytelling in the context of slow fashion.

3.3 Approaches in Connecting Theory and Research

There are several approaches in explaining the bridge between theory and research. These different forms of reasoning include abduction, induction and deduction. The latter of these concepts, deduction, implies that theories are tested in the research. This approach is commonly applied in the link between theory and empirics. Moreover, it is a linear approach with a pragmatic, step-by-step flow of organisation from theories and hypothesis building to data collection and the interpretation of results (Bryman, 2012). Induction, on the other hand, infers that the researcher's starting point is reality and this framework is used to discover new patterns (Björklund & Paulsson, 2012) that can, then, be applied to develop new models and theories. In other words, researchers whom work inductively, follow a road of discovery (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). Abduction is a combination of induction and deduction and through one particular case, a hypothetical pattern can be formulated (Patel & Davidsson, 2011) that explains the incident at hand. These authors (2011) further explain that the first stages of abduction may be characterised as inductive but later stages involve the testing of theories, and therefore a more deductive process.

Given that the theoretical framework (refer to chapter 2) has been used by the researchers as a spring board for then collecting data and thereafter interpreting the empirical findings, this study applies a deductive approach. The theoretical and conceptual examinations of slow fashion and storytelling have provided the researchers with a foundation for the collection of data and analysis process, in drawing conclusions about how the slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling and which elements are being applied in consumer engagement. Since there are already existing and accepted theories and concepts concerning slow fashion and storytelling that could be applied as an analytical tool in generating and collecting the empirical data, existing theories and concepts could be tested. The processes of induction and abduction were not thought as pertinent to this thesis.

3.4 Research Designs

Research design is a framework that concerns the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012). The choice of research design will depend on research priorities such as the importance of casual relationships, the ability to generalise the results to the population as a whole, the necessity of understanding different behaviours and thus meaning in its context, as well as the assessment of time concerning various social phenomena and their connection. There are five main research designs, which include experimental designs, cross-sectional designs, longitudinal designs, comparative designs, and case studies (Bryman, 2012). Briefly, experimental design involves manipulating an independent variable; cross-sectional designs entail a collection of data, usually many cases such as surveys; longitudinal designs are, for example, panel or cohort studies; comparative designs are comprised of cross-cultural studies, and a case study is a detailed analysis of a case or cases for comparative purposes (Bryman, 2012). This investigation of how slow fashion is being communicated is a case study since the researchers are interested in observing contemporary events but do not desire to control nor manipulate the behaviours of the participants.

3.5 Case Studies

Case studies may be further explained as a research design where one investigates one or several different companies and/or other objects in various contexts or references (Eriksson & Wiedersheim- Paul, 2011). This type of inquiry has three distinctive characteristics. Through case studies the roll of the actor(s) may be accentuated, historical contexts may be studied and a portrayal of real life or actuality may be communicated and understood (Ibid). In a case study, the researcher participates in a course of events, which can vary in time and scope or involve all three dimensions of time; the past, the present and the future (Olsson & Sörensen, 2007).

Given that the purpose of this thesis is to understand how slow fashion is being communicated to consumers and how storytelling is being applied as a tool for engagement, case studies of different current day slow fashion companies are deemed applicable. This research design is relevant to the study at hand, since the desired focus is on meetings with real life people and contexts as opposed to quantifying and measuring abstract objects and occurrences. More specifically, this work is based on four individual companies, acting as slow fashion entities (the criteria for their selection is described under heading 3.6). It is; therefore, a research design that is grounded in multiple case studies because the researchers desire an overall representation and deeper understanding of how slow fashion companies are using storytelling to communicate and engage consumers in this ideology. Multiple cases studies are seen as being more exhaustive and compelling than a single case (Yin, 2009).

3.6 Generating and Collecting Data

At the onset of this thesis, the researchers were interested in empirically examining both slow fashion retailers as well as fast fashion chains (with conscious collections) in understanding how they were each using storytelling to communicate slow fashion or aspects of this ideology. Ten emails were sent out to various fashion retailers explaining the purpose of this research. None of the six fast fashion retailers contacted were interested in participating in this study but each of the four slow fashion retailers responded positively, which include Ossoami (children's clothing), JohannaN (jewellery), Uniforms for the Dedicated (men's clothing) and Lind Store (women's clothing).

The criteria for selecting these aforementioned companies were as follows:

- 1) A business organisation that is producing and selling sustainable fashion products adhering to one or more of the slow fashion values (such as quality products, few collections, etc.).
- 2) A fashion company that seeks to educate the consumers about the slow fashion ideology or some part of this mind-set.
- 3) A fashion entity that is marketing their brand through the use of storytelling or through the use of certain elements of storytelling as well as organisationally embracing some or all of the slow fashion ideas.

The four companies that matched these criterion were selected through the researchers' own networks at the Swedish School of Textiles and through social media tools. Ossoami, for example, was found after the researchers had read an article in *Göteborgs Posten* about this new founded company, Uniforms for the Dedicated was seen as a relevant case study after the researchers met one of the company founders, during a workshop at the Swedish School of Textiles, and JohannaN was deemed as interesting after searching for slow fashion companies in LinkedIn. Generic purpose sampling was; therefore, applied in that these three companies matched the research criteria and were purposively selected because of their relevance to the research questions at hand. Contact with Lind Store; however, was proposed and established through the founder of Ossoami, thus snowball sampling was used in this latter case.

Each of these brand concepts are Swedish and are relatively new establishments with Uniforms for the Dedicated being the oldest company in this study, having been founded in the same year as Fletcher coined the slow fashion ideology, 2007, and Ossoami being the newest of these businesses, having been established in the fall 2013. Again, these companies were selected in accordance with the aforementioned criteria and with a purpose of understanding how slow fashion is being communicated to their customer groups.

The researchers of this study valued that the four selected companies each comprised different segments across the fashion industry such as men's wear, women's clothing, children's garments as well as jewelry and accessories. This broadness of target groups, was deemed appealing in that the researchers of this paper believed that the sample of participants obtained were representative of slow fashion retailers, as a general cohort, in understanding how storytelling is being used as a tool for consumer engagement. These types of business were of particular interest to the study given that the slow fashion ideology is embedded in the core of their brand. Their commitment is in contrast to large retail chains that have seemingly incorporated conscious collections into their brands only to maintain their market position in a society that must subscribe to the mission of sustainability.

3.6.1 Choice of Interviewees – The Participants

Since slow fashion businesses are not yet large operations as this ideology is still in its initial stages (Hyunsook et al., 2013), the researchers; therefore, felt it was most natural and logical to speak with the company founders or owners. These key people are perceived as visionaries by the researchers, as the company founders have expertise and deep founded knowledge in terms of slow fashion and communicating a brand concept through storytelling. The participants' expertise; therefore, increases the empirical validity and credibility of this study.

The following, respondents were selected for the semi-structured interviews:

Linda Sjölund, *Founder & Owner of Ossoami*

Ossoami is a children's wear brand established by Linda Sjölund in October 2013, with a focus on designing and producing durable clothing for kids, and thereby reducing the impact of textile disposal in the environment. Linda Sjölund lives in Gothenburg and studied at the Swedish School of Textiles in Borås. She has 20 years of work experience in the textile industry, particularly with purchasing, production and product development. She has previously worked as a product manager for Helly Hansen in Norway and it was during this time that the idea of using functional fabrics in children's daily wear was spawned. Today, she sells children's' jeans and other clothing articles in a patent material called cordura both to other retailers and through her own web shop. The interview was conducted on April 10th 2014, 9.15 am in Gothenburg.

Johanna Nilsson, *Founder & Owner of JohannaN*

Johanna Nilsson is from Östersund and started her jewelry brand JohannaN in 2009. Her idea was to mix Nordic design with traditional Thai handicraft. In addition to this combination, service, quality and transparency in production are also key in her concept. Her base is in Umeå with her jewelry being found in 50 different sales points, constituting 10 different countries. Johanna has an educational background in fair-trade and sustainable development and has previously worked as a volunteer for the Red Cross Youth Organization and as a lecturer for the Clean Clothes Development. It

was while lecturing and doing research on fashion companies that her idea was born to produce fashion but with sustainability as the foundation. The interview was conducted on April 10th 2014, 13.30 pm, in Borås.

Mike Lind, *Co-Founder & Owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated*

Uniforms for the Dedicated was founded by Mike Lind and his friends in 2007. Their business ideas had already started to develop in 2002 while snowboarding in the mountains. Their company goal is threefold; to create beautiful and timeless men's fashion, to include all customers into their 'dedicated family' and to drive change towards a more sustainable fashion industry. With their base in Stockholm, the company today has approximately 10 employees and sales points in 18-20 countries. Mike Lind does not have an educational nor professional background in the area of fashion; however, he like several of his partners have experience in marketing, as well as business and behavioral change. Their focus on sustainability emerged only two and a half years ago, wanting to make changes in their production processes. Uniforms for the Dedicated, aims to be a forward thinking business, a pioneer and a driving force in sustainable development. They have as a goal to be the best fashion company in terms of sustainable development. As a part of this mission, Mike Lind focuses the majority of his time on giving lectures on sustainability and slow fashion, both domestically and internationally. This interview was conducted on April 13th 2014, 12.50 pm, in Stockholm.

Karoline Lind, *Founder & Owner of Lind Store*

Karoline Lind established Lind Store in central Stockholm in 2011, with a goal of developing and promoting slow fashion. Lind offers sustainable fashion that is of high quality and timeless design, as well as being developed in a sustainable way, in terms of both social and environmental responsibility. Her concept is a showroom, a web-shop as well as pop-up stores, where she offers sustainable fashion from both her own Lind brand as well as other brands embracing common values. Karoline Lind attended IHM Business School in addition to studying courses at the Swedish School of Textiles and Stockholm's Tillskärarakademin. She has also many years of experience in the textile industry, having worked specifically with marketing and branding. Her interests and values in slow fashion and sustainability are deeply founded, having grown up in a textile family from Borås. Linds Färgeri and Färgeriaktiebolaget Lind & Co (founded 1912), for example, have been managed by her family for the last three generations. This interview was conducted on April 14th 2014, 10.50 am, in Stockholm.

3.6.2 The Empirical Data – Semi- Structured Interviews

The participants were examined by the researchers through qualitative interviews. Such interviews may be unstructured or semi-structured in form. Unstructured interviews are characterised by a low standardisation of open ended questions in that a few loosely defined topics are identified to be discussed (Bryman, 2012). This type of interview structure is similar to a free flowing conversation where additional questions may be formulated during the course of the interview and even the order of the questions may be

adjusted and modified in accordance with the interviewee respondent (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). Similarly, semi-structured interviews also allow flexible question order and phrasing. A brief list of topics to be discussed are determined by the researcher, in advance, and additional questions may be developed and composed as the interview progresses (Björklund & Paulsson, 2012). For this particular study, semi-structured interviews have been chosen as the method of research as the researchers preferred to work with a brief list of items to be discussed ensuring that each concept presented in the theoretical chapter (chapter 2), could be thoroughly investigated and tested in this study. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to conduct free-flowing discussions but with structure, providing the researchers with assurance that they were testing what they intended to test.

An interview guide (refer to Appendix 2) was drafted with a loosely structured list of issues and questions to be addressed on subject matters such as *slow fashion, storytelling, engagement, and meaning*. These four concepts were selected by the researchers after reviewing the relevant literature and concepts, presented in chapter 2 of this thesis, recalling that a deductive approach has been applied throughout this study.

An email presenting the purpose of this thesis was sent directly to ten different company owner(s) or founder(s), requesting a face-to-face interview. The researchers chose to conduct interviews only in person, prioritizing that there was much to be gained through face-to-face interviews in terms of being able to better interpret speech tones, body language, etc. as well as being able to ask supplementary questions in the case of misunderstandings or confusion. Thus any possible misconceptions could be eliminated, through the face-to-face interviews, and the reliability of this study heightened.

When the respondent had consented to a face-to-face interview, a meeting place and time were then arranged. The interviews were conducted at the Post Hotel in Gothenburg, the Swedish School of Textiles, and in Stockholm at the head office of Uniforms for the Dedicated and the showroom for Lind Store. Thus, all interviews were conducted in neutral and unbiased environments. The duration of each interview was between 60 to 90 minutes.

At the onset of each interview, the researchers asked for permission to record the interviews as well as providing the interviewees with the choice to be anonymous in the study. All participants confirmed the use of their names in this thesis text. At this time, the researchers, although conducting this study in Sweden, also requested that the interviews be conducted in English, explaining to the participants that the study would be written in English and possible issues of subjectivity that may arise in the process of translation would be eliminated. All participants felt comfortable being interviewed in English. This meant that the researchers have been able to directly quote persons with exceptional knowledge about how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling. Direct quotations from the interviewees have been used by the researchers, in providing a realistic and accurate

description of the empirical data, and in turn the quality and credibility of this research was assured.

3.6.3 Secondary Data – Company Webpages

Both preceding as well as after the interviews, the participants' webpages were scrutinised for general company information. The researchers sought for key concepts on their homepages such as slow fashion and sustainability. The researchers also searched for elements of storytelling such as characters, symbols, images, etc. that were used to convey messages of slow fashion, consumer engagement or more conscious buying behaviours. However, such sources were examined with careful reservation by the researchers because as Bryman (2012) notes a company's public documents such as PR material, advertisements and webpages cannot simply be interpreted as an objective description of the situation at hand. Given this issue, the researchers critically inspected the information found on the company webpages, and then compared and validated it to the information acquired during the interviews.

3.6.4 Data Analysis

In analysing the data, each recorded interview was listened to again from beginning to end. Key words and ideas were written down by both researchers during the interviews, providing a general overview of the interview content. Thereafter, each interview was transcribed in verbatim, writing down the running text in its consecutive order and then grouping themes of content into the theoretical concepts (*slow fashion, storytelling, engagement, and meaning*), as shown in the researchers' communication model (figure 2.4). The topics formed the basis for theoretical matching. Again direct quotations were also noted in further supporting certain issues and in strengthening specific examples. Information that was deemed as irrelevant to the subject matter at hand was aggregated but placed to the side for possible future reference in clarifying context. When all pertinent text had been documented in written form, then the research area concerning how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling could then be analysed. The primary data collected from the interviews was critically examined for patterns and parallels were made from reoccurring key words and phrases used by the interviewees. This empirical data could then be compared to the theoretical frames of reference in terms of storytelling, engagement, and meaning, and thereafter tested or applied to the researchers' communication model (figure 2.4). This process of coding, allowed the researchers to substantiate their results and analysis.

3.7 Disclaimers Concerning Methods and Sources Used

This research although using multiple case studies is a preliminary study, small in scale meaning that the conclusions from this study may be further applied as pilot study.

As mentioned earlier, this research focuses on the retailer's perspective. A more holistic approach and more in-depth study would include the

consumer's perspective as well, in terms of how they are receiving and interpreting the idea of slow fashion and if storytelling is being effectively employed to engage them in more conscious purchasing habits. However, for the purpose of this study, the researchers felt it was realistic and manageable to concentrate only on one facet of business; and chose to focus on the slow fashion retailer.

Again, purposive sampling was used to identify such relevant companies to interview. Thus, the results from such selective sampling in this qualitative research study may be used to explain a phenomena such as slow fashion and its communication but these results may not be generalised to the population as a whole (Bryman, 2012). However, it has not been the researcher's objective to generalise their findings to the population as a whole but instead to understand and interpret the participants' viewpoints and verbal behaviours in understanding how slow fashion is being communicated.

Moreover such sampling in the form of semi-structured interviews tends to extend beyond a traditional frame of investigation, as such interviews are similar to a general conversation with the notation that the predetermined topic areas to be discussed, function as organisational pillars in restricting the conversation to the relevant subject area. As a result of this free-flowing conversational form, the synthesizing of answers and themes was more entangled and tedious, for the researchers of this study, since the empirical data could not be pre-coded. Intended meanings and citations may, for example, be misunderstood or interpreted in another manner when removed from the conversational context. The researchers; however, have undermined this problem by explaining to the respondents, in advance, the purpose of the thesis work and the interviews; with an explicit focus on slow fashion and its communication in terms of storytelling (refer to appendix 1). Thereafter, the interviews were carefully examined by listening to the recorded conversations and issues many times. By going through the interviews several times, the researchers of this study, were then able to differentiate relevant answers and information from invalidated opinions, playful remarks, and other comments that could be deemed as outliers in terms of the topic at hand. In this manner, the issue of presenting a misrepresentation of contexts and words was minimised. The conversational texts were systematically inspected, seeking to understand the content in terms of the predetermined categories. This type of content analysis is pragmatic and allows for replication (Bryman, 2012).

3.8 Reliability and Validity Issues

In terms of reliability and validity concerns, research and other investigatory projects should fulfil basic criteria such as being interesting, understandable, and believable or credible (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2011). Interesting and understandable text is relevant and easily comprehended while a credible study bears high degrees of validity and reliability. However, it is problematic in transferring theories and models into empirics (Ibid) and

because of this complication, validity and reliability are profoundly important in research.

Validity is concerned with the integrity of conclusions that have emerged from a study (Bryman, 2012) and how these findings are connected or even unrelated. Validity can also be defined as an instrument of measurement, surveying that which is intended (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2011). In ensuring an acceptable level of validity in this study, the researchers have carefully selected to interview only the founders and or owners of the respective companies presented early, so error in sampling was avoided. The interview questions were also formulated as to maintain a structure or frame in terms of research relevancy; slow fashion and its communication through storytelling. The researcher's model, presented as figure 2.4, as well as the theoretical concepts applicable to this study have been itemised into an interview guide of categories or themes (see Appendix 2). Through this list of categories, functioning as both structural and memory prompts of what was to be discussed, the researchers of this paper can assure that all germane concepts in this study were covered in the interviews. Thus, the researchers feel confident that they were able to investigate what they had intended and could reflect and interpret the empirical findings of this study in a manner that validly portrays how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling.

Moving on from the issues surrounding validity, the notion of reliability must also be considered in research. Reliability is related to authenticity, meaning are the results stable and may they be easily replicated if the study is reproduced (Bryman, 2012). Reliability may be increased, for instance, through triangulation where more than one method or source of data in a study are cross-checked or by using respondent validation where the researcher provides, the people with whom they have conducted the research on, a copy of their findings and requesting feedback on these accounts (Bryman, 2012). In this study, each respondent was provided with a copy of the results so that they could approve what had been said, interpreted and transcribed during the interviews (refer to appendix 3). This process of respondent validation allowed the researchers to be sure that they had reflected the findings accurately and objectively and that their own values or perceptions had not intruded. In addition, because all interviews were conducted in English, the researchers could directly quote the participants, which enhances the believability and creditability of the study. This implies that the researchers were explicit and transparent in presenting their empirical findings, which strengthens the reliability and replicability of this study.

4. The Results – Empirical Findings

In this chapter, the results from the company homepages and the four semi-structured interviews are individually presented. The information from the qualitative interviews has been organized under the relevant categories of interest: slow fashion, storytelling, engagement, and meaning.

4.1 Ossoami

4.1.1 Slow Fashion

The slow fashion idea behind Ossoami is to design and make daily wear for active kids in school, daycare etc. that is durable, high in quality, comfortable as well as fashionable. Children in a family should be able to inherit the same garment, explains the founder and owner of Ossoami¹, Linda Sjölund. She states further that “when I was young, we often inherited clothes of older siblings; this seldom happens today – mostly because the garments become worn out”. The cordura fabric used in Ossoami garments is a licensed textile and proven to be 10 times more durable than standard denim (Ossoami.com, 2014). This fabric is not yet ecological but it is long-lasting. “What is best?” questions Ossoami’s founder and owner, “Is it better to buy ten pairs of pants that are ecological or one pair that is not ecological?” It is a complex question and her opinion is that the non-ecological garments of cordura fabric are preferred because of their durability and consuming many pairs of ecological trousers that are not long lasting, requires resources, especially the water used in the production processes.

The founder and owner goes on to state that Ossoami customers are very satisfied but also surprised that the cordura garments stand up well to washing and retain their shape. The garments basically look the same, even after wear as well as laundering. Ossoami is also slow fashion in that they have one basic collection per year. This collection is not seasonal as the clothing can be worn all year around. It is a concept of quality clothing, sold at full price rather than reduced retail prices. “It is not supposed to be put on sale” explains Ossoami’s founder and owner. Fast fashion is a very dangerous development in the retail business claims, Ossoami’s founder and owner, after having met many retailers who find it appalling to receive a collection that then needs to be put on sale only after three weeks to make room for a new, proceeding collection. “It is a crazy development” states Ossoami’s founder and owner. She further explains that even though many retailers have started to change their behavior in terms of slow fashion, it is still about money and economics rather than thinking environmentally. Retailers’ profit margins are constrained by fast fashion when they cannot sell collections at the regular price, she explains. Ossoami’s founder and owner thinks differently saying it is better to have collections of high quality, fewer in number, and even more expensively priced. This notion of slow fashion has been a part of the brand since its conceptualization and is presented on their webpage under an category entitled In addition, the homepage directly presents information entitled ‘Environment and Responsibility’ (Ossoami.com, 2014). Here, there is a text description

¹ Linda Sjölund, Founder & Owner, Ossoami, Interview Conducted April 10th 2014.

explaining to consumers the environmental importance of consuming less by purchasing quality and durable clothing.

Ossoami's founder and owner, believes that communicating slow fashion is a challenge for the media, as they are still focused on changing the production processes and making materials more ecological but they have forgotten the consumer and their habitual problems of buying. She further states that ecological and ethical issues are important but that the consumer should not be forgotten.

4.1.2 Storytelling

Ossoami's brand story is about durability and strength. The picture of an armadillo is used on their homepage (Ossoami.com, 2014), a symbolic character that is strongest in its class, representing the durability of Ossoami clothing, explains the company's founder and owner. This core theme is also communicated through visuals, showing, for example, children in action. Ossoami's founder and owner, believes it is very important to combine such visuals with her message of strength and durability. When working with retailers, she always includes visuals to illustrate her concept. She further explains that this strategy is necessary to help retailers understand that slow fashion and durable clothes are also comfortable, fun and fashionable. Contacting potential retailers per telephone is problematic explains Ossoami's founder and owner, as they automatically have preconceived and negative notions about durable children's wear. Therefore, it is preferable to meet the retailers in person so they can feel and touch the garments, she describes. When she meets with retailers they are often marveled by the garments' comfort and appeal. Ossoami's founder and owner, says that stimulating multiple senses such as touch and sight, in this case, are key in communicating a concept. This is the biggest challenge for web-shops, she explains because they are limited to the sense of sight through images.

She wants her communication with her retailers and end-users to be very personal. Ossoami's founder and owner, states that Instagram and Facebook are very important channels in communicating with customers in a personal way. She tries not to be too commercial in her communication, and focuses more on her brand values and the benefits of purchasing durable clothes. The customers have the leading role in the dialogue explains Ossoami's founder and owner. She strives to keep a low profile, not lecturing people but communicating with her customers on an equal level. She does not want to point fingers nor preach to the consumer. The customers must understand the need and benefits of buying higher quality garments and as a consequence of this, there will be environmental gains, says Ossoami's founder and owner.

4.1.3 Engagement

Ossoami seeks to engage retailers and their staff through education. Ossoami's founder and owner explains that even though Ossoami clothing is sold in approximately thirty stores, there is still a lack of awareness even among these existing retailers concerning the brand concept. Ossoami's, founder and owner, wants to educate them, explaining the brand concept

and the cordura material so the retailers understand what they are selling and can then further inform other consumers. The smaller shops are more successful in communicating and selling the Ossoami brand says the company owner and founder and reasons that this is often because of an engaged owner that has close communication with their customers. In the larger shops, the consumer must find and read the information themselves, Ossoami's founder and owner further clarifies. "Interaction is very important in slow fashion communication" states Ossoami's founder and owner. Ossoami involves the customers by asking them questions about the products, focusing on their needs and even problems they have experienced in seeking to find innovative solutions. Ossoami's founder and owner explains this approach as being a traditional sales strategy, meaning that it is difficult to engage the customer in something he or she does not know they need or believe is important. Ossoami's founder and owner further clarifies that if you do not make the consumer think about the environment then they will not understand the need for slow fashion and long lasting garments. It is difficult to interpret customer feedback and measure their response, Ossoami's founder and owner says, using the example that customers click on links related to slow fashion and environmental issues in the textile business but it cannot be seen if they are actually reading the articles. There is too much information, Ossoami's founder and owner, explains.

Communicating slow fashion is challenging Ossoami's founder and owner says because even if people are interested in the idea, they are not automatically willing to buy or be a part of it; actually engaging in the idea. Ossoami's founder and owner clarifies further that many consumers say they are concerned about sustainability and want to behave in an environmentally friendly manner but they still feel it is more convenient and economical to purchase H&M clothing because of the price tag. It might feel better to say you are aware of the problems of over-consumption says Ossoami's founder and owner but it cannot assured that the consumer is as genuinely concerned as they say they are.

Also, building personal relationships, satisfaction and loyalty to something that is beneficial in the long run are key in making people behave more consciously and responsibly in terms of fashion consumption, says Ossoami's founder and owner, further explaining that consumers must be trained or taught to prioritize quality before quantity.

4.1.4 Meaning

Ossoami began communicating its brand from an environmental standpoint but realized that people were not interested enough and in turn it did not encourage them to buy Ossoami clothing. Ossoami changed its communication strategy to focus on the brand's meaning and values such as strength as well as the personal or individualistic benefits of purchasing durable children's wear. Ossoami's communication is also based on an economic perspective that is better to buy fewer but more expensive garments that are long lasting but she says it is a challenge to make consumers to think in this manner. It is important to combine the benefits of

slow fashion with the personal benefits to the consumer, Ossoami's founder and owner, states. Slow fashion, for example, has environmental benefits, while buying quality and long-lasting garments has personal benefits such as not needing to repair nor spend money on replacing clothing only after a short time, clarifies Ossoami's founder and owner. She means that slow fashion must be communicated using such a holistic approach, emphasizing the meaning of the brand as well as the benefits of buying quality and durable clothing both from an environmental and consumerist perspective. Ossoami, for example provides tips, on their website, to their consumers about how to engage in environmental responsibility such as thinking long term, and prioritising quality and durability even when purchasing children's clothing, as well as avoiding throwing away clothing but instead recycling or upcycling and being creative with old garments; giving them new uses (Ossoami.com, 2014).

4.2 JohannaN

4.2.1 Slow Fashion

The founder and owner of JohannaN², Johanna Nilsson, describes her brand concept, as a fusion between Nordic design and Thai handcraft. It was by chance that JohannaN's product focus became jewelry; however, the founder and owner, clearly states that she knew she wanted to work with sustainable development issues and ethical production. According to the founder and owner of JohannaN, slow fashion is about quality and making careful, thoughtful and conscious decisions. Slow fashion is the opposite of fast fashion.

During the development of the brand, the owner and founder of JohannaN, came to realize the importance of communicating the concerns of production, the slow fashion movement as well as why people should care about the planet and future generations. JohannaN's founder and owner, means that many people believe they should care and engage themselves in sustainability issues, but at the same time they do not actually understand why.

JohannaN is influenced and inspired by people and other brands on the internet, and how they are communicating slow fashion, for example, on Instagram. JohannaN's, founder and owner, discovered the notion of slow fashion about a year and a half year ago while in the United Kingdom and sees this mind-set growing in Sweden. The founder and owner likes the ideology of slow fashion as it collects all of the ideas and values that constitute the brand JohannaN. The founder and owner of JohannaN did not want to use a term like Fair Trade to describe the core business since it is difficult to control if every aspect in the supply chain wholly adheres to this notion. JohannaN's founder and owner, explains that she preferred to use the concept transparency until she encountered the notion of slow fashion. The ideology of slow fashion captivates the whole business idea, states JohannaN's founder and owner. The concept of slow fashion is also

² Johanna Nilsson, Founder & Owner, JohannaN, Interview Conducted April 10th 2014.

presented and defined on the webpage (johanna-n.com, 2014).

JohannaN jewelry is designed by Johanna Nilsson in Sweden but produced in Thailand, not because it is cheaper but because of their specialized knowledge and skills, especially in brass handcraft. The cooperation is very equal, JohannaN's founder and owner states and without the competencies of both countries, the brand would not exist. Most jewelry pieces are made of brass and some of sterling silver. These materials are chosen because they make long lasting jewelry, explains JohannaN's founder and owner. JohannaN offers also a repair service, fixing and mending jewelry. The founder and owner of JohannaN states that they do not release new collections every season but instead follow their own tact, presenting new pieces in a collection once or twice a year. The founder and owner of JohannaN goes on to explain that the jewelry is unisex and can be worn by both men and women, regardless of age or style. Some pieces have been in the collection for years, still at their original price and then they will start to sell. Trends change from one day to the next, clarifies JohannaN's founder and owner, and uses the example of posting a picture of one of the older jewelry pieces that consumers instead perceive as being new.

JohannaN's founder and owner, says that the manner of communicating through social media will further evolve and should be seen as an opportunity in developing and promoting the slow fashion idea. "We have to use social media" says founder and owner of JohannaN. Consumers are stressed or overloaded with information. This over-abundance of information is a challenge. It is not black or white, rather grey, JohannaN's founder and owner further explains, and consumers must dig into brands to seek out information and the stories. JohannaN's founder and owner also believes that one has to adapt the conventional ways of doing business and at the same time embrace the ideas of slow fashion. "You have to be as good as the conventional brands and then even be better" says the founder and owner of JohannaN. The founder and owner of JohannaN is satisfied as long as they can take market share from a competitor brand that is not operating with the slow fashion mentality. However, JohannaN's founder and owner, admits and recognizes that one should not only focus on building the world's best and most ethical production but that a brand grounded in values must also be constructed and grown, as it is only then that the press and media will talk about the slow fashion brand. "I want to build power and use it correctly" JohannaN's founder and owner. Using the modern day marketing and communication tools, should not mean that a brand loses its integrity, the founder and owner of JohannaN further explains, "You can still chose who you want to work with".

4.2.2 Storytelling

JohannaN's founder and owner, states that as a designer she is "telling a story and it is up to the consumer to interpret this story". JohannaN's stories do not include fictional characters but she sees herself as the main role model. The webpage, for example, includes pictures of Johanna Nilsson herself, founder and owner of JohannaN (johanna-n.com, 2014) portraying a

role model image. Informing consumers about why they should care about and engage themselves in slow fashion through stories is key in the JohannaN brand concept. However, JohannaN's founder and owner recognizes that she must be careful not to scare consumers away from the subject. "As a consumer you just want a nice piece without thinking about where the jewelry comes from" says JohannaN's founder and owner, and goes on to explain that she wants to change consumers' habits so they will ask about the 'production' story behind the jewelry. The stories are told through creating beautiful pictures that discreetly integrate production pictures with image pictures of the jewelry. Such pictures are shown on the webpage illustrating jewelry in the making (johanna-n.com, 2014). These collages convey a message of cooperation. JohannaN chooses to show both types of images, on the webpage, as that the production process is an obvious and important part of every piece of jewelry (Ibid). This type of educational approach is key for JohannaN's founder and owner; as she wants to present the company's production partner, as an equal, which JohannaN also emphasizes on Instagram, Facebook, etc., instead of presenting this information in a policy concerning corporate social responsibility. Therefore, the customer should see no difference between the image pictures of the jewelry and the ones of production, JohannaN's founder and owner further explains. The founder and owner of JohannaN goes on to clarify that she wants the pictures to embrace a feeling of beauty, telling a story of equality and cooperation between Nordic design and Thai handicraft in terms of techniques, materials, and designs. The pictures says a lot, JohannaN's founder and owner states. Again, the founder and owner of JohannaN uses herself as well as the people working with production in the communications, saying that images of real life people as well as applying her background in sustainability create authenticity in the brand.

JohannaN strives to be an educational source as well as a pioneer in promoting the slow fashion ideology. The founder and owner of JohannaN aims to keep the communication positive and inspirational but still presenting the more serious message of slow fashion. JohannaN's founder and owner, describes that stories are told different levels. JohannaN's blog, for example, provides in-depth information for those who are already involved in the subject of slow fashion, and Instagram and Facebook are more general briefing platforms. JohannaN's founder and owner, discusses also the desire to tell a story but at the same time explaining the danger of being too transparent. Exposing the factory contact details, for example, as well as pricing and profit information does not make sense to people that do not understand the business, JohannaN's founder and owner further clarifies. There should not be too much information disclosed, but selective information since people are not interested knowing in everything. Again she emphasizes the importance of telling positive stories so the consumer feels pride about making a conscious purchase. She spreads this positive feeling through her blog, as well as providing tips about other sustainable brands. This feel good approach also includes posting her favorite pieces and encouraging her customers to feel satisfaction when they buy a quality

piece and even when they repair a broken product. The founder and owner of JohannaN, says she aims to develop a friendly profile with her customers, making sure that she carefully plays the role as an educator.

She then goes on to discuss that the social media's and marketers' creation of green-washing and its challenges. Brands must be honest and transparent, she says because "consumers can easily google any brand and its authenticity". JohannaN's founder and owner further explains that modern day technology grants consumers with the ability to investigate companies every day and at any time of the day. People have become accustomed to checking and verifying information, she says.

4.2.3 Engagement

JohannaN's founder and owner, says that her approach and engagement in promoting the slow fashion ideology can be described as a non-governmental organization (NGO). The founder and owner of JohannaN means with the use of this term, an organization that seeks social transformation and improvements in quality of life. JohannaN's founder and owner further states that it is easy to assume that most consumers have a mutual interest in the engagement of sustainability but further clarifies that this is not reality. The founder and owner of JohannaN emphasizes again that consumers like beautiful things but are not interested in where they come from or who made them. This realization made the founder and owner of JohannaN initially pessimistic, and she began to question if the focus should primarily on the design without trying to promote and engage consumers in the slow fashion mind-set. After time, the founder and owner of JohannaN understood that she wanted to focus on influencing and educating consumers, and changing their habits so that they would want to see and seize the production story as well as the slow fashion ideology behind her jewelry. After all fashion has a lot to do with politics and is a mode of self-expression says JohannaN's founder and owner and speaks further about the challenges of actually engaging consumers in the slow fashion mindset. For example, there is a notable difference in terms of 'likes' on Facebook when comparing images of jewelry with pictures of production. JohannaN's founder and owner, means that people are easily captivated by beautiful images without thinking.

Consumers need to be engaged on different levels, the founder and owner of JohannaN states, taking into consideration who the receiver is and what forms of media or communication tools are used. Social media and modern day technology are powerful utensils in attracting people to the slow fashion ideology, she explains. JohannaN's founder and owner says it is difficult to actually know how many people the brand has educated and influenced in terms of slow fashion but states that the more followers they have on Facebook, the more likely that these people are interested in the brand and this mind-set. The positive feedback she receives in the social media, such as an increasing number of consumers accepting and liking the production images, is a re-confirmation that the brand is on the right track in promoting slow fashion, says the founder and owner of JohannaN.

JohannaN's founder and owner explains that in making people behave as conscious and responsible consumers and react to the brand message, JohannaN aims to shorten the communication gap between the producer and the end consumer. JohannaN strives to show equality between the designer and the producer. The consumer should be able to track where the jewelry was produced and have a face of the person who made the product, explains the founder and owner of JohannaN.

4.2.4 Meaning

Purchasing and wearing a piece of jewelry from JohannaN creates a feeling of solidarity among consumers in terms of meaning and values, says the founder and owner of JohannaN. The core message is not about the jewelry or product itself, JohannaN's founder and owner explains but about the values they represent. JohannaN's founder and owner, describes herself as being more political than simply designing a beautiful product. JohannaN seeks to be an engine in communicating the slow fashion idea and uses the brand as the driver. It is not simply about the product, JohannaN's founder and owner, clarifies but it is about the values. The jewelry, as a product, is a symbolic representation of a standpoint.

4.3 Mike Lind, Uniforms for the Dedicated

4.3.1 Slow Fashion

The ideology of slow fashion is a mind-set that has emerged as the company evolved. Their commitment to slow fashion developed from being in the industry and seeing the issues concerning production practices and consumption habits. Co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated³, Mike Lind, explains that there are two directions a transitional company such as his may proceed in; "Shutting your eyes and saying this is not an issue or questioning your reason for being in the fashion industry and moving towards more sustainable practices". Uniforms for the Dedicated, chose the latter of these two approaches, deciding approximately two years ago to become the best sustainable fashion company, in the world, within the next five years. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated states that the usage of the word 'best' has changed slightly during this mission towards sustainability. Since it is difficult to measure 'best' in terms of sustainability, the company chooses to redefine the concept of best to mean that they strive after being a forward thinker, a pioneer and driving force for sustainable fashion. Their webpage presents such approaches, explaining that the company's aim is to create marginal negative impacts on the world in terms of the company's production practices while at the same time striving after substantial positive impacts concerning innovative designs, communication strategies and future inspirations (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014). When the researchers asked the company for a definition of slow fashion, the co-founder and owner, of Uniforms for the Dedicated says that it is a term that he hears frequently as he lectures on sustainability and attends conferences and workshops in this subject area. Nonetheless, it is not a

³ Mike Lind, Co-founder & Owner, Uniforms for the Dedicated, Interview Conducted April 13th 2014.

concept that they use in-house nor is it a word that they write on their webpage (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014). The company; however, acts in a slow fashion manner, producing only two collections per year, with a focus on using quality materials that are of organic fibres, industrial recycled materials as well as 100% consumer recycled fabrics such as wool or cashmere as well as producing most product groups in Europe (Turkey, Italy and Portugal). Their transitional goal is to design and produce all garments from either organic and/or recycled materials. On their webpage, this goal is also emphasised as the company states that they consider recycled materials as being the best choice, and therefore their first choice of textiles (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014).

In redirecting the interview back to the definition of slow fashion, the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated addresses the notion of time, questioning “what is the motivation for people to slow down when everything in society proceeds faster?” His reply is that “craving relationships with things” is part of slow fashion and slowing down.

In addition, he discusses the challenge of communicating slow fashion and sustainability as the general public often does not understand the meaning of these concepts. Slow fashion and sustainability have become terminology that are “misused and even washed out by the media” means the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, which has caused confusion among consumers.

The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated sees the future of slow fashion in terms of sharing instead of consuming and possessing all personal commodities. He states that “humans, like to share things but we are not used to it” as consumption has become all about personal ownership.

4.3.2 Storytelling

Storytelling has been a part of Uniforms for the Dedicated from the beginning of their concept development. Also, on their webpage a heritage story is used to communicate the initial stages of their brand and the motivational values behind it (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014). As a company, they are not interested in improving the road towards slow fashion but they want to change or transform this path. In selecting this route, they do not believe in applying statistics or numbers but instead focus on storytelling. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated explains that storytelling is about “sharing ideas, emotions and concepts and if we can build that into our way of consuming, then we can affect purchasing behaviours”. He further explains that the more emotionally attached a consumer is to his or her clothing, the more difficult it is to discard of the garment. He states “think about having an emotional connection to a garment even before buying it”, proposing that this might be the role of storytelling in the future.

Uniforms for the Dedicated employs a narrative arc of stories where the umbrella concept is sustainability and under this main topic, there are

different stories for each collection or season, as clarified by the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated. He mentions the broadness of the concepts of sustainability and slow fashion and that their interpretations are very personal and individual; hence the need for many stories. However, he points out that the stories and their characters tie into each other; they are connected to the main overriding themes of sustainability, wanting to change the world and being curious, which he explains are drivers in wanting to improve the future. Currently, their collection and story presents a character named Smoking Fox, with Aiden Shaw being the model (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014). The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated explains this persona as someone that has lived the life, is a forward thinker, fearless, interesting, and curious about the future. He describes the importance of using such characters with charismatic qualities rather than having a role model that represents only superficial values such as good looks, luxury and wealth.

4.3.3 Engagement

In terms of engagement, the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, explains that each concept in their collection must tie in with the company's values and that storytelling is the tool that connects the values with the consumer's emotions. He also states that a company must have ideas and values to ground a story in such as being progressive, curious and innovative; these core messages are key. He further explains that brand values cannot be perceived through the use of only visuals; there is also the need for a story to engage the customer. A visual acts as an initial prompt in that the consumer thinks "I like the image of the brand but there should be a story that connects the consumer's values with the brand" says the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, so that there is this sharing of similar values.

It is through storytelling that the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated explains engagement. He states that "stories are powerful as they get to our emotions, engaging our senses". The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated further clarifies his statement by using the example of a story about baking an apple pie so that the listener can smell and even taste the baked goods. He further expands on this idea by saying that the more tapped into a story the consumer is and the more emotions that are touched, the more willing the customer is to take risks in changing habits. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated also clarifies that a part of making individuals act as conscious and responsible consumers is presenting them with stories that are both relevant and believable. He emphasizes again that they do not use the words sustainability nor slow fashion when communicating with their customers but instead there is a focus on commodity use, shown through their story's characters such as Smoking Fox. They want the consumer to understand how they will use their clothing; on many different occasions. This approach is all about slow fashion, buying quality and purchasing less, means the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated. Their messages are primarily conveyed

in their store, on their webpage, and through social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram and Vimeo. Conscious and responsible fashion consumption behaviours are encouraged and tested through the company's use of pilot projects such as the '*take back system*'; when a customer purchases a garment in their store, they receive a bag with a message stating that everyone has clothing in their closet that they are not using. The idea is that with this pre-addressed bag and postage paid, the consumer should choose a garment they are no longer wearing and sent it to an organisation in Sweden (*Stadsmission*) that is focused on helping homeless as well as people struggling with drug and alcohol abuse. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated concludes by denoting that 'garments are then put back in the loop' and the company's message about wanting to improve the future is conveyed to their customers.

4.3.4 Meaning

The meaning behind this brand is developing commercial products with a core focus on sustainability and improving the future. They are a company of 10 employees, making them flexible in terms of engaging themselves in sustainability issues. Ten percent of the company's human resources are engaged in promoting sustainability. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, means that they are a brand concept that is curious and innovative and "wants to change the world". They are extremely passionate as well as dedicated to this challenge.

4.4 Karoline Lind, Lind Store

4.4.1 Slow Fashion

The slow fashion mind-set has been a part of the Lind Store concept from the beginning but not a term used directly on the company's webpage (lindstore.se, 2014). The founder of Lind Store⁴, Karoline Lind, defines slow fashion as including sustainable fashion. She explains these terms as meaning social responsibility in terms of production and good work practices, using adaptable, environmental and defensible materials, designing and manufacturing long lasting garments of quality, and knowledge about where and how the clothing is produced. More specifically, the founder and owner of Lind Store, says slow fashion distances itself from short-lived trends. She adds that ecological material is not the only solution to slow fashion nor sustainability; for example, organic fabrics should not be mass-produced. The founder and owner of Lind Store, sees the diversification of materials used in garment production as being central. She further describes slow fashion by formulating an analogy about fast food. A consumer needs a base of good raw ingredients or materials but also allowing for a portion of candies or fast fashion, explains the founder and owner of Lind Store. She means that it is all about balance and finding a harmony as well as allowing oneself to act in accordance with different situations. For example, maybe one must eat fast food or buy fast fashion to solve a problem at hand but tomorrow they will choose more consciously having time to seek out the right

⁴ Karoline Lind, Founder and Owner, Lind Store, Interview Conducted April 14th 2014.

purchases, clarifies the founder and owner of Lind Store.

She further exemplifies that sustainable fashion is not only about developing marketing concepts. She appreciates that large retailers are responding in terms of sustainability but she questions if some developments are only offering consumers a way to keep on spending and disposing of garments. The founder and owner of Lind Store also discusses the uncertainty if such retail chains are acting to defend their market position towards society or if these players are using their market position to take responsibility for the society's sustainable development. The difference is pronounced between these two initiatives, means Lind Store's found and owner, and she hopes that these large retailers are using their market position to convey responsibility.

4.4.2 Storytelling

In terms of storytelling, she also states that she does not use this terminology. It is a technique, clarifies the founder and owner of Lind Store. She states further that her communication method is value driven; based on qualities such as awareness, engagement and caring. She defines awareness as being open about new ways of doing things in terms of design, materials and production; engagement as acting and involving oneself in change, and caring as regard for the people and the process. The founder and owner of Lind Store goes onto explain that these values are deeply rooted in herself and in her concept, having grown up in a textile family from Borås, extending as far back as three generations. Her concept has a heritage story; however, she notes that she has used very little of this story on her webpage and has much more to tell but is still finding her core business and business model and will then shift her focus more to communications and perhaps lecturing on sustainable fashion (lindstore.se, 2014).

She describes her character in the Lind story as being a pathfinder as opposed to a teaching roll and she presents a picture of herself on the company webpage as opposed to using a fictional character on symbol (lindstore.se, 2014). She means that she as the founder and owner of Lind Store is like a mentor, gathering different brands with common values and initiatives in terms of slow fashion and offering consumers a choice. This information about quality and brands producing timeless collections is briefly presented on the webpage but without using direct terminology such as slow fashion or sustainable fashion (lindstore.se, 2014). People easily become defensive when discussing sustainability issues, explains the founder and owner of Lind Store, and it is therefore she chooses to take a more guiding and informative roll in this subject area. It is not about preaching or pointing fingers about what is right or wrong, but it is about offering consumers an opportunity to make good choices, says the founder and owner of Lind Store and having a constant two-way dialogue with the customer.

4.4.3 Engagement

Lind Store's founder and owner explains that previously, marketing was about creating illusions; a tactic that she does not believe will not work today. The founder and owner of Lind Store means that current day marketing is much more about product development, creating a good product and telling about it through transparent production practices and the use of social media. Marketing is about engagement, getting people involved, and it is about spreading the truth, clarifies the founder and owner of Lind Store. Engagement is accomplished through close relationships with her customers. The founder and owner of Lind Store articulates that her concept is a small shop with a tight knit channel where building strong relationships is the focus, through personal meetings, newsletters and the social media. It is about creating a strong profile about sustainability says Lind Store's founder and owner and emphasizes that she prefers to work smaller as she does not want to compromise her values. The founder and owner of Lind Store further clarifies that even as a small actor, she can influence the world around by having a strong channel.

Lind Store's founder and owner, states that there is so much information in terms of ecological, organic and sustainable products that the consumer does not know how to behave consciously and responsibly. There is a need for retail concepts like Lind Store with different priorities and values, the founder and owner explains, in helping the consumer make the right choice. It is about making a good selection as well as purchasing quality says Lind Store's founder and owner and further explains that she conveys her message through mingle events. She uses a recent example of when she had 15 women from a large bank in Stockholm come to her showroom to listen to the Lind story and concept about sustainable fashion. The founder and owner of Lind Store describes this group as being very engaged and satisfied and that these women then communicate a message to their friends and family, in turn engaging others. Social media is a powerful amplifier, explains the founder and owner of Lind Store. She concludes by saying that conscious and responsible consumption is a matter of education and that consumers must have time to make conscious decisions.

4.4.4 Meaning

Quality is of key significance for Lind Store's brand concept as presented on the company homepage (lindstore.se, 2014). Quality is the core message of Lind Store and the found and owner means quality in terms of production, processes and fabrics. She states also that quality is related to long-lasting design and describes her brand as being material driven as opposed to fashion driven. The founder and owner of Lind Store further exemplifies that quality does not need to be about one's personal economy. It is better to invest in fewer garments but of high quality, she explains, and makes reference to the renowned statement that the mother of Carmel Snow, former editor of the American edition of Harper's Bazaar, was quoted as saying "We are too poor, to buy cheap clothing".

5. Analysis

In this chapter, the results of the interviews are analysed and examined in detail, drawing parallels to the theoretical framework presented in the literature review chapter. These findings and observations will be discussed through the following categories: slow fashion, storytelling, engagement, and meaning in order to examine how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling.

5.1 The Ideology of Slow Fashion

In observing how slow fashion is being communicated to consumers, it must be first understood how the interviewees of this study, define this mind-set as it is these ideas that frame a company's goals, and expectations as well as their stories. As previously outlined in the early chapters of this thesis, slow fashion is an ideological framework that has a different point of departure than the typical consumerist view of the Western hemisphere (Fletcher, 2012). It is a vision or means through a set of ideas such as slowing down consumption, making conscious and mindful purchases, appreciating quality over quantity, understanding more about where clothing and accessories are produced as well as learning to care for and repair garments and appreciating beauty. These notions include ideas about transparency, integrity and social responsibility, which, as presented earlier, seemingly blurs the distinction between the definitions of slow fashion and sustainable fashion.

As outlined in the interview results, all four companies clearly adhere to the slow fashion framework described above. Uniforms for the Dedicated, Ossoami, Lind Store and JohannaN all focus on quality, long lasting products and slowing down both the production and consumption cycles by producing fewer collections sold at the original retail price. JohannaN's concept; however, embraces even other notions of the slow fashion framework, with a strong focus on presenting production images on the webpage and other social media forms in attempt to teach consumers about where and how her jewelry is created. JohannaN's goal is to make the customer treasure and care about their purchases. As stated by Pookulangara & Shepard (2013); transparency is needed in order to assist consumers in making conscious purchase decisions. In addition, JohannaN addresses the ideas of valuing beauty and personal style, not only through the merged images of design and production but through the jewelry itself. JohannaN observes that consumers are accustomed to seeking superficial beauty wanting only a beautiful piece of jewelry to wear, for example. JohannaN aims to change these consumption behaviours through her design, product, and image pictures that are a representation of endless creative possibilities and artful communication as well as signifying her brand values and emotions; a more substantial or deep rooted meaning of beauty that adheres to the slow fashion mindset.

Although all respondents and their businesses are acting as slow fashion entities, the results from the interviews confirm that they all use the words fair trade, sustainable, ecological and/or organic fashion sometimes interchangeably with the concept of slow fashion. This conduct strongly reconfirms what was presented in both the problem discussion and theoretical chapter that the distinction between these terms is clouded and thus individuals lack sufficient information to help them behave as conscious and responsible consumers. Conformingly, all respondents reiterate this finding by stating that even the consumer is confused by the various terminologies adhering to the subject of slow fashion and that these concepts are misused by the media. What the researchers of this paper can discern from such results is that slow fashion is an intricate and complex topic and its communication will thus be challenged by indistinct terminology.

When each of the interviewees were asked to define slow fashion as per the definitions proposed by Fletcher (2012), Bourland (2011) and Leslie et al., (2014), examined at the onset of this thesis, the founder and owner of JohannaN, provided the most precise explanation, saying that it is about prioritizing quality over quantity, making careful, thoughtful and conscious purchases as well as taking care of possessions. JohannaN also clearly presents this concept of slow fashion and its meaning as well as using the exact wording 'slow fashion' on the company homepage (johanna-n.com, 2014). All other interviewees have chosen not to use this direct phraseology on their webpages (lindstore.se, 2014; Ossoami.com, 2014; uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014), explaining that they do not want to preachify nor scare the consumer away from the subject of slow fashion. JohannaN wants to educate consumers but also confirms in the interview that brands must be careful not to appal consumers in terms of slow fashion. The beclouded use and definition of slow fashion among the interviewees and their reluctance or qualm to openly present this ideology on their homepages, blogs and alike, makes it of further interest to examine how, then, are they communicating slow fashion to their customers.

5.2 The Role of Storytelling

The results demonstrate that each of these brands are using storytelling with an aim to engage consumers in their concepts of slow fashion; however, they are applying this tool in different manners. As previously mentioned, there is not one single and fixed mode of telling a story (Denning, 2006), which is one of the reasons that it interesting to investigate how slow fashion is being communicated through storytelling, in better understanding how to engage consumers in conscious and responsible fashion consumption.

Storytelling may be employed both on a strategic level as a branding concept and on an operational level as a communication tool (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010). The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, for example, explains that storytelling has been a part of the brand from its conceptual origins. Their primary focus, is strategic, communicating the brand as the best sustainable fashion company and their promotion of

products falling secondary. JohannaN is also using storytelling on a very strategic level, merging the pictures of production with images of her jewelry to promote a message of cooperation. The founder and owner of JohannaN means that the core message is not about the product but about the values, such as cooperation and equality that the jewelry represents. As stated by Fog et al. (2010), brands need to base their communication on values rather than simply on promotional messages. Projecting values will make the consumer feel a sense of belonging, and encourage engagement in the slow fashion ideology.

Ossoami and Lind Store are also using storytelling as a communication tool but much more unconsciously or on an operational level. In these two businesses, the products stand in the limelight while their communication tools are secondary and deemed to further refinement. It should be reminded; however, that both Ossoami and Lind Store are younger companies than Uniforms for the Dedicated and JohannaN. Thus, the researchers interpret this finding to mean that Ossoami and Lind Store are still seeking to find their core businesses, after which time, storytelling may be perhaps employed more strategically and even holistically.

Although Ossoami is using storytelling on a more operational level, the founder and owner of Ossoami affirms the idea that storytelling is most effective when using a holistic approach, communicating both the brand message as well as the core story. Ossoami's founder and owner, explains that businesses must communicate both the personal benefits of purchasing durable fashion, for example, as well as the more abstract gains in terms of sustainability for the planet, if they are to succeed in engaging their customers in the slow fashion mindset.

Regardless of whether they are using storytelling on a strategic or operative level, the researchers observe that the social, expressive, controlling and informative functions of communication as stated by Johansson & Malmsten (2009) all exist in the participants' stories. Moreover, the slow fashion companies employ contemporary narratives, as previously defined in this thesis, as stories that express a brand's purpose and their connection to modern day reality (Fog et al., 2010). Ossoami, for example, is telling a story about durability and the benefits of commodities being long lasting, JohannaN's story is about equality and cooperation and is told through a story of the designer and producer, Uniforms of the Dedicated conveys a story about curiosity and wanting to change the world by improving the future, and Lind Store's tale is about quality and timeless fashion. In addition, to this type of story, Lind Store also makes use of a heritage story; stories which have a connection to time. The founder and owner of Lind Store, explains during the interview and on the company webpage (lindstore.se, 2014) that she is raised in a textile family from Borås, extending as far back as three generations, and the values that are deeply rooted in her upbringing such as quality, timelessness and nurturing the planet, are predominantly existing in her business today. Such a heritage story targets a different customer group

than a contemporary story. Uniforms for the Dedicated uses a heritage story as well. On the company webpage (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014), for example, the beginning of their journey is explained along with the founding values of their company, passion and caring for the planet; which are still important company values today.

However, as Smith and Wintrob (2013), were cited early in this thesis, storytelling does not necessary mean one narrative but may involve several stories being told at different times with various purposes. Both Uniforms for the Dedicated and JohannaN also make use of an arc of narratives. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated explains that sustainability is such a broad concept, meaning different things for different people that there is a need for many stories, appealing to various consumer groups. This finding further supports Cunliffe and Coupland's (2012) explanation that humans need multiple narratives and evolving accounts in order to make sense of issues in society. However, the co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated does notes that each sub-story is connected to the brand's 'umbrella' story of curiosity and innovation in wanting to improve the future. JohannaN, on the other hand, explains her arc of narratives in terms of social technology. JohannaN's blog, for example, tells a more in-depth story for those consumers already knowledgeable and interested in the slow fashion ideology while Facebook and Instagram present more general stories. What the researchers, of this study, can discern here is the importance of a connected arc of narratives, as human sense-making is not a fixed state. There must be many stories, perhaps so the consumer recalls past experiences, other narratives concerning present interactions and even storytelling that stimulates future expectations, which together create an understanding in term of complex issues such as slow fashion.

Regardless of type, what each of their narratives have in common, is a message implying that the current fashion landscape of overabundance and fast fashion is not delivering a sense of well-being nor prosperity. The moral of their stories is; therefore, that it is time to quest meaning beyond dazed consumption in deeper values such as quality, strength, cooperation, equality and curiosity, etc., all of which are captivated in their brands as well as the slow fashion ideology. Their stories' messages are complete with high staked conflicts and characters such a villain, a hero, and a mentor. The conflict is discerned as the same in each of the brand narratives. It can be asserted that their promotion of slow fashion is at strife with modern day fashion markets in the Western sphere; a marketplace with too many commodities and too many options as well as too much waste (Sachs, 2012). The stakes of this dissension could not be higher given that the renewal of both natural and man-made resources as well as the survival of the textile industry are at play in this story of fashion and overconsumption.

In terms of the characters used in their storytelling, the researchers of this study note both similarities and differences. The adversary role or villain is perceived as the same throughout all stories, as this character is understood

to be the unsatisfied or even greedy consumer that is mindlessly buying. The hero is also similar throughout each company narrative and is observed as the customer that chooses to shed the label of consumerism, embracing the slow fashion mindset and becoming instead a conscious citizen. The mentor in their stories is represented by the brands themselves, which the researchers, of this study, perceive as being key in conveying the slow fashion ideology. The founder and owner of Lind Store, for example, confirms this role in her interview stating that she sees herself more as a pathfinder, guiding the consumer and providing them with a choice, and JohannaN and Uniforms for the Dedicated are educators, lecturing on the subject of sustainability and redirecting the hero, or in this case the consumer.

However, their stories differ in that the mentor role is played by both fictional and non-fictional brand characters. JohannaN and Lind Store, for example, do not use fictional characters but see themselves as the role figures of their stories. They are important and powerful characters in their stories in that they do as they preach, which allows the consumer to identify with them and their characters. Hence, a sense of authenticity is created through their characters and playing the role of the mentor as opposed to a brand hero. JohannaN's website shows images of the founder and owner Johanna Nilsson herself (johanna-n.com, 2014). This visual can further help the customer to identify with the character. It is deemed pivotal by the authors that these slow fashion retailers have chosen an advisory role as a mentor instead of aiming to be the brand hero such as sustainability brands have done and perhaps without success in terms of consumer engagement. Consumers are drawn and magnetically pulled to these slow fashion brands, its stories and messages of social ideologies in contrast with the brand hero that pushes products and ideas on the consumer such as the case with sustainability marketing.

As previously explained, this familiarity and empathy with the characters in developing powerful and believable stories, is essential in making the consumer interested in the story (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010) as well as prompting the consumer to think about complex ideas such as slow fashion (Denning, 2006). Uniforms for the Dedicated, for example, also creates a memorable, recognizable and compelling persona as their mentor but through the use of a fictional character Smoking Fox. However, this unusual character is, in turn, portrayed through a non-fictional role model, Aiden Shaw. He is a British author, model, activist and musician. The co-founder and owner of Uniform for the Dedicated, in his interview, describes Shaw as a person that is curious and a forward or liberal thinker; qualities which are in harmony with the company's own values in seeking to improve the future. The mentor in Ossoami's concept is a symbolic character, an armadillo. This animal's armor like skin is its defense and strength which are analogous with her use of cordura fabric in creating strong and durable clothing. Fictional or not, each of these brands have created emotionally enchanting characters, whether it being recognizable and consistent role figures that do as they predicate such as JohannaN and Lind Store, or intriguing characters like the

armadillo and Smoking Fox. As a result, the actions, values and experiences of these characters reveal a deep truth about the fashion world and sustainability and in turn making the messages of these companies more believable and in turn prompting engagement.

5.3 Engagement

From the literature review chapter, it can be understood that engagement is accomplished through the sharing of similar values; it is a sense of belonging and commitment. In other words, it is about having similar worldviews which can be conveyed through stories. The founders and owners of both Ossoami and Uniforms for the Dedicated, speak of the importance of engaging several of the human senses such as sight and touch in generating commitment and, in turn, possibly action. Stories are a mode of activating many senses and co-founder and owner of the Uniforms for the Dedicated further explains that the more senses that are engaged, the more likely the consumer is to react or change behavioural patterns. Their Smoking Fox character is portrayed through visual images of Aiden Shaw presenting his charisma (uniformsforthededicated.com, 2014). He is a person that is curious, open-minded, and embraces challenges and even controversies clarifies co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, and is a character that every person has buried within themselves. There exists a commonality of values here between the character and the audience or consumer. As previously explained, by Herskovitz & Crystal (2010) fundamental character traits such as curiosity in characters and stories alike, are needed, as it is these same characteristics that are at play when individuals or consumers themselves make important decisions.

JohannaN speaks of engagement in terms of the values that are represented in the jewellery. She explains in her interview that when people whom have purchased her jewellery, see and recognise the same pieces worn by others; there is a sense of belonging and a common standpoint of solidarity, in that these people understand they share the same values; values grounded in equality and cooperation, for example. However, the founder and owner of JohannaN is careful not to oversimplify the degree of consumer engagement. The number of 'likes' and followers on Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms may be loosely interpreted as interest, she explains but say nothing about the extent to which a consumer is truly betrothed in the slow fashion ideology.

In projecting mutual values between the brand and the consumer, Ossoami, JohannaN and Lind Store all mention the importance of education and personal interaction. The founder and owner of Ossoami, for example, uses the example that when educating retailers about the durability of the cordura material, it is the smaller store owners whom are often more engaged than the larger retailers. Moreover, it is these smaller shops that recurrently have closer contact with their customers because of this committed owner. The founder and owner of Lind Store, also notes the same in terms of network size, clarifying that she prefers to educate and communicate her values in smaller groups such as mingle events, as she does not want to compromise

her values. Strong relationships may be built through such tight knit channels she explains. The importance of education in combination with building quality relationships is discerned here by the authors, in developing an empathy of values; meaning that the consumer understands, relates to and engages in the brand's values. People seek to connect to values and stories, building on them and making them their own (Smith & Wintrob, 2013), as this process allows the human species to understand and make sense of the world around as well as bringing meaning to their own lives (Collins, 2013).

Correspondingly, the interviewees confirm that it is difficult to measure consumer engagement in terms of adhering to the slow fashion ideology. They reinforce that although consumers may be interested in the notion of slow fashion, this appeal does not necessarily equate with actual engagement in this mind-set. Although they say that they cannot quantify their customer's behaviours, they are; nonetheless, very focused on guiding and encouraging the consumer to respond and behave as a slow fashion consumer. Hence, the researcher's, of this paper, perceived the slow fashion companies as being optimistic in the communication journey of conscious consumption behaviours. The founder and owner of Lind Store, for example, concentrates her efforts very much on showing the consumer the personal benefits of buying durable clothing in combination with the advantages of consuming less for the planet. Modern day consumption is grounded in individualistic needs and wants, for example. So it can be inferred that retailers wanting to engage the consumer to behave as 'slow fashionists' must present and explain the personal gains such as Ossoami does in communicating that long lasting children's clothing does not have to be repaired nor replaced as often. Uniforms for the Dedicated also focuses on the individualistic benefits of purchasing quality and timeless garments in alliance with improving the future. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated, further explains in his interview, that they want to help the customer understand how they will use a suit, for example, on many different occasions both more formal as well as informal settings. He clarifies that showing the consumer the benefits of purchasing quality and even higher priced garments that can be worn at many different times, encourages them to consume less which benefits also the planet.

JohannaN chooses another approach to consumer engagement and that is through focusing on the cooperation between herself and the producer. She wants the consumer to understand where the jewelry is produced and to have a face of the person whom has made the jewelry because with this holistic story at hand the customer sees, feels and understands that they have purchased something with value; substantial value. The idea behind revealing this production story, is that the consumer sees the time and effort that it takes to produce the jewelry or product and in turn, the customer will value their purchase not wanting to discard of it at a whim. Such strategy is further supported by Fletcher (2014), who explains through reference to Jonathan Chapman (2005) that products are easily thrown or given away when there is an absence of meaning. However, by creating an emotional

connection between person and object, as JohannaN strives to do, the addiction to constantly consume new goods may be diminished and meaning predominates instead.

Yet another tactic in inspiring consumer engagement may be seen through Lind Store's strategy of providing customers with a choice; the choice to buy sustainable fashion that stands for quality, transparency and even social ethics. This approach of choice provides consumers with a chance to decide whether or not they want to set out on the slow fashion adventure. Giving the hero or in this case the customer the free will to decide if they want to engage in slow fashion, means that the consumer is not pushed into this mindset, by the brand, but the consumer is instead pulled to it and its deeper meanings. As psychologist Abraham Maslow proclaimed, the human species has an innate longing to fulfill higher-level needs such as truth, creativity and self-expression (Fletcher, 2014), values which are very much embodied in the slow fashion ideology. Chan and Wong (2012) also speak of intrinsic human needs in terms of wanting to build ethical identities and socially responsible lifestyles. Thus, brands such as Lind Store, that provide the consumer with a choice, generate stories with pull. Slow fashion is not forced nor pushed on the consumer, instead there is a guiding manner at play here in helping the consumer fulfill their inherent needs of being ethical and socially responsible.

What each of these various engagement strategies have in common, is that they all focus on building close relationships with the consumer, a notion that was repeated throughout all interviews and even earlier in this analysis. The co-founder and owner of Uniforms for the Dedicated speaks of the power of building relationships through stories because emotions are involved, the founder and owner of Lind Store describes the close knit relationships she creates through mingle events in her showroom, JohannaN describes the formation of relationships by shortening the communication gap between the producer and end user and Ossoami explains that personal relationships are ensued by involving the consumer and asking them about their problems and needs concerning her products. The importance of relationship building is a key concept that emerged in all four semi-structured interviews. Additionally, they all speak about engagement in terms of changing consumption behaviours to more conscious and responsible buying. Both the founder and owner of Lind Store and Ossoami talk about the consumer learning to prefer quality over quantity, JohannaN strives to teach consumers to become used to wanting to know the story of production behind her jewelry, and Uniforms for the Dedicated seek to change possession driven behaviours to ritualisms of sharing.

5.4 Meaning

Meaning is the motivational factor that triggers conscious and responsible consumption; what consumers and brands alike, deem to be significant and important in their existence. It is; therefore, an expressed standpoint (Johansson & Malmsten, 2009) and a sense of oneself. The researchers noted throughout the semi-structured interviews and the webpages, that

each company expressed their meaning through core messages embedded in a brand story; whether it be a story about quality and durability or curiosity driving innovation and wanting to improve the future. Each of their stories through their messages and morals created insight, resonating with the consumer. The customer is thus prompted to think in ways that they have not done before, such as a slow fashion mind-set. The mission of their stories is; therefore, to create a motivational factor that triggers consumer action in terms of engaging in slow fashion. However, the researchers, of this paper, understood from the interviews that this motivational factor cannot be simply grounded in environmental concerns as the consumer is distressed and suspicious about such topics, feeling sometimes even green-washed. Instead such environmental issues must be discreetly embedded into the personal benefits of buying long lasting garments, for instance, in that clothing does not need to be replaced nor repaired as often or that one garment may be worn on many different occasions as explained by the founders and owners of Linda Store and Uniforms for the Dedicated respectively. JohannaN has also succeeded in meshing together her company's meaning of cooperation and equality and transmitting it cautiously but yet wittingly to the consumer by integrating her stories of design and production. For Lind Store, meaning is anchored in the value of quality not only in terms of fabrics and trimmings but even pertaining to quality of processes and working conditions throughout the whole value chain. Thus, the researchers perceived elements of environmental and social concerns as being present, in each of these cases, but in a personal or individualistic disguise that the consumer can relate to as being important or significant to themselves. The researchers, perceive their approaches as being subtle and careful; however, cleverly intentional, transforming meaning from a micro consumerist level to a macro, societal ranking.

Additionally, a further commonality that is seen among these companies is that their mission statements of meaning are solidly grounded in a social ideology, slow fashion. It can then be inferred again citing Floor (2009) that these brand concepts are driven by values rather than solely profits.

They also address the challenges of conveying their values and meaning because what is important for one may not be as significant for another and that social media and its far reaching amplifier have created havoc in the management of meaning. All interviewees mention the use of Facebook, Instagram, blogs, etc. in conveying their messages and values; however, it should also be recognized that such social instruments also provide consumers with the capacity to interpret and recreate stories of their own; folklore stories. Despite the amplifying powers of social media platforms, the respondents indicate that they cannot conclude if their brands and stories alike, have yet generated a deep significance or true meaning in their consumers that would influence more conscious and responsible fashion consumption.

From this analysis, it can be understood that each of the brand's stories are vehicles for explanation, engagement and meaning. In other words they

create a message or meme that can then be repeatedly told, leveraging attention and ideally motivating consumers to engage in conscious buying behaviours. Their messages stimulate consumers to think about slow fashion but what cannot be discerned from the interviews is to what extent consumers are actually participating in the ideas of slow fashion. These findings and analysis prompt further questions in terms of slow fashion and its communication. For instance, it appears that slow fashion retailers are effectively using storytelling to communicate slow fashion in that they have believable stories and characters whom convey shared values and stimulate a sense of belonging and engagement. Moreover, they are all retailers that focus on personal interaction with their consumers, educating their customer groups as well as engaging many of the human senses in striving to create a perception of true meaning and conscious consumption behaviours. They are doing everything right in terms of using storytelling as a tool for engagement, so why, then, can it not be confirmed to what extent consumers are behaving as 'slow fashionists'? A knowledge-to-action gap exists but why? The researchers of this paper, attribute this inconsistency to the problem of multiple terminologies such as sustainable, ecological, organic and slow fashion, as described at the beginning of this chapter. The consumer is left mystified and has difficulties in making sense of their roles and responsibilities in terms of acting as a conscious and responsible consumer. This discursive confusion, combined with the fact that the slow fashion ideology coexists in a retail sector that still overpowered by mass-production and fast commodity chains, has currently erected a barrier that confines conscious and responsible consumption. Nonetheless, the researchers of this paper, are optimistic that slow fashion is only in the early stages of its metamorphosis and that through the continued use of storytelling as a tool for engagement and clarity in conveying meaning that the future may be one of more mindful and conscious consumers; slow fashionists.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, the conclusions aggregated from the empirical results and analysis are presented. The chapter concludes with the contributions that this research makes as well as suggestions concerning future research.

In ascertaining how storytelling is being communicated through storytelling as a tool to engage consumers in more conscious and responsible fashion consumption, a deductive study of semi-structured interviews has been employed. The following research questions have been answered:

- 1) How is storytelling being applied as a tool for engagement in slow fashion?
- 2) What elements of storytelling are being used to communicate and engage consumers in slow fashion?

6.1 How storytelling is being applied by slow fashion retailers

This study reveals that some slow fashion retailers are applying storytelling as a more strategic and cognizant tool while others are using it as an operative construct. Those retailers that are newer business establishments were found to be using storytelling as an operative tool. The researchers believed this conclusion was based on the finding that these retailers are still seeking to develop their core business and brand concept. Likewise, those retailers with older business establishments appeared to be using storytelling very strategically. The case study of JohannaN, for example, clearly illuminates this conclusion. This company, was very purposely applying storytelling to integrate the production and design stories in a very strategic manner that encourages the consumer to value and care for the product and in turn be a more conscious and responsible consumer.

The researchers also found that interaction with the consumer as perceived as key in applying storytelling as a tool for engagement in slow fashion. From the empirical results, the researchers found that some slow fashion retailers focus on increasing consumer knowledge and interaction through a holistic story about both domestic design and foreign production while the others intensify consumer engagement through concentrating on the use, function and durability of the garment. Activating several of the human senses was also seen as fundamental in their strategies.

Despite differences in their approaches to interaction, what each of the slow fashion companies do, is discretely but intentionally create an experiential and emotional connection between the consumer and the commodity; in other words aiming to create a sense of meaning. The interviewed companies recognize that meaning, what is truly significant to individuals (sense of oneself), cannot be engendered through abstract ideas such as environmental concerns but that this attitudinal bond between the consumer and the product must bare more personal avails.

In summarizing each of these findings, concerning how storytelling is being applied to communicate slow fashion and engage consumers in conscious consumption, the researchers feel it is necessary to further refine their communication model (figure 2.1) presented at the beginning of this study, to include interaction, as shown in figure 6.1.

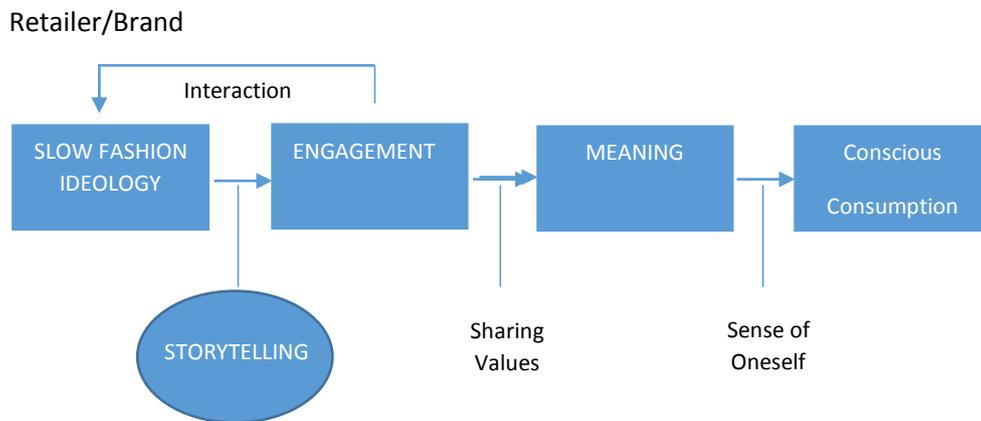


Figure 6.1 The Author's Communication Model – Empirical Findings

6.2 The elements of storytelling that are being used by slow fashion retailers

Themes, conflicts, morals, mentors, values, characters, and characteristic traits are all storytelling elements that have been employed by each of the study's respondents. Their stories, for example, all convey similar messages (the theme) about the need to seek meaning beyond blind consumerism and materialism, which are vividly in conflict with the slow fashion mind-set or being a conscious and responsible consumer. Moreover, their stories' morals are communicated through a mentor, the brands themselves, and characters, both of fictional and non-fictional stature. This guiding role was considered pivotal, by the researchers, in each of the four case studies, as opposed to the companies playing a brand hero. The slow fashion retailers through the element of mentorship seek to draw the consumer to the brands, the characters and their messages. The companies' values, such as quality, strength, equality and curiosity, as seen in this study, are embedded in the various characters' personalities.

It can also be concluded from the research that there is an intentional emphasis on characteristic traits, in the companies' stories that the consumer can personally relate to and identify in themselves. This conveyance of similar values, builds empathy between the slow fashion brand and customer, and thus believable and authentic narratives are generated. Storytelling's tool of empathy is used by all respondents as each of the respondents has stimulated a sense of belonging or engagement among consumers.

6.3 Contributions of the Research

These conclusions answer the questions how storytelling is being applied and which elements of storytelling are being used to convey slow fashion. Thus, this research academically contributes to improving the literature gap in terms of further understanding slow fashion and storytelling as a communicative tool for engagement. According to Kadembo (2012), there is little research in the area of how to construct storytelling or narrate a story to generate the desired results at hand. Additionally, there is no empirical research that studies slow fashion and its communication, in terms of storytelling. This thesis, although small in scale, sheds light in this area. Using storytelling strategically, as well as applying elements of mentorship, interaction, shared values, and so forth were seen as being key, in this study, in building a story that produces the preferred outcome; conscious and responsible consumers. Such findings may also be further applied beyond the fashion industry but to other retail sectors such as the grocery industry and interior decorating segment to name a few. This study; therefore, makes a contribution to the industry in terms of understanding communication strategies and more balanced consumption.

6.4 Future Research

The aforementioned conclusions take the perspective of slow fashion retailers. In terms of future research, it is also of interest to study the consumers in investigating how they perceive slow fashion is being communicated to them through storytelling, in engaging them in more conscious and responsible fashion consumption. By using this study, as inspiration to further examine slow fashion and its communication but from the consumer's perspective, more holistic findings may be generated. Research, from the consumer's perspective, may also include a more quantitative focus, concerning how engaged consumers are in the slow fashion mind-set to learn more about if consumers are actually behaving as conscious and responsible consumers, which this study does not confirm. In the research study entitled "Motivations of the Ethical Consumer" by Freestone & McGoldrick (2008), it is noted that consumers may act responsibly for the personal benefit of being perceived as a social and ethical person. Therefore, on this basis, it is also suggested that the relationship between consumers' motivational factors and actual behavior should be further examined in future research.

Extending the empirical research to include even fast fashion retailers (with conscious collections or other aspects of the slow fashion ideology) would also propose interesting research in the future. A comparative analysis could then be made between slow and fast fashion retailers in terms of how they each are using storytelling to communicate slow fashion or elements of this mind-set, in engaging consumers in more conscious and responsible consumption behaviours.

Reference List

- Baldwin, J. & Roberts L. (2006). *Visual Communication: from theory to practice*. Lausanne, Ava Publishing SA.
- Beard, N. (2008). The Branding of Ethical Fashion and the Consumer: A Luxury Niche or Mass-Market Reality? *Fashion Theory* 12(4) p. 447-468.
- Belz, FM. & Peattie, K. (2013). *Sustainability Marketing – A Global Perspective*. 2 ed. Sussex, John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Bergström B. (2012). *Effektiv Visuell Kommunikation – Om nyheter, reklam och profilering i vår visuella kultur*. Bo Bergström och Carlsson Bokförlag.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. & Tight, M. (2010). *How to research*. McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing. [2014-04-04].
- Björklund, M. & Paulsson, U. (2012). *Seminarieboken: att skriva, presentera och opponera*. Författarna och Studentlitteratur.
- Bourland, J. (2011). *What is Slow Fashion?* <http://www.slowfashioned.com> [2014-03-07].
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. 4 ed. New York. Oxford University Press Inc.
- Cervellon, M-C. & Wernerfelt, A-S. (2012). Knowledge sharing among green fashion communities online: Lessons for the sustainable value chain. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 16(2) p.176-192
- Chan, TY. & Wong, C. (2012). The Consumption side of sustainable fashion supply chain: Understanding fashion consumer eco-fashion consumption decisions. *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management* 16(2), p. 193-215.
- Clark, H. (2008). Slow + Fashion - an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future? *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 12(4) p. 427-446.
- Clarke, A. & Miller, D. (2002). Fashion and Anxiety. *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 6(2), p. 191-213.
- Collins, D. (2013) In Search of Popular Management: Sense-Making, Sense-Giving and Storytelling in the Excellence Project, *Culture and Organization*, 19(1), p. 42-61.
- Cunliffe, A. & Coupland, C. (2012). From Hero to Villain to Hero: Making Experience Sensible through Embodied Narrative Sense-Making. *Human Relations*, 65 (1), p. 63-88.
- Denning, S., (2006). Effective Storytelling: strategic business narrative techniques. *Strategy & Leadership*, 34(1) p.42-48.
- Eneroth, B. (2005). *Hur mäter man "vackert"?* *Grundbok i kvalitativ metod*. Bo Eneroth och Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur. [2014-04-05].

- Eriksson, LT. & Wiedersheim-Paul, F. (2011). *Att utreda, forska och rapportera*. Författarna och Liber.
- Fletcher, K. (2007). Slow Fashion. *The Ecologist* 37(5) p.61.
- Fletcher, K. (2012). *Kate Fletcher, Sustainability Design Fashion*.
<http://katefletcher.com/> [2014-04-05]
- Fletcher, K. (2014). *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*. 2 ed. Oxon UK, Routledge.
- Floor, K. (2009). *Branding a store: how to build successful retail brands in a changing marketplace*. Kogan Page.
- Fog, K., Budtz, C., Munch, P. & Blanchette, S. (2010). *Storytelling- Branding in Practice*. Springer.
- Freestone, O. & McGoldrick, P. (2008). Motivations of the Ethical Consumer. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 79(4), p- 445-467.
- Gottschall, J. (2012) *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
- Herskovitz, S. & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), p. 21-28.
- Hyunsook, K., Ho Jung, C. & Namhee, Y. (2012). The motivational dress of fast fashion avoidance. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17(2), p. 243-260.
- JohannaN.com (2014) <http://www.johanna-n.com> [2014-04-06]
- Ka Ming, L., Zhi-Ming, Z. & Leung, CS. (2004). Fashion Change and Fashion Consumption: the chaotic perspective. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 8(4), p. 362-374.
- Kadembo, E. (2012). Anchored in the Story: The Core of Human Understanding, Branding, Education, Socialisation and the Shaping of Values. *The Marketing Review*, 12(3), p. 221-231.
- Leslie, D., Brail, S. & Hunt, M. (2014). Crafting an Antidote to Fast Fashion: The Case of Toronto's Independent Fashion Design Sector. *Growth and Change: A Journal of Urban and Regional Policy*, 45(2), pp. 222-239.
- Lindstore.se (2014) <http://www.lindstore.se> [2014-04-10]
- Lindstrom, M. (2010). *Brand Sense: Build Powerful Brands Through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight and Sound*. Kogan Page.
- Markkula, A. & Moisander, J. (2012). Discursive Confusion over Sustainable Consumption: A Discursive Perspective on the Perplexity of Marketplace Knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 35 (1) p. 105-125

Olsson, H. & Sörensen, S. (2007). *Forskningsprocessen: Kvalitativa och Kvantitativa Perspektiv*. Författarna och Liber.

Once upon a time: Using Storytelling to Manage Organizational Change (2008). *Strategic Direction*, 24(10), p.16 – 18.

Organic & Eco Fashion (2011). *Ethical Fashion Forum*
<http://www.ethicalfashionforum.com/the-issues/organic-eco-fashion> [2014-04-08]

Ossoami.com (2014) <http://www.ossoami.com> [2014-04-06]

Ottosson, M. & Parment, A. (2013). *Hållbar Marknadsföring- Hur sociala, miljömässiga och ekonomiska hänsynstaganden kan bidra till hållbara företag och marknader*. Studentlitteratur AB.

Palomo-Lovinski, N. & Hahn, K. (2014). Fashion design Industry Impressions of Current Sustainable Practices. *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process & the Fashion Industry*, 6(1), p.87-106.

Patel, R. & Davidson, B. (2011). *Forskningsmetodikens Grunder: att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning*. Författarna och Studentlitteratur.

Petrick, I. (2014). The Power of Storytelling. *Research-Technology Management*, 57(2), p.54-55.

Pookulangara, S. & Shephard, A. (2013). Slow Fashion Movement: Understanding Consumer Perceptions – An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(2) p. 200-206.

Sachs, J. (2012). *Winning the Story Wars*. Boston. Harvard Business Review Press.

Sadowsky, J. (2012). *The New Marketing: Social Media, Email and the Art of Storytelling*. USA. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Sheth, J., Sethia, N. & Srinivas, S. (2011). Mindful Consumption: A Customer-Centric Approach to Sustainability. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(1), p. 21-39.

Smith, K. & Wintrob, M. (2013). Brand Storytelling: A Framework for Activation. *The DMI Review* p. 36-41.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

Tjora, A. (2012). *Från nyfikenhet till systematisk kunskap: Kvalitativ forskning i praktiken*. Studentlitteratur.

Tojo, N., Kogg, B., Kioerboe, N., Kjaer, B. & Aalto, K. (2012). *Prevention of Textile Waste: Material Flows of Textiles in Three Nordic Countries and Suggestions on Policy Instruments*.

http://www.nordicfashionassociation.com/sites/default/files/tn2012545_web.pdf [2014-04-18]

Uniformsforthededicated.com (2014)

<http://www.uniformsforthededicated.com> [2014-04-07]

Wanders, A. (2009). *Design Critical Texts: Slow Fashion*. Vol. 3. Zurich, Verlag Niggli AG.

Watson, M. & Yan, R. (2013). An Exploratory Study of the Decision Processes of Fast versus Slow Fashion Consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17(2), p. 141-159.

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4 ed. USA, SAGE Publications Inc.

Öhlin, PR. (2012). *Fame to Claim: 12 kreativa hjältestrategier för att få uppmärksamhet och sympati i en skeptisk värld*. Malmö. The Brainy Bug.

Appendix 1 – E-mail Template to Potential Interviewees

Dear [NAME],

We are two students, Jenny Eriksson and Natalie Karlsson, currently writing our master's thesis at the Swedish School of Textiles in Borås. Our chosen research area is slow fashion and how it is being communicated to consumers. More specifically, we are interested in learning about the role of storytelling in engaging consumers in the slow fashion ideology.

We have chosen to contact you because we understand through your homepage and social platforms such as LinkedIn that you and your company are committed to slow fashion and conscious consumption.

We wonder if it would be possible to personally interview you or someone else in your company whom is knowledgeable in the subject area of slow fashion. The interview is estimated to take approximately one hour.

We would be so appreciative of your time and the opportunity to speak with you in person.

Sincerely,

Jenny Eriksson & Natalie Karlsson

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

Through the use of semi-structured interviews and the questions below, the following concepts were discussed and examined: *slow fashion, storytelling, meaning, and engagement.*

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) *How is storytelling being applied as a tool for engagement in slow fashion?*
- 2) *What elements of storytelling are being used to communicate and engage consumers in slow fashion?*

SLOW FASHION

- Please tell us about your brand.
- What is your company's definition of slow fashion?
- Please tell about the brand's connection with slow fashion?
- Was slow fashion apart of the company idea from the beginning or has the slow fashion ideology emerged later after the establishment of your brand?
- Are you influenced by other stakeholders and competitors in how they are communicating slow fashion?
- What are the challenges in communicating slow fashion to your customers?

STORYTELLING

- How do you define storytelling in terms of promoting an ideology such as slow fashion?
- Is storytelling apart of involving and engaging your customers in the slow fashion ideology?

The Message

- What is your brand's core message?
- Can you tell a captivating story of how your brand makes a difference?

The Conflict

- How do you communicate slow fashion to your customers while still making your stories or messages interesting and intriguing?

The Characters

- How do you interact with your customers?
- What is your role in the interaction with customers in terms of communicating slow fashion?

- What role figures or characters do you use in promoting your company concept and are they linked to communicating the slow fashion ideology?

The Plot

- How do you create an experience for your customers?
- How do your customers relate to your company's stories of events?
- Do your customers influence your company's stories; in other words do you modify the company message after the customer?

The Competitors

- How do you create a competitive advantage as a slow fashion brand?
- Do you consider yourself to be a leader/pioneer in slow fashion?

The Future

- How do you think slow fashion will develop in the future?
- How do you think communications forms will evolve in the future?
- What is the ideal future for your company and society?

Appendix 3 – E-mail Template: Validation of Interview Results

Dear [NAME],

Hoping that everything is well with you? We are now in the final phases of our thesis work and have transcribed the interview we conducted with you. Please find attached, in this email, the transcription. We would appreciate if you can read through the document and provide comments if you feel that we have incorrectly taken something you stated out of context.

We would like to have your feedback no later than Monday, May 12th 2014, before writing our analysis chapter.

Thanking you in advance.

Sincerely,

Jenny Eriksson & Natalie Karlsson