



**UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG**  
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## **The Meaning of Transparency**

A qualitative study of how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions in the purchase of fashion products

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**Abstract:** The concept of transparency is gaining importance in today's society because of the increased awareness of companies' unethical practices. Consequently, this study examines the meaning of transparency information for consumers by looking at how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products. By using qualitative phenomenological interviews, this study describes the meaning of lived experiences of the phenomenon of transparency and consumers' perceptions of purchasing clothes from a transparent company. The study shows that consumer values regarding transparency information are interrelated and derived to different degrees and dimensions depending on how consumers perceive this information, thus, from which perspective transparency information is perceived. The insights contribute to consumer value theories by showing how values derived from transparency information are symbolic of how important the consumer feels transparency, and, in many times, sustainability issues are, thus, guiding different routes in value creation.

*Keywords: Transparency, Traceability, Sustainability, Consumer Values, Consumption-value Theory, Social Responsibility Value, Epistemic Value, Functional Value, Emotional Value, Social Value*

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## Introduction

In today's society, consumers are, to a greater extent, interested in information about the production origin and sustainability conditions of products (Singh et al., 2008). Hence, transparent information from companies is necessary in order to gain acceptance from stakeholders (Cramer, 2008). The concept of transparency is widely used concerning sustainability of organizations and supply chains (Egels-Zandén et al., 2014) and is often referred to as the disclosure of information (Christensen, 2002). The fashion industry context is especially interesting in relation to supply chain practices, as social and environmental risks are mainly embedded in those processes (Jestratišević et al., 2020).

Furthermore, consumers nowadays have an increased ability to look for information online about a company's transparent business practices and whether these meet sustainable norms. Consequently, Sodhi and Tang (2019) emphasize the importance for companies to disclose transparency information. In essence, transparency can be understood as allowing consumers to evaluate firms' products and activities in an informed way (Chapman, 1995). In this study, we will focus on supply chain transparency in the fashion industry which includes the disclosure of information about traceability and sustainability conditions at suppliers (Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016).

The concept of transparency is also often used as a way for companies to gain legitimacy from stakeholders (e.g., Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011) and respond to scandals (Wulff, 2019). In particular, the fashion industry is an industry that has been a case for scrutiny in several ways. First, the fashion industry is characterized by a large product variety, short product life cycles (Şen, 2008) and a constant thrive for newness, resulting in claims of the fashion industry being unsustainable (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). Second, companies within the fashion industry mainly outsource their production, which has resulted in a general lack of supplier knowledge that may harm the company's reputation (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014). As such, the industry has become challenged regarding its supply chain practices (Bartley, 2007). For example, Lee, Seifert & Cherrier (2017) describe how the Rana Plaza Collapse scandal, a garment factory collapse in 2013, has changed many consumers' perception of the fashion industry. As such, consumers are now more aware of the unethical firm practices that can occur in the fashion industry (Lee et al., 2017). Furthermore, Cramer (2008) explains how information sharing by companies regarding suppliers' level of compliance with international standards is important for stakeholders when accepting a company's approach. Consequently, transparency is gaining more significance in society. Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2011) explain how the market for transparent products is now growing, leading companies to openly communicate their transparency activities and efforts to a greater extent. Furthermore, the emergence of the Web 2.0 has resulted in an increased demand for access, disclosure, and dialogue regarding transparency efforts, resulting in different ways of disclosing transparency information, such as through narratives (Arnould & Press, 2014).

The transparency concept is further shown relevant when looking at contemporary examples of transparency efforts, such as in the case of Patagonia. Patagonia is known for being at the forefront of supply chain transparency. For instance, they have launched their footprint chronicles, making it possible for consumers to acquire information about their suppliers and manufacturers (Sodhi & Tang, 2019). Other companies in the Swedish fashion industry, such as Nudie Jeans and Dedicated, are also

coming on strong with increased transparency. In Winter 2020, Nudie Jeans launched a production guide that includes supply chain data from the entire production process, from raw materials to finished products (Nudie Jeans, 2020 December 15th). The clothing company Dedicated, founded in 2006, also has a strong focus on transparency and sustainability (Dedicated, 2020). They offer, for example, the possibility to look at their supplier's factories, certifications, and fabrication.

Literature has examined various aspects of how transparency impacts consumers and companies. However, much of the literature studies attitudes and consumers' willingness to purchase or how corporations can use transparency as a tool for trust-building (e.g., Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Bradu et al., 2014; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014).

Furthermore, Kang and Hustvedt (2013; 2014) describe how there is little research concerning how consumers feel about the transparency of social responsibility efforts. Their study proposes that consumer perceptions of cooperation's transparency and social responsibility efforts are crucial in building consumer trust and attitude toward the cooperation, ultimately affecting purchase intentions and brand loyalty. In line with this, Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016) describe how transparency can be a useful corporate tool to increase revenue as it improves consumers' willingness to buy in practice. Simultaneously, however, consumers do not leverage pressure on the transparency to pressure the firm. Thus, Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016) conclude that transparency is useful as a corporate tool yet fails to act as a tool for consumers to pressure firms to improve sustainability aspects.

Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2011) explain how supply chain transparency within apparel can positively influence consumer purchase intentions. The purchase intention was affected by elements such as consumer values, prior knowledge regarding transparency efforts, attitudes, and trust toward the firm and its shared transparency information. Holbrook (1996) argues that consumer value "...provides the foundation for all marketing activity..." (p. 138). As such, the attention in this research

paper is put into investigating if and how marketing efforts through the medium of transparency information can evoke consumer values and what sort of values that would be. This study could hence be useful for managers by giving them an in-depth understanding of how to create value for their customers in regard to the transparency efforts they try to display.

Research by Bradu et al. (2014) explains the possible lack of consumer motivation to process transparency information. Companies should be straightforward with their information to successfully influence purchase intentions, such as labels, rather than detailed and complicated information. Further, they explain how attitudes and intentions are not always transformed into purchasing behavior, emphasizing a need to move beyond studies of attitudes and intentions and analyze findings in a natural environment rather than artificial environments. This is also emphasized in a study by Sodhi & Tang (2019), who acknowledge research opportunities in supply chain transparency. Thus, field studies are necessary within the actual purchasing behavior rather than merely the purchase intent (Gupta and Zeithaml, 2006). Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016) do examine consumers' willingness to purchase clothes in practice yet do not explain how consumers perceive and derive value from transparency information. Additionally, Sodhi & Tang (2019) suggest more research regarding consumer responses when supply chain information is disclosed voluntarily rather than being pressured by regulations.

Even though there is research regarding transparency information and its influence on consumers' willingness to purchase a product or gain trust and loyalty among consumers, research is scarce regarding how consumers make sense of transparency information when choosing to buy apparel objects. As such, there is an interest in examining how consumers perceive transparency information, if this brings value to the consumer, and what sort of value that would be. Consequently, this study will focus on consumers who already have purchased from a transparent company to gain an in-depth understanding of how and if the information was perceived valuable from a consumer perspective rather than merely

exploring if it affects the consumer willingness to purchase, as previous research has done. In order to address this, this article builds upon research of transparency, consumer perceived value, and a phenomenological methodology.

In light of this, our study aims to analyze the meaning of transparency information for consumers in the fashion industry. To fulfill this aim, the following research question is posed:

How does transparency information contribute to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products?

## **Theoretical Framework**

This section presents theories about transparency, its disclosure, and consumer values. Further, we present our adapted analytical model, which is used to discuss the results further on.

### **What is Transparency?**

Transparency as a concept is central in relation to sustainability of organizations and supply chains, yet it is inconsistently defined in the scholarly conversation (Egels-Zandén et al., 2014). However, transparency is often referred to as the disclosure of information (Christensen, 2002) and can be understood as allowing consumers to evaluate firms' products and activities in an informed way (Chapman, 1995). This study will focus on supply chain transparency which includes the disclosure of information about traceability and sustainability conditions at suppliers (Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016), which will be further elaborated below.

In the business context, transparency is often referred to by words like honesty and visibility. The Cambridge Dictionary describes transparency in relation to business as “a situation in which business and financial activities are done in an open way without secrets, so that people can trust that they are fair and honest” (“Transparency”, 2021). Christiansen (2002) explains how organizational transparency is established through communication and how the general assumption is that external actors demand or want transparent information regarding the

company. This takes for granted how external receivers of the communication have unlimited information processing capacities and that consumers can judge themselves whether they believe actions are transparent or not. It also assumes that the information helps consumers gain a more sophisticated view of the company. Further, Cotterrell (1999) discusses the complexity of transparency and how transparency is not merely the accessibility of information but rather the active participation in its acquiring, distribution, and creation. This perspective presupposes that there is always more to know on a specific matter; thus, transparency is never objective. There is always another perspective, and that one account never cancels out another, yet supplements it.

Nowadays, the concept of transparency has increasingly become a part of supply chains (Mol, 2015). As a result, the notion of supply chain transparency has emerged and is used to describe the information sharing about names of suppliers, sustainability conditions at suppliers, and buyers' purchasing activities (Egels-Zandén et al., 2014). In the fashion industry context, social and environmental risks are mainly embedded in the supply chain processes (Jestratišević et al., 2020). Sodhi and Tang (2019) describe how companies disclose information on different supply chain levels, including, for example, information about suppliers, the environmental footprint, the cost, and the workplace safety compliance in all tiers.

Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016) argue that there exist two dimensions of supply chain transparency in previous literature. The first one being traceability. This concept refers to the physical process to trace the product and its flow through the supply chain and its processing stages, such as disclosure of supplier names (Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016; Verbeke, 2001; Doorey, 2011). In line with this, Sodhi & Tang (2019) explain how traceability is an element of companies' visibility and acts to show the material or product's origin. Traceability of raw materials could be necessary in order to respond to consumers' desire for the information of purchases' ethical viewpoints, such as sustainability or human health (Bradú et al., 2014). Similarly, Verbeke (2001) explains how traceability could be beneficial to respond to consumer concerns for

trustworthy information and guarantees. The second dimension that Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016) describe is the disclosure of information about sustainability conditions at suppliers, meaning the social and environmental conditions at the production point (Egels-Zandén et al., 2014). This dimension could involve the information sharing of the suppliers' level of compliance with international standards, such as the auditing body's quality and the results of the audits (Cramer, 2008), for instance, publishing complete factory audit reports (Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016). It could also include information about how the organization supports suppliers financially (Cramer, 2008). Further, Sodhi & Tang (2019) explain how environmental conditions involve the disclosure about how suppliers "...comply with the environmental regulations or accepted norms." (p. 2947). These norms can, for instance, involve standards regarding energy usage, water consumption and air pollution (Sodhi & Tang, 2019). Cramer (2008) argues how this type of transparency is "...needed to gain acceptance of the company's approach by both internal and external stakeholders." (p. 399).

Seeing as social and environmental risks in the fashion industry are mainly connected to the supply chain processes (Jestratišević et al., 2020), this study focuses on supply chain transparency in particular. In line with Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016), we define supply chain transparency in this context as the disclosure of both traceability information and sustainability conditions at suppliers, hence combining the two dimensions into a holistic view.

### **Disclosure of Transparency Information**

Sodhi and Tang (2019) stress the importance for companies to disclose transparency information because of consumers' ability to look for information online (e.g., through social media or comparison platforms) about a company's product and its supply chain activities and whether these meet sustainable norms. Singh et al. (2008) show in their study that many consumers are interested in obtaining such information. However, as explained by Bradú et al. (2014), there is also a possible lack of consumer motivation to process transparency

information. Hence, it seems as if consumers perceive transparency information differently.

Press & Arnould (2014) problematizes numeric transparency, which is constructed within the model of financial audits, as the monological communication does not live up to the demands of the Web 2.0 while at the same time, external actors are often skeptical and mistrust companies' communication of transparency efforts. Also, the average consumer may have problems comprehending the information. As such, they suggest that narratives also could be an effective tool in addressing transparency, rather than tactics used in the auditing paradigm, including numeric transparency, such as certifications and labelling. A narrative approach to transparency is seen as useful as it can enable stakeholders to make sense of the experience through access to familiar values, beliefs and rituals in the information (Press & Arnould, 2014). Further, Press & Arnould (2014) explain how, with the help of familiarity and identification of communicative content, narrative transparency can help organizations with the access, disclosure and dialogue that stakeholders on the Web 2.0 currently demand.

### **Traditional Conceptualization of Consumer Perceived Values**

The notion of consumer value has been widely researched, although it is not clearly defined in previous studies (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). However, one of the most commonly used definitions of consumer perceived value is that of Zeithaml (1988), who explains how perceived value is "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions about what is received and what is given" (p.14). As the definition implies, consumers' perceived value is determined by the consumer and not by assumptions of the seller (Zeithaml, 1988; Woodruff, 1997). The perceived value occurs at all levels of a purchase process, including the prepurchase stage (Woodruff, 1997). Keeney (1999) describes how consumers gain value from the product itself, as well as the process of finding, ordering, and receiving the product. Hence, focusing on understanding consumer value is important for managers in order to gain an advantage in the marketplace (Woodruff, 1997) and can further also be helpful in predicting purchase behavior (Chen & Dubinsky, 2003). Holbrook (1996) even argues that customer

value "...provides the foundation for all marketing activity..." (p. 138) and, as such, the attention in this research study is put into investigating if and how marketing efforts through the medium of transparency information can evoke consumer values.

### **Consumer Value Theory**

Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) discuss previous research written within consumer perceived value and how traditional perceptions, such as Zeithaml's (1988) research, is a uni-dimensional construct that can be measured by merely the trade-off between the benefit and sacrifice and building on a "means-end theory." Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) explain how the then-existing information processing perspectives included products being judged based on their proper function or performance in a utilitarian manner. However, criticizing this research for being too simplistic is the multi-dimensional research stream, which, for instance, are included in research by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and Sheth, Newman & Gross (1991). The multi-dimensional perspective accounts for utilitarian values, as well as hedonic values which are reflected as the experiential and emotional worth of shopping (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). This perspective constructs a holistic representation of a phenomenon by looking at several attributes or elements (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

In this study, we have adapted our own analytical model based on one of the most important contributions within the studies of multi-dimensional consumer values by Sheth, Newman & Gross (1991) (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). The analytical model will be described below.

### **A Model of Consumer Value and Transparency Information**

In order to analyze the meaning of transparency information for consumers, we used an adapted analytical model (see figure 1) based on the Consumption-value theory (Sheth et al., 1991), as well as adding Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire's (2011) and Mohr et al.'s (2001) definition of social responsibility value to the model. Since we will examine how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products, these values

will be connected to transparency information.

The Consumption-value theory is a conceptualized model consisting of five different values influencing the consumer choice behavior (Sheth et al., 1991). These different values are functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional and can make different contributions depending on the given situation in which the purchase occurs. This study does not account for the conditional value presented by Sheth et al. (1991), which refers to the value in relevance to a specific situation or circumstance facing the consumer, such as seasonal value or “once in a lifetime” events. The conditional value was seen as less critical for the concept of transparency as it lacks seasonal value.

Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007 have described the Consumption-value theory by Sheth et al. (1991) as limited because it fails to include, for example, ethics as a source of value. As such, this study also accounts for social responsibility value, used by, e.g., Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire (2011) who describe it as concern about benefits to society.

Furthermore, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) criticize the Consumption-value theory because the value dimensions are claimed to be independent. Instead, they argue how elements may be interdependent. In this study, consumers' perceived values will therefore not be restricted to be seen as independent. Instead, we assume that the value dimensions can be interrelated and that consumers can experience several values simultaneously. The different values of our analytical model will be described below:

**Social value** refers to the association to social groups, such as socioeconomic or cultural-ethnic (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Sheth et al., 1991). For example, an alternative can be chosen for the personal image the consumer wishes to project or for the association to a specific social group, such as a group of friends or specific demographics. Therefore, in this study, social value will be understood as the association to ongoing trends regarding transparency among social groups.

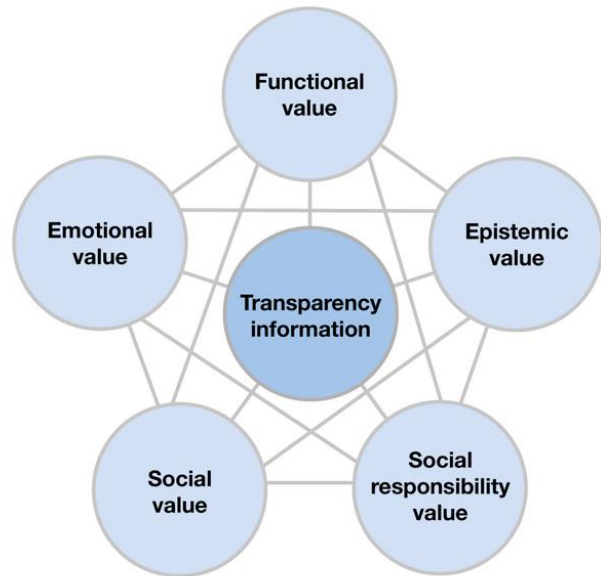


Figure 1: The adapted analytical model. The lines represent the interrelatedness between values.

**Emotional value** is acquired to the capacity to arouse feelings. For example, a person can feel personal pleasure, such as feeling relaxed, excited or joyful about a purchase. However, emotional value can also be connected to affective states associated with previous experiences, for example childhood memories (Sheth et al., 1991). Emotional value will therefore be interpreted as the transparency information's capacity to arouse feelings or affective states.

Sheth et al. (1991) define **functional value** as the capacity of the alternative's function and its utilitarian attributes, such as the durability and reliability of a product. It could also involve task-oriented behaviors (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). As such, functional values will be interpreted as the transparency information's capacity to help the consumer understand utilities or to complete task-oriented behaviors.

**Epistemic value** consists of an alternative's capability to arouse curiosity or satisfy consumers' desire for knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991). For instance, this could include the urge to search for new products or information about them. In this study, epistemic value will be understood as the degree to which the transparency information satisfies consumers' desire for knowledge.

**Social responsibility value** can be described as concern about benefits to society (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). Additionally, Mohr et al. (2001) describe how socially responsible consumer behavior has to do with consumers basing consumption of products "...on a desire to minimize or eliminate any destructive or harmful effects and to maximize the long-term beneficial impact on society" (p.180). Essentially, this means that consumers who are socially responsible would purchase products from companies that do not harm the environment and people (Mohr et al., 2001). As such, social responsibility value will be understood as the consumers' concerns for sustainability issues.

## Methodology

This section presents the two case companies from which interviewees have purchased fashion products, as well as discusses the data collection and method used to analyze the material.

### The Cases

This study consists of two case companies, Nudie Jeans and Dedicated. These companies were of interest to this study because of their extensive work with transparency.

Nudie Jeans facilitates much information regarding sustainability and offers a production guide on their website which the consumer, for example, can use to trace where the garments are produced. Furthermore, the guide offers information about the factories as well as audit summaries. Further information about sustainable practices can be easily found on their website, such as sustainable materials and certifications (Nudie Jeans, 2021). As such, Nudie Jeans can be described to include much of both dimensions of supply chain transparency, thus, both traceability and sustainability conditions at suppliers defined by Egels-Zandén and Hansson (2016), on their website.

Dedicated similarly offers information regarding their transparency and their sustainability agenda. Their website allows consumer to look at some information about suppliers' factories, certifications and information about the sustainable materials they use (Dedicated, 2021). Therefore,

Dedicated can also be described to include disclosure of information about traceability and some sustainability conditions at the suppliers as well, according to Egels-Zandén and Hansson's (2016) definition.

Company	Traceability	Sustainability conditions at suppliers
Nudie Jeans	Production guide with full disclosure of supplier names (including subcontractors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Production guide</li> <li>- Certifications</li> <li>- Information about sustainable materials</li> <li>- Information about conditions</li> <li>- Audit summaries</li> <li>- Pictures</li> </ul>
Dedicated	Disclosure of supplier factory names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certifications</li> <li>- Information about sustainable materials</li> <li>- Information about conditions</li> <li>- Pictures</li> </ul>

Table 1: Overview of case companies transparency efforts.

### Data Collection

In order to fulfill our aim of analyzing the meaning of transparency information for consumers in the fashion industry, a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach was conducted as the qualitative approach can be used to understand and interpret the meaning of the studied interest while accounting for social and cultural variables (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Further, qualitative interviews suited our research topic as it is one of the most powerful tools for gaining an in-depth understanding of a person's experience, according to Kvale (1983) in (Thompson et al., 1989). Moreover, the phenomenological approach fitted well to this study as it aims to examine phenomenon and how phenomenon in the world is perceived by the respondents (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). Solér (1997) describes how the perception of a phenomenon is a way of viewing parts of the lived world as meaningful. As such, the approach was suitable for this research topic because it deals with examining the phenomenon of transparency as well as consumers' perceptions of purchasing clothes from a transparent company. Thus, it is the personal experiences of purchasing from a transparent company in the fashion industry context that is of particular interest in this study. In order to reach such understanding, the phenomenological approach was helpful since it "...describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57).



The data collection in this study included in-depth phenomenological interviews with consumers, which provided a deep understanding of the respondents' experiences partly from understanding the language that the consumers used. The nature of this study would thus be interpretative since it focuses on humans and their sense-making in ongoing situations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Furthermore, an abductive scientific approach was used, characterized by a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning processes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In our research, this involved a brief theoretical examination prior to data collection, which helped us understand concepts and inspired different routes in our data collection. After collecting data, we, as explained by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), categorized everyday descriptions and meanings to create an explanation of the lived phenomenon, and observed the tendencies and patterns in relation to the theories. However, as concepts used in our primary theoretical examination were not all found relevant to our categorizations, the theoretical framework was adapted in our analytical model.

In phenomenological studies, the most common way of collecting data is through in-depth interviews with people who have experienced the phenomenon of a concrete experience (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of this is to reach the respondents' reflection regarding an experience (Solér, 1997). In the context of this study, data was thus collected through interviews with people who have purchased clothes from a transparent company. Consequently, this study used a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 1990) as it is important that respondents are carefully chosen individuals who have experienced the specific phenomenon of shopping from a transparent company so that a common understanding of several individuals' experiences could be established (Creswell, 2007). Through observing fashion company websites online, we searched for case companies that disclosed extensive information regarding their transparency efforts. We concluded that Nudie Jeans and Dedicated were interesting cases for this study because their transparency efforts included both dimensions of transparency, described by Egels-Zandén & Hansson (2016). Therefore, we chose to interview participants

who are consumers of Nudie Jeans and Dedicated in order to capture their concrete experiences. Respondents from both companies were found through contacting people who posted pictures wearing products from Nudie Jeans or Dedicated on Instagram. In addition, Nudie Jeans contacted consumers who had purchased from them directly and asked if they wanted to participate in our study. Because of laws regarding general data protection regulation (GDPR) we could not contact consumers from Nudie Jean's website directly. Instead, consumers who were interested in participating gave Nudie acceptance that their e-mail address was forwarded to us in order to contact them. Nudie Jeans chose to contact consumers who had given them a good customer rating through e-mail, since they were assumed to be more likely in wanting to participate in a study regarding Nudie Jean's sustainability work. This purposeful sampling method was used since we believe that these consumers can provide valuable and in-depth understandings to our study based on their experiences with purchasing fashion items from a company that engages with supply chain transparency.

Furthermore, this study consisted of 17 interviews, which can be seen as a sufficient number of interviews since the sample size is within the range of the typical number of interviews, of 5 to 25, in phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, as shown in table 2, a similar number of consumers from each company were selected to give a balanced representation of both case companies. In order to create a sample variation, we also interviewed people from different nationalities and of different ages and gender. The interviews lasted around 20-50 minutes which also was sufficient in order to reach informational saturation. Hence, in line with the argumentation of Patton (1990), our focus lied in finding insights based on informational richness rather than aiming to achieve the largest sample sizes possible.

The interview sessions' openness is vital when using a phenomenological method as it aims to describe the meaning of the lived experience. As such, the respondent should freely describe the lived phenomenon, while interviewees should probe for detail and clarity (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). With this context in mind, our

interviews were semi-structured since they give a somewhat comprehensive material while simultaneously having a conversational and informal tone (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Questions were asked for the respondent to describe a concrete experience, for example, “Think of the time you first heard of Nudie Jeans/Dedicated and describe the experience in as much detail as possible.” The response was later followed by different probes such as, how..., what..., tell me more about... As such, the content of the interviews could be concentrated on the respondents’ concrete experiences to gain a deep reflection (Sandberg, 2000). Furthermore, in accordance with advice from van Manen (1997), when respondents started to generalize about their experiences, questions to return back to the concrete experience were given, such as “Can you give an example of...”. At the end of the interviews, we started to focus more on examples related specifically to the transparency information, unless it had not been brought up beforehand. As such, we had the possibility to further create a dialogue regarding perceptions of the transparency information, while making sure that we did not lead respondents into talking about it from the beginning of the interview when discussing their purchase experience in general.

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Company
David	M	41	Sweden	Dedicated
Jennifer	F	21	Sweden	Dedicated
Paul	M	33	Sweden	Nudie
Sandra	F	25	Denmark	Dedicated
Emily	F	21	Switzerland	Dedicated
Olivia	F	35	Poland	Dedicated
Joseph	M	22	Sweden	Nudie
Amy	F	23	Sweden	Dedicated
Charles	M	34	Germany	Nudie
Frank	M	55	Scotland	Nudie
Alexander	M	21	England	Nudie
Adam	M	19	England	Dedicated
Lauren	F	27	Australia	Nudie
Sara	F	25	Sweden	Dedicated
Elizabeth	F	38	Germany	Nudie
Richard	M	60	Denmark	Nudie
James	M	24	Sweden	Dedicated

Table 2: Overview of respondents. In order to keep respondents anonymous, the names are fabricated.

### Analyzing the Material

As the phenomenological methodology aims to gain a common or shared understanding of a lived experience (Creswell, 2007), the material

should describe “what” the respondents experienced and “how” they experienced the specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) of encountering transparency information. This gave a deeper understanding of the features of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), which in our case had to do with what customer perceived values that may be evoked. Consequently, we had to look at the meaning behind the words of the respondents.

This study consists of a two-step analysis to validate our results. We made short written summaries of the interviews immediately after each interview. The tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed to increase the trustworthiness of the results.

[1] The first part of our analysis was based on Thompson et al.’s (1989) explanation of a phenomenological analysis method. The method involves part-to-whole processes, where the first process was to seek an idiographic, also known as individual, understanding of each interview. Each transcript was viewed as a whole, and separate parts of the text were related to the overall context. Next, the second part-to-whole process involved relating the individual interviews to each other with the aim of finding common patterns, called global themes. As a result, we could group respondents based on their perspective of how they understand transparency information. Three different perspectives were found; consumers who view transparency as a bonus, consumers who view transparency as important, and consumers who view transparency as a prerequisite. By using these perspectives, we could better understand the patterns and how the phenomenon may have been experienced differently (Thompson et al., 1989).

[2] In the second step of the analysis we decided to operationalize, in other words, define how we observe, the consumer values in order to see what values were reflected in the different interviews. Thus, making a translation of the theoretical concepts into instruments helped us analyze the verbal symbols apparent in the interviews (Patel & Davidson, 2011). Mainly, these operationalizations were derived from our theoretical framework. As we could see varieties in the degree to which consumers

Consumer values	Operationalizations
<b>Social value</b>	The degree to which the consumer is influenced by *T.I being a trend
<b>Emotional Value</b>	The degree to which T.I evokes the consumers feelings or affective states
<b>Functional Value</b>	The degree to which T.I helps the consumer in understanding utilities
	The degree to which T.I help the consumer with task oriented behavior
<b>Epistemic Value</b>	The degree to which T.I satisfies consumers' desire for knowledge
	The degree to which the consumer is active/passive in satisfying their desire for knowledge
	The degree to which the consumer is objective/subjective in their understanding of T.I
<b>Social Responsibility Value</b>	The degree to which the consumer feels concerns for sustainability issues
	The degree to which the consumer is egoistic/altruistic in its concerns
<i>*T.I = Transparency information</i>	

Table 3: Operationalizations of consumer values.

derived values, we created different degrees and dimensions in our operationalizations, shown in Table 3. For example, a consumer could derive vague, moderate or strong values from the transparency information. Moreover, we recognized that consumers also could be active/passive, objective/subjective, or egoistic/altruistic in deriving specific values. The second step involved reading the interviews again, using the operationalizations and dimensions created, to find commonalities in the interviews. This was also a way to validate our three perspectives derived in the first step of the analysis.

Naturally, as our research question addresses how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products, the operationalizations of the consumer values are related to the transparency information.

First of all, social values are derived from the association with another social group. For example, a product can be chosen for the social image evoked (Sheth et al., 1991). In this study, we therefore operationalize social values as the degree to which the consumer is influenced by transparency information being a trend that the respondents wish to follow.

Emotional values are instead derived from the capacity of an experience to arouse feelings or affective states (Sheth et al., 1991). As a result of this, we have operationalized emotional values as the degree to which transparency information evokes the consumer's feelings or

affective states. These feelings can be either vague, moderate or strong.

The functional value is the capacity of the alternative's function and its utilitarian attributes (Sheth et al., 1991). Our operationalization of this value is understood in two ways; the degree to which transparency information helps the consumer in understanding utilities and the degree to which transparency information helps the consumer with task-oriented behavior. Both two ways can be either vague, moderate or strong.

The epistemic value is an alternative's capability to satisfy consumers' desire for knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991). Our operationalization of epistemic value therefore has to do with the degree to which transparency information satisfies consumers' desire for knowledge. The degrees range from vague, moderate and strong. In addition, the degree to which the consumer is active or passive in satisfying their desire for knowledge is evaluated. This idea is derived from Cotterrell (1999), who explains that transparency is not merely the accessibility but also the active participation in acquiring information. A consumer may for example actively seek specific transparency information, to satisfy their desire for knowledge while another consumer may be passive and hence, not search for such information.

Moreover, the epistemic value is also evaluated in whether the consumer is objective or subjective in understanding the transparency information. For example, an objective

consumer may be critical of the presented information and investigate further. In contrast, consumers with a subjective understanding of the transparency information instead base their viewpoints on what they feel sounds good/right.

Finally, social responsibility value is derived from the consumer's eagerness in being socially responsible and not harming the environment or people (Mohr et al., 2001) as well as having concerns about benefits to society (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire., 2011). Therefore, this study operationalizes social responsibility value as the degree to which the consumer feels concerned for sustainability issues; these concerns can be vague, moderate or strong. Additionally, the operationalization also involves the degree to which the consumer is egoistic or altruistic in these concerns. A consumer who is egoistic feels concerned for personal sakes, such as feeling good about themselves or finding personal benefits with the transparent information. On the other hand, an altruistic consumer instead feels selfless concern for the environment or people.

### **Quality Assessment and Ethical Considerations**

In order to maintain high quality and trustworthiness of our interpretations in this study, three criteria in relation to the phenomenological approach, suggested by Sandberg (2000), were used, communicative and pragmatic validity, and reliability as interpretative awareness. Communicative validity involves ensuring an ongoing dialogue about alternative claims and hence the validity of interpretations. In this study, we ensured communicative validity by conducting the interviews in the form of a dialogue through which the respondent's own experience was interpreted, as suggested by Sandberg (2000). Creswell (2007) describes how challenges with using phenomenology are related to difficulties of bracketing personal experiences, and the researcher thus "needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study" (p. 62). Therefore, we tried to set aside our own interpretations of the meaning of transparency information for consumers, mainly through writing down our own experiences with the phenomenon. Sandberg (2000) explains how pragmatic validity involves testing the interpretations towards real-life actions.

Therefore, ensuring pragmatic validity in our study included asking respondents to give concrete examples as well as using probes in the interviews. For example, we asked respondents to elaborate on what certain concepts meant to them. Sandberg (2000) refers to reliability as an interpretive awareness by "...acknowledging that researchers cannot escape from their interpretations but must explicitly deal with them throughout the research process." (p.14) and suggested that this type of reliability could be achieved by asking "what" and "how" questions, through treating statements as equally important, and by asking follow up questions, which suggest respondents to elaborate on their answers. In light of this, we have established reliability as interpretative awareness by implementing these suggestions when creating the interview guide, when conducting the interviews and when analyzing the empirical material.

A challenge of this study was the purposeful sampling, as this can make the results biased (Kalton, 1983). This study acknowledges that it is possible that consumers, who chose to purchase from Nudie Jeans and Dedicated, as well as rated them highly or posted a picture about them on Instagram, are more likely to care about the companies' transparency efforts or have a more positive attitude toward the brands. Thus, the results may be difficult to generalize to a whole population. However, the aim of this study is not to make a statistical generalization and it is instead following the advice by Thompson et al., (1989) to see themes as experiential gestalts in human and social practices rather than abstract, independent entities. As this study aims to investigate how consumers who have already purchased from a transparent company made sense of the transparency information, it is inevitable to avoid the bias of the consumers as the phenomenological approach requires understanding people who have already experienced the phenomena (Creswell, 2007).

Further, because of the global situation with Covid-19, the interviews took place online with the aim to resemble face-to-face situations with real-time interaction virtually, in line with Eriksson & Kovalainen's (2008) advice regarding online interviews. While the use of online interviews may be seen as a limitation because of the lack of human interaction, the

online interviews in this study gave us the ability to interview consumers in other places of the world, such as Australia and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, respondents were assured anonymity in the study, and were asked to agree on the interviews being recorded as a way for us to facilitate the analysis of the collected material (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Also, the ethical advice by Patel & Davisson (2011) regarding consent requirements has been followed, thus, all the respondents have voluntarily participated in the study as well as been informed with the purpose of the interviews.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Step Analysis – The Three Perspectives of Perceived Transparency Information**

From the collected data, three perspectives of the meaning of transparency information for consumers have been distinguished. These perspectives represent the way consumers perceive transparency when purchasing fashion products and will be useful in understanding how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products. The three perspectives identified are:

- Perspective 1: Transparency is a bonus
- Perspective 2: Transparency is important
- Perspective 3: Transparency is a prerequisite

In order to give an in-depth understanding of the different perspectives, we will outline common aspects in each perspective.

#### **Perspective 1: Transparency Is a Bonus**

Perspective 1 includes consumers who mainly did not purchase from a transparent company because of its transparency. Instead, what attracted the consumers in their purchase, was the clothes' appearance. The fact that the acquisition happened from a transparent company was something additional rather than the deciding factor. For instance, David describes how the question of transparency and sustainability is rather insignificant in being asked how he wishes sustainability information to be presented:

*"I don't know how important that question is to me. As I said earlier, it is probably more of a bonus." - David*

The common aspects in this perspective are the perceptions that transparency is believed to be something positive which gives the consumers a feeling of a clear conscience when shopping. However, the transparency information is not something the consumers look for prior to a purchase. These dimensions mentioned will be further elaborated below:

#### ***Transparency Feels Like a Positive Matter***

The respondents have a common perception that transparency is something positive about a company. This perception is based on the consumers' feelings and their subjective idea of what transparency means, which is merely positive, but remains shallow throughout the interviews. Jennifer describes how she does not for a fact know how and if Dedicated are transparent or sustainable:

*"Honestly, it's more of a feeling that they have given me about them being sustainable, rather than me knowing that they actually are." - Jennifer*

Simultaneously as the group does not know for a fact that the companies are sustainable or transparent, respondents typically express an appreciation toward environmentally friendly companies:

*"I think that the environmental aspect is good; it also feels a bit future-friendly in some way because you know that we will have to move in that direction." - Jennifer*

Another example is how respondents have somewhat of an understanding that organic cotton is good for the environment, but cannot explain its benefits or in what way it differs from conventional cotton:

*"It means that I don't help others in doing more damage to the planet, and it means I'm actually trying in a way to help it by supporting these kinds of brands." – Sandra*

Simultaneously, Jennifer also explains how she likes organic cotton because of its benefits for her skin:

*“In the last couple of years, I feel like it is nice with organic cotton. Once again, the primary reason is probably egoistic - that I know that it is better for the skin. So, when I see that is organic, I get more excited about that too.” - Jennifer*

### **Transparency Gives a Clear Conscience**

Another central aspect in the first perception is that purchasing from a transparent company gives the consumers a clear conscience about their purchase choices. Once again, this perception is simply based on feelings rather than actual facts on why their purchases are better than buying from an un-transparent company. Paul describes this:

*“I feel like I can do it [purchase clothes from Nudie Jeans] with a good conscience since they make an effort in keeping themselves responsible.” - Paul*

Also common for this group, is that sustainability efforts that consumers talk about are mainly selfish and connected to their own feelings and thoughts about their purchase. Jennifer explains how she feels better buying from Dedicated than for instance, H&M:

*“It makes me as a consumer feel that this is a better choice than if I would have gone to H&M. In some way, I get some sort of self-affirmation in making that choice.” - Jennifer*

As such, the respondents describe how they make a difference and emotionally feel good about it yet lack the ability to explain in what way they are making a difference. David, for example, clearly explains his lack of knowledge regarding transparency and sustainability information in the following quote:

*“I'm poorly informed about certifications, so I don't understand what they actually mean.” - David*

### **Transparency Is Not What I Look For**

The consumers of this perspective also display thoughts about their uninterest in looking for transparency information. They are instead

more interested in the appearance of the clothes. For instance, many of the respondents became interested in Dedicated because of the motives on their T-shirts. This is exemplified below when Anda describes how she first heard of the brand:

*“And I heard from a friend of mine, because, basically, Dedicated has my taste in t-shirts, with cats on them and I'm obsessed with cats. And my friend was like “I found this amazing t-shirt and it's from this brand, and you might be interested”. And of course, I wanted to know more because it's cats.” - Sandra*

Jennifer also expresses how she likes Dedicated because she feels that they are trendy and modern with their sustainability work:

*“But also, that it feels trendy that it should be sustainable, and it feels like they [Dedicated] are in line with that.” - Jennifer*

The focus among these consumers is on appearance, and they do not express any interest in finding out information about the company's transparency. For example, Paul explains how he does not notice any specific sustainability information from Nudie but knows that there is information accessible if he would want to look at it. Further, Sandra explains how she enjoys looking at Instagram pictures but does not feel numbers and statistics are important in her current state because she does not understand the meaning of them:

*“Right now, no [I don't look at numbers], because I'm not so experienced.” - Sandra*

Jennifer explains how she likes simplicity in the information which shows her uninterest in reading extensive transparency information:

*“It's [the information] not 24 word documents that explain sustainability but instead it's short and simple in order to understand what it is.” - Jennifer*

### **Perspective 2: Transparency Is Important**

Common for consumers of this perspective is that they see transparency information as something interesting and important when easily accessed. These consumers mainly try to purchase sustainable clothing. However, they do not acquire extensive transparency

information, other than what is easily given to them. Distinctive for this group is also that consumers are interested in different parts of transparency information depending on their personal values. Moreover, a common viewpoint to this perspective is a perception that transparent companies can be trusted as responsible, and that transparency is crucial in this moment. The common aspects will be further elaborated below:

### ***Transparency Is Interesting When Easily Accessed***

Consumers of this perspective find transparency to be interesting when information is already given to them, meaning that they do not have to dig deep to find information. When asked if she look for sustainability information on the company's webpage prior to her purchase, Emily explains:

*"No, not really, but it was more like I found the information, like oh it's recycled!" - Emily*

The consumers do some research about transparency but are not interested in doing extensive research, which is shown in the below citation of Joseph:

*"Honestly, who can sit down and read two pages in A4 about a company as a normal consumer? People have kids to take care of, cleaning has to be done etc. So, I think it's very good that they [Nudie] can make a short video in 30 seconds and explain that this is how we work" - Joseph*

### ***Different Areas Within Transparency Are More Important Depending on Personal Values***

The consumers of this perspective show how they value many different parts of transparency information. For instance, some respondents are more interested in environmental and social concerns, whereas others are more caring about transparency for their own personal sake. These interests are often connected to their personal interests and what they find to be most important. Olivia explains how nature and birds are important to her and as such, has a lot of environmental concerns.

*"I like the connection to the nature and to birds and also to the... supporting our earth and so on" - Olivia*

On the other hand, respondent Joseph is more interested in transparency regarding the materials of the fabric from Nudie because of his personal interest in jeans, its quality and function.

*"Like with material and such, I guess that's what interests me the most. Why should I buy these jeans? How thick is the fabric? And all of those different qualities." - Joseph*

The consumers of this perspective can also have an overall perception that transparency in general is important and has no specific interests within the area of transparency. Instead, they value the concept in its entirety with concerns for both the environment and social efforts. Emily explains how she is thoughtful in choosing what to buy in order to not affect extrinsic factors:

*"And I look at how much water is used, or where the material comes from, if it is recycled or something else so. And where it is produced is also important, I think... I don't want to wear a lot of plastic on me to not affect others and the environment." - Emily*

Emily also describes how she likes the quality because of the well-produced clothes and materials:

*"You can buy them, and they will last for 5 to 10 years if you take care of them, and it's like, the time is investment." - Emily*

### ***A Transparent Brand Can Be Trusted in Being Responsible***

Another aspect of this perspective is how consumers have the perception that you can trust a transparent brand in being responsible. By knowing that a company is doing good in one area of transparency, the respondents assume that the company has nothing to hide and thus, puts large trust in the corporations being responsible in all areas of their organization. As such, they do not feel the need to look into more extensive details about other areas in which they are uninterested in. This is exemplified by Frank, who describes how he

has looked at information regarding organic cotton and environmental concerns but that he gets the “vibe” that Nudie also has good working conditions:

*“[I] Mainly [look at] the sustainability in the organics but however they give the vibe that, the staff well, they don’t necessarily outsource other companies to manufacture the products, they seem to be a very focused company and they seem to be especially focused on their brand and how it’s perceived through the website. And I would assume that employees are paid, I get that vibe from them.” - Frank*

Respondents explain how they feel trust in Dedicated and Nudie Jeans because they are transparent and not trying to hide anything. Also, there is a disbelief and untrustworthiness in bigger fashion brands because of their lack of transparency and mass-production.

*“I like that as soon as you enter Dedicated’s website, it is stated about their materials, and where they produce their clothes, so it doesn’t feel like anything is hidden... I feel like I can trust that their clothes really are produced fairly and that there are no big clothing chains involved or such.” - Amy*

Furthermore, Charles explains how he always chooses to buy ecological clothing over, for instance, Fairtrade because he trusts that working conditions automatically become better and thus trusts that ecologic companies also care for working conditions.

*“But I would always take the ecological one because I also think that working conditions in general will be better.” - Charles*

### **Transparency Is Crucial in This Moment and Going Forward**

The consumers of this perspective also typically acknowledge the importance of companies being responsible in this moment because of the sustainability issues in today’s society. This is exemplified by Emily:

*“I think sustainable life is very important in our moment that we are at. And it’s important that brands, as big as Dedicated, say that we step into it and we care about it and that they are like a role model for brands and also for teenagers who aren’t just as conscious. It is*

*really important that they do something about it.” - Emily*

Olivia also explains how sustainability is important right now, although she does not always purchase clothes that for example are Fairtrade certified herself.

*“...I guess everyone right now, or I hope that everyone should think about how we are devastating our earth more and more and I... I’m not only buying right now... eco or Fairtrade clothes. But it’s quite... I read a lot about it and it’s quite important for me...” - Olivia*

Consumers within this perspective are also typically referring to different scandals within the clothing industry and documentaries that highlight the importance of sustainability work. This also make them more mindful:

*“You understand how it’s possible [producing cheap clothes that are unsustainable] when you see the documentaries about the ecological impact of clothes production in the developing world and so that’s when I decided [to purchase from Nudie Jeans].” - Charles*

### **Perspective 3: Transparency Is a Prerequisite**

Consumers representing perspective 3 perceive transparency as essential when purchasing fashion products. The style of the clothing may still be important for them; however, these consumers assure themselves that the company is both transparent and acts responsibly prior to a purchase. These consumers typically express that:

*“So, once I first establish, okay this brand is ethical for me, I will then let myself look at the page. And then like, browse, otherwise I don’t browse.” - Adam*

Prevalent aspects of this perspective are that transparency enables the consumers to make informed decisions and helps them understand the utility of products. Further, all parts of transparency are seen as important, and transparency is not seen as a temporary trend by these consumers. These aspects are further presented below:



### ***Transparency Is Vital Because it Enables You To Make Informed Decisions***

A central aspect to this perspective is seeing transparency information as vital when deciding to make a purchase. These consumers put much effort into acquiring information, both on the company web site and on third party sources, to make informed decisions whether the company acts sustainably or not. James describes how he requires, at least, information about the materials of the product as well as the origin, prior to a purchase:

*“Well, the bare minimum for me is knowing what it [the clothing] is made of and where it is made. It’s like... if I can’t get information about those two things, it will require a hell of a lot for me to buy it.” – James*

The consumers of this perspective typically acknowledge how they like to follow every step of the production process:

*“I like that Nudie is trying to make it very transparent, like, from all steps of the production.” – Elizabeth*

The consumers of this perspective are also very critical in their information acquisition and do not perceive transparency as equal to fully sustainable or responsible practices. They tend to consider, for example, what countries that normally have good supplier conditions and what materials that are best to use:

*“I don’t want the people who make my clothes to be unwell... I therefore try to shop from countries that may have... where it is more legislated and such.” - James*

*“The use of organic cotton is important in my opinion. It’s also very important for the people who produce the cotton because they are exposed by strong chemicals in the process. So, it’s not only about the environment but also about those who work with it. So, it feels important that they [Dedicated] are clear about it.” - Sara*

Furthermore, the consumers of this perspective view certifications as a guarantee that the company acts sustainable:

*“For me, insight into the production process is very important. They [Nudie Jeans] have great*

*transparency information where you can follow the entire supply chain with transportations etc. Certifications also become a guarantee.” – Richard*

However, these consumers are oftentimes also critical about what kind of certifications that are used. For example, James describes how he, when purchasing clothes from Dedicated, think it is important that their cotton is GOTS (The Global Organic Textile Standard) certified:

*“And then... I think that almost everything is GOTS certified cotton, which is one of the most difficult certifications to receive, there are other certifications, like BCI (The Better Cotton Initiative), which is not as difficult to accomplish.” – James*

As the citations show, consumers of this perspective view transparency information as useful in order to make thoughtful purchase decisions and in deciding for themselves whether the company acts sustainably or not.

### ***All Parts of Transparency Are Important***

Consumers of this perspective also typically find all parts of transparency to be important. They all acknowledge both being able to trace the production chain as well as caring for working and sustainability conditions:

*“I know that they [Dedicated] have a transparent production chain and that everyone gets enough paid in all steps. That is really important to me.” – Sara*

Primarily, they express selfless concern for the environment and other people rather than selfish concerns:

*“Uhm... I think... it’s knowing that... I guess in my mind it’s like... okay this is gonna... like go back to the earth, what actually degrades back into the earth.” – Lauren*

Their informed purchases also make them feel relaxed. For example, Alexander describes how purchasing organic clothing makes him feel like there is one less thing to worry about. He continues to describe how:

*“So, when a company is not, trying to hide all the facts, I feel a lot more relaxed.” – Alexander*

Some of the respondents also have specific interests and describe how their personal life has affected their interest in gaining knowledge about transparency information:

*“I’ve become interested in the well-being of the oceans because I live on Öckerö, it’s always been kind of close to myself, you know. And then... I’ve always learned when being a child to pick up trash and those kinds of stuff, to not litter.” – James*

*“And also, I guess why I think it’s important is one such a personal thing as I am half malaysian-chinese and my family they... My family back in Malaysia ranges from that lower to middle class. There’s not really a lot of factories in Malaysia as in other countries but I have always been mindful about like the type of work that people are doing out there and how they are getting paid.” – Lauren*

These consumers hence extract meaning related to their own interests and background from the transparency information, yet they still care for the other areas within transparency as well. In these cases, James highlights his concern for the ocean, while Lauren acknowledges the working conditions. Although these types of concerns may be related to personal interests and are the most important for consumers, they still put importance on all parts of transparency in regard to environmental and social issues.

#### ***Transparency Information Is Helpful in Understanding the Utility of a Product***

Consumers of this perspective also have the viewpoint that transparency is helpful in understanding the utility of a product. They are mindful about purchasing clothes that last for many years, have high quality, are gentle for the skin and live up to their functional requirements. For example, they acknowledge how their choice is related to the longevity and quality of a product:

*“Say if I have to buy a winter jacket because I don’t have one, I will try to make a good decision on a good product which will then last. It’s not much about how it looks but more functional and how it works and what the product is about.” – Elizabeth*

*“I’ve become very strict, I don’t want polyester in my clothes, partly because it releases plastics*

*when I wash it... I know you can use filters for that, but I don’t know how effective they are. But also, using polyester makes me sweat a lot more because it’s not breathable at all since it’s not organic.” – James*

The transparency information is therefore perceived by consumers of this perspective to be helpful in assuring them that the products will be of high quality and therefore also last for several years. Although the consumers of this perspective care a lot about the practicality of the products, they take into account the looks of the clothing pieces to some extent as well. As Richard explains:

*“I think it’s good to have a shirt that is well designed also. It doesn’t need to be fashionable but should be designed nicely. It doesn’t need to be boring just because it’s better for the environment.” – Richard*

#### ***Transparency Is Not a Temporary Trend***

Common for this perspective is also how consumers shop from transparent and responsible companies as if it is a given thing to do nowadays. Elizabeth and Sara talk about how their shopping habits has changed and that they now care about the sustainability parts of shopping:

*“When I first bought a product from Nudie, I was 22 years old, so I wasn’t paying much attention to what I bought and for what reason. It was pretty much about the look and to have something unique basically in the beginning you know, and then later on, I mean as you grow older, I guess we all have to fix these questions about what and for what reason we buy things [concerning sustainability issues] and so Nudie still has products I find interesting.” – Elizabeth*

*“Before, I didn’t think much about... nowadays I buy it [Dedicated clothes] because it is eco, sustainable and Fairtrade. But before I bought it only because the clothing pieces had cool prints.” - Sara*

Hence, consumers of this perspective view shopping responsibly as a natural ongoing practice which they do not expect to end.

Name	Perspective	Social Responsibility		Emotional	Epistemic			Functional	Social
	Transparency is...	V/M/S	Egoistic/Altruistic	V/M/S	V/M/S	Active/Passive	Subjective/Objective	V/M/S	V/M/S
David	A Bonus	No	No	Vague	Vague	Passive	Subjective	Vague	No
Jennifer	A Bonus	Vague	Egoistic	Vague	Vague	Passive	Subjective	Vague	Strong
Paul	A Bonus	Vague	Egoistic	Vague	Vague	Passive	Subjective	Vague	Strong
Sandra	A Bonus	Vague	Both	Vague	Vague	Passive	Subjective	Vague	Strong
Emily	Is Important	Moderate	Altruistic	Moderate	Strong	Passive	Both	Vague	Moderate
Olivia	Is Important	Moderate	Altruistic	Moderate	Strong	Passive	Both	Vague	Moderate
Joseph	Is Important	Moderate	Both	Strong	Strong	Active	Both	Moderate	Moderate
Amy	Is Important	Moderate	Both	Moderate	Strong	Passive	Both	Moderate	Strong
Charles	Is Important	Moderate	Both	Moderate	Strong	Passive	Both	Moderate	Moderate
Frank	Is Important	Moderate	Altruistic	Moderate	Strong	Active	Both	Moderate	Moderate
Alexander	A Prerequisite	Strong	Altruistic	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague
Adam	A Prerequisite	Strong	Altruistic	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Moderate	Vague
Lauren	A Prerequisite	Strong	Both	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague
Sara	A Prerequisite	Strong	Altruistic	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague
Elizabeth	A Prerequisite	Strong	Altruistic	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague
Richard	A Prerequisite	Strong	Altruistic	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague
James	A Prerequisite	Strong	Both	Strong	Strong	Active	Objective	Strong	Vague

\*V/M/S = Vague/Moderate/Strong

Table 4: Summary of derived consumer values.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Step Analysis – Values and Perspectives

From looking at how consumers understand transparency information, and how the information contributes to value perceptions when purchasing fashion products, it is clear that the type of consumer values derived by respondents differ depending on from which perspective transparency information is perceived, as shown in table 4. This discussion will therefore address the aim of analyzing the meaning of transparency information for consumers by connecting consumer value perceptions to our results. The discussion will be structured by looking at the three different perspectives found in the results.

### The Few, Vague, Values Derived When Transparency Is Seen as a Bonus

In the perspective where consumers view transparency as a bonus when purchasing fashion products, it becomes evident that many of the consumer values presented in the theoretical framework are vague for this group. Social responsibility, epistemic, emotional, and functional values are all, to various degrees, on the lower scale. However, the consumers in this perspective display a stronger degree of social value than the other two perspectives.

### When There Is No Strong Desire For Knowledge to Satisfy

A prominently low value within this perspective is the epistemic value, defined in this report as the transparency information's

capability to satisfy a consumer's desire for knowledge, based on Sheth et al. (1991). Because the consumers who view transparency as a bonus are not purposefully looking for transparency about sustainability conditions at suppliers or traceability, there is no strong desire for knowledge to satisfy among these consumers. Thus, the epistemic values derived in this perspective are vague and contradicting Singh et al.'s. (2008) study that many consumers are interested in obtaining transparency information.

Furthermore, as the consumers do not actively search for information and lack an understanding of the information, the low, epistemic values are also passive and subjective within this group. This as they barely recognize the transparency information and put their personal values into how they "feel" that the transparency is something positive without explaining or understanding how. For instance, when consumers explain how they appreciate organic cotton but fail to explain how it is beneficial for the environment. Bradu et al.'s (2014) explanation about the possible lack of consumer motivation to process transparency information are evident in this perspective as respondents do not desire to search or put objective thoughts in the passively received information. This is also in line with the studies by Press & Arnould (2014), who problematizes numeric transparency as it could give consumers trouble comprehending the

information. As respondents express that they, for instance, do not understand the meaning behind certifications or base their viewpoints on feelings rather than facts, it is safe to say that this group has troubles comprehending and lack the motivation to process transparency information (Bradu et al., 2014., Press & Arnould, 2014). As Press and Arnould (2014) explain, a narrative approach could be useful for these consumers in understanding the transparency information.

#### ***When There Are Vague Sustainability Concerns***

Moreover, consumers in this perspective do not purchase from a company because of the transparency information or sustainability work, but rather the looks and aesthetics of the clothes. Additionally, they are vague and shallow in their thoughts about not harming the environment or people (Mohr et al., 2001) or discussing concerns about benefits to society (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire., 2011). Consequently, the degree to which the consumers feel concerns for sustainability issues is vague. Thus, it is simply a bonus, and the purchase may have happened regardless of the transparency information. It is also prominent that in the few circumstances that the consumers do show social responsibility values, they are often egoistic in their reasoning. For example, the cases in which transparency information gives them self-affirmation and makes them feel good about their purchase. Thus, they have concerns for themselves doing good rather than selfless thoughts about benefits for society (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011) or minimizing harmful effects (Mohr et al., 2001).

As explained by Sweeney & Soutar (2001), consumer values can be interrelated. This study shows that the vague epistemic value (Sheth et al. 1991) is possibly related to the vague social responsibility value. Because of the consumer's lack of interest in social responsibility concerns, the willingness to search for information about it, such as transparency information, automatically becomes limited. As such, the epistemic values derived become vague as consumers have little to no desire for knowledge to satisfy.

#### ***When There Is a Lack of Emotional and Few Functional Connections***

The vague emotional value prominent in this perspective is shown by the consumer's lack of evoked emotions or affective states (Sheth et al., 2014). The only prominent emotions derived from the interviews were an appreciation of environmentally friendly companies and how that gives the consumers an overall good feeling about their purchase. Also, as the consumers do not express any task-oriented behavior and are obscure in their understanding of the utilities (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Sheth et al. 2014), their functional value derived from transparency information is also vague and often just one or none. Once again, this can be related (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) to the vague social responsibility value and the vague epistemic value that the consumers derive. As a result of their lack of concerns for social responsibility issues and uninterest in finding information about it, the emotional and functional values derived seem to be vague as well.

#### ***When Transparency Is Trendy***

On the contrary to the vague values derived from this perspective, the consumers in this perspective mainly derive strong social value from the transparency information. For instance, when consumers explain how sustainability is trendy, which can be linked to the explanation by Sheth et al. (1991) in how social value can be derived from associations to a specific social group. As such, the consumers in this perspective derive social value because of the trendiness of it, rather than altruistic sustainability concerns.

#### ***The Moderate Values Derived When Transparency Is Seen as Important***

The consumers who see transparency as important derive many values from the transparency information, however, these values are mainly perceived in a moderate way.

#### ***When There Is a Moderate Desire for Knowledge to Satisfy***

First of all, these consumers derive epistemic value in line with the definition of Sheth et al. (1991) since the transparency information satisfies their desire for knowledge. In this perspective, their desire for knowledge is

somewhat moderate because they mainly read about information that is easily given to them, thus the degree of epistemic values derived are not as few as in perspective one, yet not as many as in perspective three, which will be presented further on. However, the degree to which the consumers are satisfied with the knowledge is strong, thus, a strong derived epistemic value in relation to their desire. As consumers of this perspective show an uninterest in acquiring extensive information about transparency, and mainly recognize information given to them, they are passive in satisfying their desire for knowledge. They are thus similar to consumers who see transparency as a bonus in that they are both passive, however, the consumers of this perspective see transparency as more important and recognize the information given to them to a greater extent. When it comes to satisfying their desire to gain knowledge, it is also shown in the result that consumers of this perspective are objective in certain areas within transparency. They then subjectively put trust in the whole corporation being responsible. The consumers of this perspective thus, typically, both derive objective and subjective epistemic values from their purchases.

#### ***When There Are Moderate Functional Values Derived***

The functional values derived from consumers of this perspective are also mainly moderate. Consumers use transparency information to understand some utilities (Sheth et al., 1991) of the garment, such as quality or the materials of the clothes. They can also use the information in a task-oriented manner (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007) to realize that they are purchasing from a sustainable company and not a fast-fashion or unsustainable company. However, these task-oriented behaviors and understandings of utilities are relatively lower than consumers who view transparency as a prerequisite (which will be presented further on). A possible reason for the moderate level of functional values derived may be related (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) to the passive epistemic value. Because consumers within this perspective do not actively search for information, they will probably not be exposed to as much transparency information, thus not deriving as many functional values, such as understanding utilities.

#### ***When There Are Specific Interests Within Transparency***

As shown in the results, the consumers who view transparency as important often look at transparency in its entirety, and often also focus and feel concerned for, specific parts of the transparency information depending on their personal interests. These personal interests are typically connected to emotional feelings. For example, one of the respondents is more interested in transparency regarding the materials of the fabric because of his personal interest in jeans. Hence, the transparency information arises feelings for the consumers, and they thus derive emotional value from it (Sheth et al., 1991). However, this is mainly on a moderate level, as they are not fully invested in acquiring extensive information about the transparency and therefore are not fully emotionally involved in it. Thus, these respondents may respond to a narrative approach as they make sense of transparency information through access to familiar values and beliefs (Press & Arnould, 2014) by relating to personal interests when looking at information.

#### ***When Sustainability Concerns Are Different Within the Group***

Compared to the consumers who see transparency as a bonus, the consumers of this perspective feel more concern about benefits to society and believe transparency is important. They, therefore, derive social responsibility values from their purchases in line with the definition by Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2011) and Mohr et al. (2001). However, they do this only on a moderate level because they do not typically establish that a company is transparent and acts responsible prior to a purchase. Instead, as mentioned, they acquire the information that is easily presented and passively given to them but still find that this information valuable and important.

Furthermore, as the consumers believe different areas within transparency are interesting, others are less interesting, such as being interested in jeans materials but not as interested in social concerns, the social responsibility value in this perspective can be seen as egoistic and in benefit for specific interests. On the other hand, consumers within this perspective can also be

interested and value transparency in its entirety, such as caring for information about environmental and social concerns and deriving altruistic social responsibility values alone or in combination with egoistic values. Thus, respondents within this perspective can show selfless concern for the environment and people and selfish concerns about their own personal sake and interests.

#### ***When Transparency Is Currently Important***

Consumers of this perspective see transparency as something crucial in this moment that we are at. Having sustainability issues that need to be solved, these consumers can be said to find transparency as an important trend in today's society. Therefore, they derive some social value from their purchase, in line with our operationalization of social value based on Sheth et al.'s (1991) explanation. However, they are only doing this to a moderate degree, as they also seem to think that it is important that more companies continue to show that they care about society and that consumers take the sustainability issues into consideration as well, which shows that they do not think that it is only a temporary trend.

#### ***The Many, Strong, Values Derived When Transparency Is a Prerequisite***

It is evident that the consumers who see transparency as a prerequisite strongly derive many values from the transparency information when purchasing fashion products. They experience both strong epistemic, emotional, functional, and social responsibility values. However, the social values derived from this group are low.

#### ***When There Is a Strong Desire for Knowledge to Satisfy***

In comparison to the other groups, these consumers have a strong desire to gain extensive transparency information in order to make informed decisions and assure themselves that specific information about the transparency, such as the material and origin of a product, is stated. The transparency information thus satisfies their desire for knowledge to a great extent, which shows that they derive strong epistemic values (Sheth et al., 1991). As presented in the result, these consumers are very much interested in all parts of transparency information. Both, the entire

production process, which shows that they use traceability as a way to evaluate ethical viewpoints, confirming Bradu et al.'s (2014) discussion about how transparency is necessary in responding to consumers' desire for such information. But also, these consumers acknowledge the second dimension of transparency, sustainability conditions at the suppliers, by talking about how they are concerned with working conditions in the factories. However, they do not typically search for detailed information about the results of audits and the auditing body's quality, as included in the definition of the second dimension by Cramer (2008). The consumers are also active in satisfying their knowledge for transparency, because they actively seek for such information prior to a purchase. In addition, they often evaluate the transparency information critically and in detail to see whether they perceive the acts of companies as responsible or not, which shows that their epistemic values are based on an objectiveness. For example, they view certifications as a guarantee of responsible actions while still being critical about what kind of certifications are used. It is therefore clear that these consumers use the transparency information in the same way as Christiansen (2002) describes it; to judge whether the company is transparent or not, which is different from the other perspectives, where consumers typically believe that transparency equals a responsible act.

#### ***When There Are Strong Functional Values Derived***

The consumers of this perspective all seem to have an understanding that transparency information helps them to make informed decisions, as well as help them understand the utility of products. Simultaneously as this is an example of how they derive epistemic value, since it satisfies their desire to gain knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991), it also shows that the transparency information contributes to consumers perceiving functional values, hence confirming Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) study that values can be interrelated. This, because the information helps them complete a task-oriented behavior (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007) of making an informed purchase decision, as well as helping them understand the utility of a product (Sheth et al., 1991) in terms of, for example, assuring

themselves by looking at the transparency information that products are of high quality and will have long durability.

#### ***When Attention Is Put On All Parts of Transparency***

The consumers of this perspective are very much involved in all parts of the transparency information, and it is clear that mainly strong emotional values are perceived. The transparency information both arouses feelings and affective states of the consumers, in accordance with the definition by Sheth et al. (1991). Furthermore, respondents tend to put additional importance on some parts of the transparency information. For example, one of the respondents pays extra attention to working conditions because of her association to her personal background, which shows that the transparency information evokes a strong affective state connected (Sheth et al., 1991) to her childhood. Another example of how these consumers perceive emotional values from the transparency information is the common perception of feeling relaxed about their informed purchase.

#### ***When There Are Strong Sustainability Concerns***

Connected to the emotions described above is the fact that the emotions are mainly derived from a strong concern for the environment and other people. Hence, the consumers of this perspective also perceive strong social responsibility values because of their concern about benefits to society (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011) and their desire to minimize harmful effects (Mohr et al., 2001). These consumers use the information prior to a purchase to evaluate if the company is responsible or not, for example, when respondents shop from more legislated countries because they feel it indicates better working conditions. Since these consumers feel selfless concerns rather than egoistic concerns, these consumers are also mainly altruistic, and hence they differ from the other perspectives.

#### ***When a Transparent Purchase Is a Given***

Furthermore, consumers of this perspective only shop products when having evaluated beforehand if they perceive the brand as responsible, or, if the specific clothing piece is responsibly produced. As mentioned earlier, these consumers see this type of shopping as a

given thing to do, and hence not as an ongoing trend that one should follow. Hence, the consumers of this perspective derive vague social value from the transparency information, as they do not make any distinct association with another group (Sheth et al., 1991).

### **Conclusions**

This paper analyses the meaning of transparency information for consumers by looking at how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products and hence contributes to existing research on transparency information (e.g., Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Bradu et al., 2014; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014; Gupta and Zeithaml, 2006; Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016; Sodhi & Tang, 2019).

In sum, our analysis shows that consumer values regarding transparency information are interrelated and derived to different degrees and dimensions depending on how consumers perceive this information, thus, from which perspective transparency information is perceived. As such, consumers may perceive transparency as more or less important, thus deriving consumer values to either a vague, moderate or strong degree. For specific values, dimensions such as active/passive, objective/subjective or egoistic/altruistic were found. This study also provides a deeper understanding of how consumers not only put meaning into the purchase itself but also into the transparency information related to the purchase. Simultaneously, there is also an interrelatedness between consumer values, thus, confirming Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) explanation of interrelated values. As such, when values are derived to a specific level in one area, for instance, deriving a strong social responsibility value, it often reflects upon the same level of derived values in other areas, such as a strong epistemic or emotional value. However, when it comes to the social value, it is typically vague when other values are strong, and strong when other values are vague.

Furthermore, this study moves beyond and deepens the reasoning behind consumer values, extending traditional research of consumer values (e.g., Sheth et al., 1991) by recognizing the interrelatedness of values as well as values being derived to different degrees and

dimensions in relation to transparency information. As such, this study accounts for a more holistic viewpoint of consumer values rather than merely looking at values as independent constructs. It seems as if the values derived from transparency information are symbolic of how important the consumer feels transparency, and many times sustainability issues, are, thus, guiding different routes in value creation. Because consumer values influence consumer choice behavior (Sheth et al., 1991) and can be helpful in predicting purchase behavior (Chen & Dubinsky, 2003), the extended analytical model presented in this study enables a deeper understanding of what type of route should be taken in value creation, depending on in what way transparency information is meaningful. Drawing from this insight, one should be cautious when looking at earlier research about consumer values (e.g., Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Sheth et al., 1991; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007) without taking into account how consumers' perspective may vary, thus varying in the dimensions and degrees to which they derive values. As shown in this study, consumers may derive values to a vague, moderate, or strong degree depending on how important they perceive transparency information to be. Simultaneously, it should be acknowledged that consumers can be active/passive, objective/subjective, or egoistic/altruistic in deriving specific values. By recognizing that values can be derived to different dimensions and degrees rather than being constant for all, one should have in mind that the values can be perceived differently by individuals when looking at earlier research.

Considering that the values derived from transparency information can be seen as symbolic of the consumer perspective, thus, symbolic of in what way transparency information is perceived and how it is meaningful for the individual, there seem to be two different routes that can be taken in recognition of transparency information and value creation. One possible route to recognition of transparency information and value creation is the social route. Consumers who see transparency as a bonus are characterized by an uninterest in transparency information and sustainability issues while deriving strong social values from the transparency information. They do not care

about the content of transparency information displayed but instead care about the concept of transparency as a trend in society in accordance with our operationalization of social value based on Sheth et al.'s (1991) definition. Pushing on social aspects of transparency, such as the trendiness of transparency information and sustainability, could thus help these consumers derive stronger consumer values and, in turn, influence their consumer choice behavior. Another possible route to recognition of transparency information and value creation is what we call, the awareness route. This route includes pushing on both epistemic, emotional, functional, and social responsibility values by creating an awareness of in-depth transparency information. Presenting extensive transparency information can help satisfy consumer's desire for knowledge, evoke feelings and affective states, create an understanding of utilities and task-oriented behavior, as well as address their concerns for sustainability issues. Consumers who see transparency as a prerequisite typically derive these values to a strong degree, and offering these consumers extensive transparency information can thus help them derive such values to an even stronger degree, influencing their consumer choice behavior. Lastly, it can be beneficial to use both of these routes for consumers who see transparency as important as they derive values to some extent from all consumer values.

In addition, it becomes apparent in this study that transparency information is strongly connected to sustainable consumption as it helps consumers evaluate whether a company meets sustainable norms, in line with, e.g., Sodhi and Tang (2019) and Egels-Zandén et al. (2014). As transparency information and sustainable consumption can go hand in hand, it can be argued that deriving strong consumer values from transparency information may influence a more sustainable consumer choice behavior. Because this study confirms research regarding how many consumers lack motivation (Bradú et al., 2014) and have trouble comprehending transparency information (Press & Arnould, 2014), we conclude that narratives may be an effective way of deriving stronger consumer values among these consumers by, for example, connecting the transparency information to familiar values, (Press & Arnould, 2014) such as questions that speak close to the consumer's heart, for



instance, heritage or place of living. This could be an incentive for companies to work with transparency in a narrative manner, and in turn, influence sustainable consumption. On the other hand, we find that we cannot neglect numeric transparency as it is essential for consumers who see transparency as a prerequisite in order for them to make informed decisions.

### **Future Research**

While the consumers of both Nudie Jeans and Dedicated provide a unique context to finding out how transparency information contributes to consumer value perceptions when purchasing fashion products, we suggest further research on our results. For example, extensive research of a wider range of consumers from multiple transparent fashion companies could provide greater generalizability to our study. As the market for transparent products is growing and making companies disclose transparency information to a greater extent (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011) and this study is limited to the fashion industry, it would be of interest to study consumer value perceptions of transparency information in other industries as well.

Moreover, this study has touched upon how consumers prefer the presentation of transparency information to some extent. For example, it is shown that consumers who see transparency as a bonus have difficulties understanding transparency information and thus prefer simplicity. As this study has been mainly focused on analyzing consumer perception values derived from the transparency information, we suggest further in-depth research into consumer preferences using theories of transparency by, for example, Press & Arnould (2014), who discuss narrative transparency and numeric transparency. As such, more focus can be put on how companies should present transparency information in practice.

Furthermore, this study has examined consumers' points of view of transparency information through interviews. As such, consumers may not have been able to recall their experiences in exact detail, especially when their purchases did not occur recently. This can be seen as a limitation, and we,

therefore, suggest that further research should provide a context in which respondents can freely describe their details of an experience, in line with the recommendation of Thompson et al. (1989). This context can be provided by bringing stimulus material into the interview session in order for respondents to remember the situations and, thus, explain further about the specific subject through the simulation of discussion with the help of visual cues. For example, the company website and transparency information can be brought into the interview. It could also be interesting to look at the findings from a company viewpoint and track visited pages to see the exact information that consumers look at and possibly derive consumer values from.

### **Managerial Implications**

The results and conclusions drawn in this study can be useful for managers by giving them an in-depth understanding of how to create value for their customers in regard to the transparency efforts they want to display. This section will present recommendations for companies who wish to use transparency in their marketing efforts to increase consumer values. This could be beneficial for managers since it is argued that the foundation for all marketing is built upon consumer values (Holbrook, 1996).

- Companies should consider that there are different routes to take in creating consumer values connected to transparency information. As already mentioned, there are two possible routes to take depending on the perspective consumers have; the social route and the awareness route.
- When presenting transparency information, it should preferably be both easily accessed and easily understood. Many consumers who see transparency information as a bonus have, in line with previous studies (e.g., Bradu et al., 2014; Press & Arnould, 2014), trouble comprehending and lack the motivation to process transparency information. For instance, many consumers have trouble understanding the meaning behind certifications. Moreover, consumers who see transparency information as important

relate personal interests to the transparency information and are not interested in acquiring extensive information. Therefore, we suggest that companies reach these consumers through easy and narrative information that helps the consumers benefit from familiarities and simplicity in the information, in line with Press and Arnould (2014).

- Simultaneously, it is essential to disclose more extensive information for consumers who wish to read about companies' sustainability and transparency efforts. As shown in our study, consumers who see transparency as a prerequisite and are active and objective in their information search often demand to know information more comprehensively, in line with research by Singh et al. (2008), who shows that many consumers are interested in obtaining transparency information. A lack of this type of information may bring distrust among consumers. Furthermore, our results show that transparency information is necessary, although it is not always read. It is especially crucial to show this information to consumers who perceive transparency as important since they put immense trust in the company acting responsibly.
- Companies should also have in mind that consumers differ in their activeness or passiveness when acquiring transparency information. Thus, as this study shows, consumers who are passive in their acquisition may prefer more simplistic transparency information. On the other hand, consumers who actively seek up information may demand more detailed information.
- Last, when presenting transparency information, companies should be aware that it is not always altruistic driving forces behind consumers' motivation to read up on information. In many cases, consumers derive egoistic and functional values in

transparency information, such as concerns for the skin or the longevity or function of the clothes.

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