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Greener Closets

Understanding Practices of Acquiring Sustainable Fashion

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- Understanding Practices of Acquiring Sustainable Fashion

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Abstract

The fashion industry is a large contributor to climate change, therefore sustainable options to acquire clothing need to be further emphasised and explored. A gap regarding the practical aspects of shopping has been identified and by using theories of practice the ‘doings’ of practices within acquisition of sustainable fashion can be studied. Drawing on literature within practice theory and sustainable fashion, the purpose of this study is to explore the acquisition of sustainable fashion and the related practices of reuse, upcycling, sharing and buying new garments. Five focus groups with Swedish young professionals, together with additional methods, provided insights into how the practices are performed in the everyday lives of the practitioners, as well as what fosters and hinders them. The findings suggest five ways of acquiring sustainable fashion - reuse, upcycling, sharing, buying new garments and mixing practices. Links between materials, competences and meanings in the different practices were found and further analysed. Time emerged as a prominent aspect as it was continuously emphasised as a decisive factor. Conclusively, through the practice theory perspective, the different elements of practises of acquiring sustainable fashion were identified and the practices’ importance and connection to time. This study contributes with knowledge regarding how consumers act whilst performing different practices which could provide important guidelines for companies.

Key words: practice theory, sustainable fashion, reuse, upcycling, sharing, time

INTRODUCTION

This study contributes to the understanding of how sustainable fashion is acquired and motivated by the fashion industry’s negative impact on the environment, it is a topic of relevance. Climate change is an increasing and large threat leading to major issues across the globe and a large contributor is the fashion industry (CEO Agenda 2020). Fashion is characterized by a linear system (CEO Agenda, 2020) and the negative environmental consequences from the fashion industry can be traced back to all phases of the clothing life cycle (Goworek, Oxborrow, Claxton, McLaren, Cooper & Hill, 2020). Clothing output has nearly doubled in the last 15 years (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) which is a result of lower fashion prices and a rise in speed at which fashion reaches the consumers (Šajn, 2019). On average, a piece of clothing is only used ten times before disposal (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) and not even 50% of used clothes are being recycled (Šajn, 2019), further illustrating the unsustainable ways of fashion consumption.

Nevertheless, the fashion industry is going through a transformational state, moving towards a more sustainable development (Segran, 2021). Companies are to a greater extent incorporating sustainability in their business models through initiatives such as creating garments from scrap

fabric (Segran, 2021), offering repairs (Kennedy, 2019; Nudie Jeans, 2021; Circlejeans, n.d) and renting clothes (Hack Your Closet, 2021). Though there have been indications that the fashion industry is improving its social and environmental performances, sustainable solutions are not implemented fast enough to outweigh the negative impacts of the industry (CEO Agenda 2020). However, consumers are becoming more aware of sustainability (Rosmarin, 2020; Stein, 2019) and there has been an increased interest in circularity and collaborative approaches (CEO Agenda, 2018). Further studies regarding the acquisition of sustainable fashion are therefore highly relevant.

There are a number of possible issues regarding sustainable clothing including the fast pace of changing fashion trends and that consumers effortlessly can purchase new low-cost garments (Williams & Shaw, 2017). Previous studies have emphasized underlying reasons for sustainable fashion consumption, such as values and motivations (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016), identity creation (McNeill & Venter, 2019) and consumer's attitudes and their perception (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013; Niinimäki 2010). It has also been explored how consumers handle green complexities during green shopping (Fuentes, 2014). Previous studies often delimit themselves to females (eg; McNeill & Venter, 2019), therefore both males and females were included in this study. The study focuses on young professionals which is motivated by younger consumers often having more knowledge regarding climate change and showing greater interest in shopping environmentally friendly (Goworek et al., 2020). Younger generations are also expected to affect practices of acquiring sustainable fashion in the future.

Scholars have debated whether sustainable fashion can even exist. Arguments involve the idea of sustainable fashion being an oxymoron (Clark, 2008), drawing on the contradiction of sustainability having a long-term perspective and the short-term aspect of fashion going in and out of style (Halkier & Jensen, 2011; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Conflict is created by the difficulty of not wanting to compromise commercial drivers, whilst also following sustainability commands (Goworek, et al., 2020). Nonetheless, sustainable fashion is a commonly used term to describe fashion with environmental and social considerations (Ertekin & Atik, 2014). Sustainable fashion is subjective (Henninger et al., 2016) and, on that account, the study's stance on sustainable fashion is mainly rooted in the idea of prolonging the life of garments. Sustainable fashion should take the clothing's life cycle into account (Ertekin & Atik, 2014), therefore the practices of acquiring sustainable fashion, prolonging the longevity, can add interesting perspectives.

We have identified a missing component of the practical aspects of how consumers acquire sustainable fashion. Drawing on Fuentes' (2014) argument of practical aspects often being ignored within the context of shopping, using theories of practice to study the acquisition of sustainable fashion will contribute to filling the theoretical gap by focusing on the 'doings' of practices. The theoretical framework of this study consists of two blocks; practice theory and sustainable fashion. We work with Shove and Pantzar's (2005) notion of theories of practice, stating that all practices include the elements materials, competences and meanings. Additionally, we focus on Southerton's (2013) aspects of time and temporality. The second block, sustainable fashion, will provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability aspects of fashion consumption and, thus, the acquisition phase. Drawing on the literature review, the acquisition of sustainable fashion is divided into four groups; *reuse*, *upcycle*, *sharing* and *new garments*.

Against this background, the study intends to provide insights to how consumers acquire sustainable fashion. The findings aim to provide an increased understanding of ‘the doings’ within the different types of acquisitions as well as related possibilities and implications. Even though sustainable fashion and consumption has many times been studied before (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013; Niinimäki 2010), the unique contribution of this study lies in the combination of practice theory and sustainable fashion and connecting these theories by focusing on the acquisition phase of consumption. Drawing on literature within practice theory and sustainable fashion, the purpose is to explore the acquisition of sustainable fashion and the related practices of *reuse*, *upcycling*, *sharing* and buying *new garments*. In doing so, the following research question will be answered; *How do young professionals acquire sustainable garments and what characterises the different ‘doings’ of the practises of acquiring sustainable garments?* Thus, the focus of the study will lie on the acquisition phase within consumption of sustainable fashion, rather than the meanings behind them. However, meanings will be included as part of the practice.

Definitions

A practice theory approach will be used in order to understand the acquisition of sustainable fashion. Theories of practice has a broad scope and does not have one single definition (Warde, 2005), accordingly there are risks involved in simplifying theories of practice (Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory allows to study the practical performance of actions (Halkier & Jensen, 2011) and the material aspects (Welch & Warde, 2014). Drawing on previous theory, we argue that the perspective would be suitable in order to describe the ‘doing’ of acquiring sustainable fashion.

The term ‘acquiring’ is used throughout the study. It is a broad concept and Ingram, Shove and Watson (2007) state that it involves “*different ways of thinking about what things are for, how they fit into, and how they extend existing regimes of meaning and significance.*” (p.6). Accordingly, ‘acquiring’ involves more activities than the purchasing phase. It is not an isolated phase and it will be further investigated how it is linked to other practices. ‘Shopping’ is often associated with fast fashion and new production of clothing, therefore ‘acquiring’ was deemed more appropriate.

Regarding the term sustainable fashion, there is no standard within the industry (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). However, Haugestad (2002) argues that sustainable fashion relates to consumption that does not undermine the quality of life for future generations by exploiting natural resources. Sustainable fashion can be promoted through a number of different practices, including *reuse* (Williams & Shaw, 2017), *upcycling* (Bhatt, Silverman & Dickson, 2019), *sharing* (Belk, 2010) and buying *new garments* (Niinimäki, 2013). In this study, the focus will be on the practices. Regardless of the various definitions of sustainable fashion, we will not enter the discussion of defining it, rather the focus will be on how consumers reason about sustainability in relation to fashion.

The fourth practice within acquiring sustainable fashion, *new garments*, refers to new garments bought with a purpose of longevity. The garments have been produced in a more sustainable manner (Niinimäki, 2013), far from fast fashion. Henceforth, this practice will be referred to as *new garments*. Furthermore, we define young professionals as students and graduates at the

beginning of their career, typically between 20-30 years old.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To provide an in-depth understanding of the acquisition of sustainable fashion, this study will use practice theory as a theoretical framework, i.e. the main analytical lens. The analysis will also be informed by theories of sustainable fashion.

Practice theory

To explore the practices of acquiring sustainable fashion, we will initially review the background of theories of practice. Following, the theoretical lenses of Shove and Pantzar (2005) and Southerton (2013) will be drawn upon. Practice theory, a part of culture theory (Reckwitz, 2002), is not coherent (Halkier & Jensen, 2011) and there is no homogenous definition (Warde, 2005). An assortment of philosophical and cultural interests regarding circumstances of social life practices, is the focal point of practice theory (Halkier, Katz-Gerro & Martens, 2011) and a mutual aspiration is to better understand the ‘doings’ and ‘sayings’ (Reckwitz, 2002). Within practice theory, the emphasis is on material rather than symbolic (Welch & Warde, 2014). Practices and day-to-day lives are interlinked (Spaargaren, 2011) and through a practice, the world can be understood and explained (Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory is proven to enhance understanding of social change and how it arises (Halkier et al., 2011). The resistance to target individuals and their behavioral drivers, such as choices and attitudes, is a significant feature of practice theory. Accordingly, Shove and Pantzar (2005) regards the individual as a carrier of a practice. Furthermore, Reckwitz (2002) defines a practice as follows:

“A ‘practice’ (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.” (p.249).

Materials, Competences and Meanings

According to Shove and Pantzar (2005), the complexity of practices can be understood by reducing it to three key dimensions that are connected: (1) Materials, (2) Competences and (3) Meanings. These interdependent relationships are significantly important and are viewed as elements of a practice (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012). (1) Materials represent objects, tools, infrastructure, the body and more. (2) Competences consist of various types of knowledge and understanding grouped collectively. (3) Meaning is related to emotions and mental activities and, rather than an outside driving force, it emphasises the importance of the symbolic and social parts of participation at all times. We operate from the premise that a practice includes materials, competences and meanings as Shove and Pantzar (2005) highlight that one could successfully analyse a practice from these dimensions.

Time and Temporalities

Drawing on Shove et al. (2012), Southerton (2013) presents a “*categorization of the relationship between temporalities and practices*” (p.342) and divides it into three themes; (1) time as a resource, (2) practices as configuring temporalities and (3) temporal rhythms. During the course of our analysis we noted that the categorization was relevant due to the recurring discussions of time spent in relation to the acquisition of sustainable fashion. Southerton (2013) allows us to examine the acquisition of sustainable fashion from the perspective of time. Time is

argued to be an important aspect when trying to understand everyday life and consumption. Regarding sustainable consumption and decreasing the extensive use of resources in daily life, understanding how time and practice relate to routines could be key. Regarding the first theme, (1) time as a resource; Within practice theory, it is an established view to regard time as a resource and time has been compared to be spent in the same way as money. In order for the practice to become routinized, time needs to be spent on the practice. The second theme regards (2) practices as configuring temporalities. Coordination with other practices and people is necessary in order to perform a practice, and a certain amount of time is required for the practice to be performed with satisfaction. The temporal requirements affect the temporal rhythm of everyday life. The third theme, (3) temporal rhythms, set the tone for practices and determine how they are carried out. Examples of collective temporal rhythms are fashion cycles, travel- and working times. However, personal temporal rhythms can take precedence over collective temporal rhythms. The personal temporal rhythms include the pace of doing a practice, time-planning and substitution between practices.

Practice Theory and Sustainable Acquisition

Consumption, in various forms, is part of most practices, argued to be more than just market exchange and viewed as a moment within a practice, rather than a practice itself (Warde, 2005). In later studies, Warde (2014) articulates that theories of practice can lead to new insights due to the possibility of explorations of phenomena that are normally viewed through a cultural lens. Sustainable consumption is stated to be one of the most important applications of theories in practice (Welch & Warde, 2015). Current consumption patterns must be considered in order to promote sustainability (Spaargaren 2011), why the understanding of practices becomes of importance. Continuingly, Welch and Warde (2015) state three reasons why practice theory is connected to sustainable consumption; (1) the large environmental impact of the use of energy and resources caused by everyday routine tasks, (2) rather than the consumption as such, goods are primarily used to achieve social practices and (3) they offer a social understanding of the difference between reported pro-environmental values and unsustainable behaviour. Moreover, Fuentes (2014) argues that shopping should be regarded as a social practice. The practice of shopping becomes of interest from an environmental point of view since shopping is related to other practices and the practice itself increases resource consumption (Røpke, 2009). Røpke (2009) further argues that the material components serve as a connection between a practice and the environment. Furthermore, it was found that environmental issues can be conflicted with other consumption goals and often lose against these. When the majority of consumption practices are performed, there is little attention directed towards the environment.

Sustainable Fashion

This section of the theoretical framework will be of relevance to provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability aspects of acquiring fashion. There was a lack of connection to practice theory in this field, further implying the importance of this study to aim to fill the gap of knowledge. Initially a background to the field will be presented, followed by various approaches to acquiring sustainable fashion that later on are used in the analysis.

One of the most debated topics within the fashion industry is sustainability (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Janigo & Wu, 2015). Environmental problems became publicly recognized in the 1970's and following this direction, the term sustainable consumption appeared in the 1990's (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). Regarding sustainability within fashion, Birtwistle and Moore

(2007) identified a lack of knowledge regarding how clothes are produced and disposed. A majority of consumers are not aware of how resource intensive fast fashion consumption is and the negative consequences of it (Ertekin & Atik, 2014). The present fashion structure creates constant market growth due to products and garments constantly getting exchanged. Fast fashion retailers sell clothing that is intended to be worn less than ten times and, as a result, consumers are throwing away clothes that have barely been used (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). As a reaction to fast fashion, the slow fashion movement emerged (Henninger, Alevisou & Oates, 2016) which advocates for ethical actions and choosing quality over quantity (Henninger et al. 2016; Ertekin & Atik, 2014) as well as incorporating upcycling and renewable materials (Halkier & Jensen, 2011). The slow fashion movement aspires to reduce the amount of fast-changing trends and combine fashion with responsibility and awareness (Ertekin & Atik, 2014). However, scholars have identified a contradiction between consumers' growing concern for the environment and their actual knowledge of the fashion industry's impact (Ritch, 2015). Some forms of sustainable fashion, such as vintage stores, tend to be more expensive than fast fashion, which is problematic since consumers are prone to select a cheap option (Ertekin & Atik, 2014). An additional cost of consumer's sustainable consumption behaviour is the amount of time and effort it demands, which is becoming more difficult in the modern busy lifestyle. Nonetheless, Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) illustrated that consumers have moved from simply being motivated by concern for the environment, to now aligning sustainable concepts with fashion consumption.

Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Research suggests that consumers' awareness about environmental impacts from the fashion industry is lacking (McNeill & Venter, 2019). However, while consumption is increasing, so is environmental and social awareness (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009). Factors such as price and quality have proven to be stronger drivers than the environmental aspects when consumers purchase clothes (Goworek, Fisher, Cooper, Woodward & Hiller, 2012). Following, the reason behind an ethical purchase can more often be related to consumers' aspirations and wants than genuine environmental concern or responsibility (Niinimäki, 2010). Nevertheless, scholars argue that consumers are starting to challenge fast fashion and social and environmental issues are said to be fueled by the fashion industry (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Hence, there is a need to explore other options within this field. There are various approaches to sustainable fashion consumption, thus clarifications and groupings are made below. To reiterate, we focus only on the acquisition phase of consumption.

Reuse

Reuse is argued to be the best method of reducing the fashion industry's negative impact on the environment (WRAP, 2012; Niinimäki, 2013). The method extends the life of a clothing item and less clothes need to be produced which can be linked to waste prevention (Williams & Shaw, 2017). Reuse could include both the reuse of one's own clothing and the reuse of someone else's clothing, in the study the focus will be on the acquisition of reused garments from others. The phenomenon of reuse has in the past often occurred through second hand- and swap shops, however the internet has started to change this setting and it opens up for a less commercial kind of reuse (Williams & Shaw, 2017). Williams and Shaw (2017) argue that reuse is a style of living as well as a financial choice, related to the cheap price tag. However, the desire to be unique trumps the monetary aspect of shopping second hand (Roos, 2020). When engaging in reuse, the effort involved can sometimes be considered too high for the potential

reward and concerns about the product quality and longevity can make consumers hesitant to buy previously used clothes (Williams & Shaw, 2017).

Upcycle

In order to reduce the amount of wasted clothing items, upcycling enables old clothing items to be recreated or getting a new purpose (Bhatt et al., 2019). Upcycling transforms items at the end of its useful life (Janigo and Wu 2015) and allows to add value by creating something new or increasing the quality of used or waste materials (Sung, 2015). Without adding non-renewable resources or depleting raw materials, worn out garments can be made useful again (Bath et al., 2019). By prolonging the longevity of garments and redirecting waste from landfills, upcycling decreases the impact on the ecosystem (Janigo, Wu & DeLong, 2017). Compared to recycling, the demand for energy is less when it comes to upcycling (Sung, 2015). Furthermore, upcycling is considered to be a cleaner and easier process to reduce textile waste (Bhatt et al, 2019). Janigo et al. (2017) argue that there are various ways of practicing upcycling activities; if consumers have the ability they can recreate the garments themselves, others can buy upcycled items or find tailors to realise their ideas. There are also varieties to what extent the garment is altered, from repairs to complete remakes (Janigo & Wu, 2015).

Sharing

Collaborative consumption is based on the idea that underused assets should benefit all (McNeill & Venter, 2019) and sharing is fundamental in this practice (Belk, 2010). The social climate is essential in collaborative consumption, as consumers have to choose sharing over possessiveness (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Moreover, sharing could be another way of saving resources (Belk, 2010), it cultivates community (Albinsson & Yasanthi Perera, 2012) and it can decrease the need for new production. Moreover, there are several reasons behind sharing and sharing practices can be split into two different categories - (1) access over ownership and (2) transfer of ownership (Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015). The former includes renting and the latter consists of reselling and gifting. Previously, sharing has mostly been observed within family and close groups of friends, however this has expanded (Belk, 2010). One example being Facebook sites where neighbours can connect and share resources (Albinsson & Yasanthi Perera, 2012). Scholars have found that underlying reasons for engaging in collaborative consumption includes environmental reasons (Armstrong, Niinimäki, Lang, & Kujala, 2016). Nevertheless, others argue that subjective norms have a stronger effect (Hamari et al., 2015).

New garments

Sustainable fashion must regard the garment's life cycle, including all stages from design to disposal (Niinimäki, 2013). Environmental concerns are also emphasised and refer to using renewable resources without threatening their capability to renew. According to the European Commission, environmental design standards include; (1) Low-impact materials, (2) Resource efficiency, (3) High quality and durability and (4) Reuse, recycle and renew. Furthermore, diversity in textile fibres is highlighted and today's overuse of cotton and polyester is therefore problematic. Favorably, new fibres produced from, for example corn or soy, are emerging. According to consumers, sustainable fashion is more expensive than fast fashion because of the environmentally friendly fabrics being used (Henninger, 2016). The higher price is described as a barrier to sustainable fashion, as everyone cannot afford it.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question: *How do young professionals acquire sustainable garments and what characterises the different 'doings' of the practises of acquiring sustainable garments?*, five focus groups were conducted. The study aims to explore the practice of acquiring sustainable fashion and a qualitative method was selected as it is useful when trying to understand a reality founded upon social and cultural meanings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). As existing research was the starting point (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016), the study initially had a deductive approach. However, phenomena without a clear link to theory were found during the process and the empirical material led to further additions to the theoretical framework in line with an inductive approach (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Thus, this study contains elements of both a deductive and inductive approach.

Focus groups

The purpose of this study is to explore the practices of acquiring sustainable fashion and how it relates to *reuse, upcycling, sharing* and buying *new garments*. As the study strives towards deeper understanding, focus groups enable for analytical discussions and promote free voicing of differentiated opinions which is valuable when exploring new approaches (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Through the focus groups, we could get an insight and understanding of why people think the way they do and how value is created collectively. Unlike a traditional interview, the respondents can have a discussion amongst one another and both get questioned and challenged (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

Sampling

The respondents were selected based on shared topic-related attributes and were chosen through a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling method and, in purposive sampling, the participants are strategically chosen based on their relevance to the research question (Rapley, 2014). Both authors are young professionals and initiated contact with other young professionals in their network who met the criteria. The young professionals helped us to establish contact with other possible candidates. Family members and close friends were excluded from the sampling.

We conducted five focus groups which were deemed sufficient due to the large amount of data collected and that theoretical saturation was reached. The typical number of participants in a focus group is between four and eight (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). In this study the aim was to have six respondents in each group, however seven were invited to manage the risk of respondents not attending. The participants were expected to be invested in acquiring sustainable fashion as it is resource intensive (Fuentes, 2014). Pseudonyms were used in order to keep participants anonymous and respect their confidentiality. To provide heterogeneity, participants with different occupations were grouped together. One of the groups only had student participants, however they had different fields of study. Heterogeneity facilitated diversified discussions with various perspectives as it provides the ability to capture a wide variety of people's viewpoints (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). In the majority of the focus groups, the participants were equally engaged in the discussions. However, focus group one and three included participants with strong voices, leading to other participants being more withdrawn. Tables with information about the participants are presented in *Appendix 1*.

Criteria were created to find suitable participants for the focus groups which would facilitate discussion and ensure that they met the required knowledge and behaviour.

- More than half of the participants' acquisition of fashion were through the practices of *reuse, upcycling* and *sharing*.
- The participants acquired sustainable fashion by the main reason of being sustainable, even though garments can be a way of expressing one's social identity (McNeill & Venter, 2019).
- The participants were young professionals between 20-30 years old.
- All participants were from Sweden.

The age range was decided as we argue for the importance of exploring younger generations' acquisition of sustainable fashion as they are expected to have an impact on the future of the practices. All participants were considered young professionals which was ensured by emphasizing their high ambitions as well as education and occupation. The majority of participants had higher education with established jobs, further insights are presented in *Appendix 1*. The sample consists solely of Swedish participants since the Swedish population has had a steady interest regarding environmental issues during the last decade, with a large increase in 2020 (Roos, 2020). Therefore, we found it of interest to study Swedish young professionals and their acquisition of sustainable fashion. Drawing on these trends, it was of interest to research how sustainable fashion is acquired in Sweden. Moreover, there was a strive towards an equal gender distribution. Previous studies within the same field have often delimited themselves to female respondents (McNeill & Venter, 2019), thus including both genders in this study could provide further insights.

The data collection process: Conducting the focus groups

Considering the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the focus groups were virtual and held over Zoom video calls. Video calls were considered appropriate as they make it possible to pick up on facial expressions and body language. When conducting the focus groups, participants who knew each other were separated into different groups in order to prevent intimacy in the discussions and participants being influenced by near-ones (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). As all participants were from Sweden, the focus groups were held in their native language to not limit anyone's ability to express themselves. Quotes used in the analysis were translated to English.

Both authors of the study moderated all focus groups together and the focus groups were loosely controlled. The structure of the focus group session was as follows: an introduction, a three part discussion and, finally, a short summary and ending. Regarding the introduction; to ensure that the participants were aware of what participating in the study implied, every focus group started with a briefing. We asked for permission to record the focus group session and permission was granted in all five focus groups, which facilitated the transcription in the upcoming stage. Following, a brief introduction to the topic was given as well as a presentation of the agenda. The respondents got to introduce themselves to get familiar with one another which created a pleasant atmosphere. A possible challenge could have been to engage everyone in the conversation, therefore it was highlighted that discussions are encouraged and that there is no right or wrong.

In order to get close to the practice, the participants of the focus groups guided us through their shopping experiences, as well as describing and discussing it with the other participants. The discussion was divided into three parts; part one contained more general questions, part two

consisted of a Powerpoint presentation concentrated on the topics of *reuse*, *upcycling* and *sharing*. Lastly, part three involved more in-depth questions and a scenario. The questions were designed to initiate discussion between the participants and make them reflect upon and guide us through their acquisition of sustainable fashion. The focus group question guide can be found in *Appendix 2*. The aim of the first part of the discussion was to familiarise the participants with the field of study and open up for conversation. The Powerpoint presentation in part two was used as visual aid, linked to the topics of *reuse*, *upcycling* and *sharing*. This made it possible for the moderators to be less involved and still ensure that the discussion was relevant. The participants were encouraged to guide us through their routinized behaviour in regards to the practices: *reuse*, *upcycling* and *sharing*. Part three consisted of broad questions that ensured a depth in the discussions, a scenario encouraged the participants to reflect upon their behaviour and the participants also got the possibility to show acquired sustainable garments. The participants got to lead the discussion and the reduced authority of the researcher let the respondents engage more in the topic which could result in better insights (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis in Leavy, 2014). The moderators aimed to stay neutral in the discussion, both in terms of verbal and non-verbal expressions. The focus groups were held between 21st of February and 8th of March 2021. More time was reserved in between the first- and second focus group in order to give the authors time to process their first findings, evaluate their method and improve the upcoming focus groups.

Focus group	Duration
Focus group 1	1h 38min
Focus group 2	1h 45min
Focus group 3	1h 29min
Focus group 4	1h 49min
Focus group 5	1h 33min

Figure 1. Summary of the duration of the focus groups

Processing the material

After each focus group, the recording was transcribed as it enabled a more detailed analysis of the respondent's discussions (Bell et al., 2019). Five focus groups generated 8 hours and 14 minutes of recordings and 108 pages transcribed material.

To complement the focus groups additional methods, including in-store and online observations as well as complementary written pages from the participants, were used. Additional methods are common when using focus groups in business research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016), the triangulation enabled us to regard various perspectives and gain a better understanding of the practices. 22 photos from visiting and observing four second hand stores and 27 screenshots from five second hand websites and applications were used as well as two written pages sent in from chosen participants to complement previous statements. The additional methods were important in order to understand the practises and allowed us to come close to habits and routinized behavior which is seldomly reflected upon. Within theories of practice, accessing a practice is key for further insights and understanding.

The gathered material - transcriptions, photos, screenshots and written pages - had to be understood and analysed. Firstly, in order to create an overview and increase understanding of the material, the focus groups were summarized after the transcription. Secondly, through color coordination, the material was reduced through identification of important and relevant information. Thirdly, we formed concepts derived from the empirical findings and the three groups from the theoretical framework (*reuse*, *upcycling* and *sharing*) were found. In addition, two more categorizations of acquiring sustainable garments (*new garments* and *mixing practices*) emerged and a distinct importance of the concept of time. This illustrates how the theoretical framework was continuously further developed.

Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic approach based on the theoretical framework was used when analyzing the empirical data. In creating the themes, quotes were extracted and grouped together. Quotes from the participants have continuously been used throughout the analysis as using the respondents' own words prevents our values from being dominant. Using quotes also ensured that the analysis was founded upon data. In order to identify and confirm the different themes derived from theory, both authors were engaged in a peer coding process. In the first part of the analysis, the theoretical lense of Shove and Pantzar (2005) was used to provide an understanding of the acquisition of sustainable fashion from a practice theory perspective. This part of the analysis was divided into themes of the five different practices of acquiring sustainable fashion, identified during the coding process, and analysed through elements of materials, competences and meanings found in the data. The concept of time was repeatedly emphasised during the focus group discussions, therefore Southerton's (2013) view of practices in relation to time formed the basis for the second part of the analysis. This part of the analysis was divided into themes based on Southerton's (2013) three themes of time; time as a resource, practices as configuring temporalities and temporal rhythms. Practices as configuring temporalities concerns how practices shape when and how other activities are carried out, whilst temporal rhythms regards how time in different forms affects the practice. Additionally they were connected to the elements of the practices. This contributed to deeper insights into the acquisition of sustainable fashion as we found that time and temporality was a large contributor to how the practices are framed. Thirdly, additional findings including monetary aspects, value and dilemmas were analysed. These themes repeatedly appeared through the color coordination of the transcriptions and, thus, deemed important to include. This section contributes to a wider understanding of the acquisition of sustainable fashion and could provide insight into areas for further research.

Reflection about Method and Critique towards Qualitative Research

Reflecting about the chosen method allowed us to gain a better understanding of our findings. Qualitative research often relies on the view, preferences and priorities of the researcher and relationships with the participants, causing criticism towards the research being subjective, thus, there are difficulties of replication (Bell et al., 2019). By being aware of these risks we chose participants who we did not have relationships with and continuously handled elements of personal values. Generalizable results are not the aim of focus groups (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) and making generalizations about the population in qualitative research is seldomly possible (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, we have strived towards a depth in our findings. To handle issues regarding transparency, there have been clear explanations throughout the paper of how the participants were chosen, how the analysis was conducted and other choices in the process. Thus, confusion regarding how the conclusions were reached could be avoided (Bell et

al., 2019). During the sampling selection the following has been taken into consideration; Criticism towards focus groups includes the method being intimidating for some participants and could appear to be suppressing for respondents with opinions that do not align with the majority (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Since the method could attract a certain 'type' of people, versatility could be lacking (Bell et al., 2019). The sampling process has been strategically illustrated, which can raise credence (Rapley, 2014).

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, observing participants during their acquisition of sustainable fashion was not possible. To mitigate against this restriction, the focus group questions were formatted to guide us through the participant's routinized behavior. Additionally, photos of frequently mentioned second hand stores and screenshots from second hand websites and applications provided a deeper understanding. The elaborated written statements from chosen participants fulfilled the same function. The pandemic may have led to altered acquisition patterns, making it an important aspect to take into consideration. Therefore, the discussions regarded both participants' 'normal' acquisition of sustainable fashion and their current demeanor.

Ethics

Within a qualitative approach, ethics is often related to the participants (Traianou in Leavy, 2014). Ethics within focus groups include being transparent with the participants about the study's purpose and what the focus group discussion will be used for (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Clear information was communicated to the participants both before, during and after the focus groups to ensure that they were comfortable with taking part in the study. Further, we have ensured that all participants in the same group are strangers, to handle confidentiality (Dresler-Hawke & Vaccarino, 2010). Acquiring sustainable fashion is a relatively insensitive subject which could make the participants less hesitant in taking part in the discussions. The participants have received pseudonyms, as the participants' anonymity is important (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Traianou in Leavy, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness consists of four aspects - *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). *Credibility* refers to whether the findings can be related to reality and are accurate. In accordance, the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. *Transferability* is related to whether the results are applicable to other situations and in different contexts. When using purposive sampling, as done in this study, the results will not be generalizable to a population by reason of it being a non-probability approach (Bryman et al., 2019). Additionally, the study is based on a qualitative method and limited to Swedish young professionals' acquisition of sustainable fashion. Thus, the *transferability* can be questioned. However, we have strived towards depth rather than width in our findings. Further, *dependability* regards the author's responsibility to provide information (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) which has been handled by detailed explanations of the approaches and decisions. Lastly, *confirmability* relates to the interpretation of the data and the degree of certainty that the results avoids research biases (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The authors have continuously tried to manage elements of personal values throughout the study. Thus, one can argue that the authors have acted in good faith.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Based on the five focus groups and additional methods, our findings will be presented in three parts. Drawing on Shove and Pantzar (2005) the first part of the analysis (*Materials, Competences and Meanings*) will be analysed through their work. The second part of the analysis (*Time and Temporality*) will delve deeper into the findings and through Southerton (2013) we will explore the practices' of acquiring sustainable fashion connection to time and temporalities. The third part of the analysis (*Monetary aspects, Value and Dilemmas*) will contain additional findings of interest.

Materials, Competences and Meanings

The categorizations of acquiring sustainable fashion found in the theoretical review also became evident in our empirical findings. Therefore, the first part of the analysis will be divided into the main practices of acquiring sustainable fashion; *reuse, upcycling, sharing* and buying *new garments*. However, the findings also promote another way of acquiring sustainable fashion - *mixing practices*. These five groupings will be analysed through the theoretical lense of Shove and Pantzars' (2005) elements of a practice; *materials, competences* and *meanings*.

Second hand

The most common way for the participants to acquire sustainable fashion was through reuse. The participants refer to the practice of reuse as 'second hand', therefore the term second hand will also be used. The majority of the participants have been taking part in this practice for most of their lives. By acquiring sustainable fashion from second hand sources, many participants have created their clothing identity (meaning) and take pride in acquiring fashion in a sustainable manner (meaning). Thus, through the garments (material) the practitioner can design an unique style and meaning can be created. To perform 'the doings', the right knowledge (competence) was emphasised as key in all five focus groups.

The empirical findings suggest that reuse can be practiced both in physical stores and online (Williams & Shaw, 2017). Materials (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) required for practicing second hand shopping in physical stores are the infrastructure and vehicles needed to get to the stores. Purchasing methods, cards, money, bags and the physical body are also part of the practice. To be able to acquire second hand online, the practitioner is required to have materials such as a smartphone or laptop. Unlike fast fashion, reuse does not create an increase of materials as the garments already exist.

When acquiring sustainable clothing through reuse, both online and in store, those who do it more often and have a well-established routine can more easily find what they are searching for.

"I think that after a while you learn how to find things. Those of us who are used to shopping second hand find the thing we look for." (Signe, 24)

"I have only shopped second hand for about three to four years so I am quite new so when I go shopping with my 'vintage-shark' friends I can pass a clothing bar and not find anything good and then, eh, and 5 second later my friend looks through the same place and finds the coolest shirt ever and I'm like 'what? how did you find that?'" (Liam, 24)

This illustrates the knowledge needed when navigating through the second hand stores. The practitioner must possess the competence (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) to operate between different stores and know what to expect, many participants had insights regarding when the stores get restocked. It became evident that the participants had established systems regarding what store to visit depending on their needs and available time. To exemplify, when they were in need of a pair of jeans a particular store with an appropriate assortment would be visited. This knowledge comes from years of experience. Being a competent practitioner who can easily navigate in the reuse jungle also created a sense of pride which can be translated to meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). The ‘doing’ of reuse can be carried out in various ways. Practitioners who preferred second hand shopping online usually had a habit of checking their favorite applications and websites from everyday to once a week in order to keep up to date with the selection. Some of the participants made time in the evenings to do so, others did it in a more automated manner as they checked their phones and browsed through social media. Many of the participants who preferred in store acquisition, had habits of doing a regular round consisting of a couple of stores every week or on their way to work.

“Like, I go by Myrorna on my way to work so I usually take a look and do a quick lap to see if I find anything. And just, yeah, keep my eyes open.” (Johannes, 27)

“I am very specific in my consumption habits, I go scouting very often. So I go to some stores pretty often to find a bargain. I check my stores a couple of times every week to be up to date but I rarely buy anything but then I find something maybe every other week or so and then I buy it.” (Olle, 25)

Based on the findings, reuse can be described as an integrated part in the practitioners’ everyday life. Many of the participants were proud to refer to themselves as second hand shoppers as it not only signals a care for the environment, but also enables them to create a unique wardrobe which is deemed desirable. Thus, meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) is created.

Other participants showed a habit of making second hand shopping a full day- or weekend-trip once or twice a month to visit their favourite second hand stores that are further apart or in rural areas. Materials (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) in the form of transport vehicles are of particular importance for these practitioners. These kinds of second hand outings revolve around the clothes and require knowledge such as the whereabouts of the stores and creates a sense of community and belonging. Further, as many of the participants had routines in their shopping behaviour, planning had become an important aspect of it.

“I often have lists of things I’m looking for. Like blue jeans. Eh. And it can take a year before I find a pair that fits eh but that’s also the fun part of it because you’re so satisfied afterwards.” (Jill, 25)

“You may have a long list in your head of things that you know you are going to need and then when you find something that fits you buy it then and there. [...] And then if you see a winter jacket six months before winter you think that oh this fits well now so I’ll take it because I am going to need it.” (Signe, 24)

In addition to being planned in their acquisition behaviour, having an open mind set was considered important, motivated by the difficulty of knowing the current selection of the second hand stores.

“For me, it’s like going in to second hand store I often don’t have a super clear idea of ‘I need this garment now’” (Calle, 27)

Through the participants’ discussions, and our observations of physical second hand stores, it was found that the condition of the stores vary. Some were organised with carefully selected garments, but the majority were chaotic without colour coordination or other forms of systems. To exemplify, the stores rarely had coherent hangers, the clothing often laid in messy piles and there was often a distinct smell. Knowledge of how to approach and ‘scan’ a store is possessed by all participants who shop second hand in store regularly and deemed a necessary competence. In the more organised second hand stores, the practitioners are not required to have the same knowledge when acquiring the garments. In these stores, there were few garments in a light room on nice hangers, making it easy for the customer to navigate. Further observed, the clothes were often from familiar brands. Some participants stated that acquiring garments from a familiar brand gave them a sense of social acceptance, opposing the previously discussed meaning that second hand practitioners want to create a unique style. The physical store can disrupt the practice if it is too messy and force the practitioner to go elsewhere. However, the unorganised nature of some second hand stores can be attractive to one type of practitioner as it gives them a pleasant feeling and satisfaction about themselves when they are able to find a unique garment that will complement their style. Regardless of whether the practitioner prefers the structured or unstructured manner of second hand, being sustainable was deemed meaningful.

Concerning the unorganised second hand stores, these quotes illustrate that the routine was of particular importance in an unstructured environment. Practitioners used previous learning when approaching an unorganised store.

“I often go to messier second hand stores to look for something spontaneously. See what is available, ehm [pause] like a treasure chest or whatever you call it. See if there are some nice things in store. I wouldn’t go there with a clear vision in mind though, only to browse.” (Jessica, 24)

“I’m rather selective when I go to second hand stores that are messy. [...] Then I often go to the sections where I have found things previously” (Mauritz, 23)

Many of the participants of the focus groups argued that second hand shopping online makes it easier to navigate and find specific garments as the stores in general are unorganised. While many competencies are the same when acquiring second hand online, as the ones required in physical stores, it sometimes varies. Know-how in approaching an unstructured physical store is exchanged with a requirement of technology competence. Knowing what websites and applications to use and how to filter and search for your needs exemplified some of the competences necessary for the doing of acquiring second hand fashion online. Second hand shopping online enables the practitioner to filter and search without getting distracted by the surroundings.

“If I’m often looking for something specific I think Facebook Marketplace is the best or eh, I found some things on Blocket too, eh.” (Ester, 25)

“I always try to determine the quality of the clothes when I’m shopping online [...] I do a lot of searching, I do pretty specific searches, specific brands eh. They often have really good search options which makes it possible to really filter and eh finding specific products you’re after” (Saga, 25)

Referring back to Saga’s statement and those of many others, evaluating the quality of the clothes (Williams & Shaw, 2017) was deemed a competence necessary to be successful in acquiring second hand clothing online. Further, second hand and the effort it requires adds meaning to the garments;

“All of my favorite pieces are clothes I’ve bought second hand. I don’t know if it’s because I’ve put more effort into it but I get more attached to those pieces.” (Jonna, 23)

A clear link of the three elements that was identified is the following: Those who had competence within the acquisition of second hand garments were in general aware and knowledgeable about sustainability and the many negative consequences caused by the fashion industry (Ertekin & Atik, 2014). Thus, competence can encourage more sustainable choices and bring meaning in terms of consciousness and a greener lifestyle.

Upcycling

Regarding the participants' upcycling behaviour (Halkier & Jensen, 2011; Janigo & Wu 2015; Sung, 2015; Bath et al., 2019), three methods of partaking in the practice were discussed in line with Janigo et al (2017); purchasing already upcycled items, upcycling themselves by sewing and redoing items into new garments and, third, mending broken garments. The upcycling was not limited to clothing but included shoes and bags. Upcycling requires knowledge (competence) to perform and the consistent reason behind practitioners' upcycling was to be sustainable (meaning) and extend the longevity of the garments (material). Illustrating examples of the elements of the practice of upcycling (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

“I usually cut my jeans off if they get torn. [...] Eh, so then I usually just put them on, draw a line with a pencil where I think it's good, take them off and just cut them. It goes fast, it takes five to ten minutes, and I do not care so much if it is not completely perfect [laughs] then I can at least wear them” (Elin, 25)

When garments break, the majority of the participants try to mend them, rather than throwing them away (Bath et al., 2019). As the participants care for their clothing and extend the longevity, memories and attachment were created. Thus, a link was found; by having the competence to mend, the material can contribute to creating meaning as well as the meaning created by being sustainable. A distinct theme in all focus groups was that many of the participants would like to partake in the practice of upcycling more. However, many of them lacked the knowledge and competence. Having the ability to sew and mend constitute the competence necessary for the doing of upcycling. Nonetheless, some of the participants expressed that they were not picky with the results and thus did not feel the pressure to have the full competence. These participants were more bold and took chances in their attempts of redoing garments. Thus, depending on the participant's stance, competence could be argued to

be more or less important. Furthermore, participants who did not possess the same amount of competence found themselves feeling guilty for not being able to mend garments. Participants who lacked competence expressed that when clothing tears, they are more likely to purchase a similar garment through fast fashion, rather than mending and upcycling it. The lack of competence can therefore reluctantly lead to less sustainable ways of acquiring clothing. Fast fashion was seen as a shortcut when participants were in a rush and did not have the time necessary to engage in upcycling.

‘The doing’ can be carried out in various ways, aligning with Janigo et al. (2017). The participants discussed redoing old garments into other objects such as tearing up and sewing old jeans into a hanging flower pot or taking old shirts and cutting them apart to sew them together into a tote bag or cushion cover. It was also found that participants make shorts out of broken pants and make new garments out of several torn ones. To exemplify, one participant had cut two old and torn collared shirts into half and then sewn them together into a new, ‘funky’ looking shirt. Findings show that creating something new out of existing materials adds value (Sung, 2015) and, in turn, creates meaning. Another way to perform the practice was to hand in garments to a seamstress (Janigo et al., 2017) or shoes to a shoemaker in order to extend the longevity of the materials. This behaviour was common among practitioners who were attached to their items as they carried meaning for them, such as designer handbags. Knowing where to turn is a required competence to be successful within the practice. This illustrates the link between materials, competence and meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) within the practice of upcycling. However, a knowledge gap was identified as a majority of the participants were not aware of the upcycling services one could use, as seen below:

“I didn’t even know these services existed but that is great, ehm.” (Jennifer, 25)

“I don’t know if there is a lack of information here [regarding upcycling services]? You don’t see it anywhere.” (Mauritz, 23)

Upcycling requires materials (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) to be able to perform the practice; needle, thread, scissors, scrap fabric and sewing machine were some of the materials identified. Participants with much competence (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) enjoyed upcycling garments in order to create a unique style. The participants’ emotions towards purchasing upcycled garments from brands or companies that claim to use upcycled materials were skeptical. They questioned the underlying reason and how sustainable the garments are when the companies encourage consumption. The lack of company transparency makes it difficult for the practitioners to possess the required knowledge for these decisions.

Sharing

The majority of the participants had not engaged in the practice of sharing. A gap in knowledge (competence) regarding how to find the right platform (material) and how to take part in a sharing practice was identified. Sharing was not part of most participants’ everyday lives and awareness was lacking. With lack of knowledge (competence), concerns involve uncertainty and the risk of not finding garments that correspond with their own personal style (meaning). Nevertheless, all participants were open minded regarding lending or renting party clothing and more exclusive garments. This suggests that personal style is less important in these situations.

"I have never used this kind of service and my interest in doing so is very low. [...] I kind of like having my own." (Signe, 24)

Many of the participants were sceptical towards the practice of sharing and a common denominator was that the participants wanted to own the garments in their closets. This relates to McNeill and Venter's (2019) emphasis on the social climate as sharing must be chosen over possessiveness. It was seen that reluctant practitioners had deeper bonds to their clothes. However, those who were positive towards a sharing service claim that sharing could give them a sense of renewal in style, while still being environmentally aware (Armstrong et al., 2016).

"I share a lot with my friends." (Hedda, 20)

Many of the participants shared clothes with family and friends (Belk, 2010). No knowledge is needed, therefore the participants claimed it to be more accessible. One participant had created a sharing initiative and started a 'clothing bag' through an Instagram account. The clothing bag circulates between the members and allows them to take as many items as they want. Before sending the bag forward, they add the same amount of garments from their own wardrobe as they have taken. Initially only friends were invited but the idea has spread and more people have gotten involved. Keeping the environment in mind, the idea is that the clothing bag should be handed over by foot, bike or public transport, and a lot of time, logistics and knowledge goes into the initiative. The practitioners feel like they are contributing to something good and are part of a sustainable initiative, adding meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

Practitioners who have tried the practice of sharing claim it to be more than simply a platform, but a community where more than clothes is being shared (Albinsson & Yasanthi Perera, 2012), creating additional meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). However, occasionally the participants got too attached to a garment and ended up purchasing it which contradicts the whole idea behind the concept.

New garments

A theme that was not initially part of the theoretical categorizations was buying new garments, which can be further understood through the elements of Shove and Pantzar (2005). The reason behind acquiring newly produced garments made of sustainable textiles (materials) was the high quality and longevity (Niinimäki, 2013; Henninger et al. 2016; Ertekin & Atik, 2014). The material is key in this practice as it is where the sustainability aspect comes in and contributes to meaning. Making these choices require insights in the industry (competence) and can contribute to a sense of environmental consciousness (meaning).

Some of the participants went to tailors in order to sew timeless pieces out of high quality, sustainable fabrics with long longevity. Participants argued that going for timeless pieces and avoiding trends allowed them to use their garments for a longer time. Being capable of finding a tailor is one of the competences needed to partake in these ways of being sustainable. A further requirement is being knowledgeable about the fabrics used by the tailor. Some of the materials (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) required in order to make up and sew new clothes are sewing machines, thread and fabrics. It also requires the customer to visit several times for measurements and fittings. Shoes and bags were another example of pieces that the participants preferred to purchase new and it required much research in order to find sustainable options.

Another way the participants pointed out as being sustainable, was related to the actual usage of the garments.

“You have to actually use things in order for them to be sustainable. If you purchase a garment second hand and it only hangs in your closet it is still not sustainable” (Sophie, 24)

Other statements have been made along the same line leading to further discussion that participants try to avoid over-consumption, even though it is tempting as second hand items often are cheaper. By not over-consuming and avoiding temptation, the feeling of being a responsible and sustainable practitioner is enhanced - adding meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

“The way I think of it today, in order to not over-consume, is that I rather want to buy a few garments made out of good quality. And preferably out of sustainable fabrics.” (Jacqueline, 29)

However, the findings indicate that being able to acquire sustainable garments puts a lot of pressure on the consumer to have the required knowledge to know how to evaluate sustainability aspects, an awareness that is often lacking (McNeill & Venter, 2019). With sufficient knowledge, sustainable garments can be selected which increases the meaning of being sustainable and contributes to creating a desirable, timeless style.

Mixing practices

An identified mix of acquisition practices were reuse and upcycling. Many participants stated that they purchase clothing second hand (reuse) with the intention of changing them (upcycling). Knowledge (competence) and different supplies (materials) from both practices are required and the value (meaning) is created by making sustainable choices. Meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) was also found in the unique style that follows, and letting the practitioners express themselves through their creativity.

“I buy quite a lot second hand that I make into new things because I think it is fun and to make it ‘my own’.” (Ester, 25)

When combining reuse and upcycling, the participants stated that they get a wider selection when shopping second hand as they are less limited regarding sizes. Additional competences (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) are however required as the participants first must find the right garments and then possess the ability to sew and upcycle. Creativity is brought forward as a must.

“I thought about it sometimes... When I have found a garment [second hand] that is nice but does not fit properly, but then I ended up not buying it because I felt like I did not have enough knowledge [about upcycling].” (Saga, 25)

This illustrates how lack of knowledge can restrict participants from engaging in this mix of practices. Others, despite possessing the right knowledge, experienced the upcycling stage as a barrier as it was considered time consuming and inconvenient. Further, more material (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) is needed as it requires both the materials from reuse and upcycling. When taking part in the process of ‘creating’ the garment, participants stated that they have a stronger bond to

it and like it more than pieces they have ‘only’ purchased. Thus, by having the proper competence and being involved in the ‘creation’ of the garment, meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) is added.

Further findings suggest that the practice of upcycling can be favored by engaging in the practice of buying new garments. New garments are in general more expensive, which adds meaning (Shove & Pantzar, 2005), and makes the participants more prone to wear the garments for a longer time, thus engaging in upcycling. The competence (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) and time that needs to be invested is considered as reasonable. Along the same line, it became clear that when purchasing clothing secondhand, without the intention of upcycling it, participants are less willing to mend it when torn. According to the participants, those garments are often not worth any further investments.

Time and Temporality

Drawing on the empirical findings, another distinct theme appeared; the concept of time. In all focus groups this was intensely emphasised and manifested as an important factor to take into account when acquiring sustainable fashion. Thus, the aspect of time will be further analysed in relation to acquiring sustainable fashion through Southerton’s (2013) categorizations; time as a resource, practices as configuration of temporalities and temporal rhythms. From the findings, all three appeared however time as a resource was the most prominent aspect of time that emerged.

Time as a resource

All five practices of acquiring sustainable fashion (*reuse, upcycling, sharing, new garments and mixing practices*) require time invested by the practitioner and the discussions during the focus groups regarding how much time worth spending were protrusive. Based on the empirical findings we argue that time is a resource, which aligns with Southerton’s (2013) view.

Acquiring clothing second hand requires the practitioner to spend a lot of time (Ertekin & Atik, 2014) regardless if it is practiced online with daily browsing, searching in stores to find the right garment or doing full day- or weekend outings. Also taking into account that participants sometimes search for garments for over a year before they find what they are looking for. One could therefore argue that it requires a high incentive for someone to acquire garments second hand. As previously mentioned, the participants emphasised that with time spent, the practice becomes less challenging and they can more easily find what they are looking for. Thus, time must be invested in order to improve the doing of the practice (Southerton, 2013). In modern society however, time is a scarcity (Ertekin & Atik, 2014) and people value time off. Having to reprioritize how time is spent may be a threshold hard to overcome for those who do not regard second hand shopping as an entertaining activity.

To perform the doings of upcycling, it requires competence (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) of sewing and mending which is time consuming to gain. The findings further emphasised that upcycling garments demands a great deal of time to perform. Regarding sharing, it is not necessarily more time consuming than reuse, however the participants are more willing to invest their time to acquire something that becomes ‘theirs’. The extended lack of knowledge within sharing initially demands additional time from the participants which discourages them to explore the practice further as they are not familiar with the doings of the practice. The same pattern can be

seen concerning the practice of buying new garments. The additional time requirement could act as an invisible barrier, making participants reluctant to explore the practice further. On the other hand, when renting clothing for a one-time-event, it does not require the same commitment as buying something. Thus, one could be less picky and invest less time in renting than purchasing. As each practice requires the practitioner to spend a great deal of time, one could argue that the mix of practices becomes even more time consuming. Hence, high investment and interest is seen as essential to engage in this mix from a time perspective. Further, to acquire new garments made out of sustainable fabrics, the practitioner has to spend much time on fittings and redosings.

Findings suggested that when time was not sufficient to sew or mend a garment, partake in a sharing practice or make up new clothing at the tailor, participants often turned to fast fashion options. Therefore, one can see that the practitioner has to put thoughtful considerations into where to best spend their time and balance it with their commitment to sustainability. In times of stress, the participants' ambition to acquire sustainable fashion is often lost to saving time, aligning with Røpke (2009). When presented with a scenario involving time pressure and having to find something new to wear, the discussions were in line with the following;

“I would probably rush to the mall and to H&M or something where I know I can find what I’m looking for. If I went to a second hand store I know I’d have to be lucky and I’ll have to do a lot of searching. If you’re stressed there’s also the risk that you don’t find anything, eh. Second hand requires time so I’m afraid I would turn to a fast fashion store.” (Saga, 25)

A link between Shove and Pantzar’s (2005) element of meaning and the concept of time (Southerton, 2013) was identified. The practitioner has to weigh time spent against the meaning in terms of being sustainable. Hence, depending on how much meaning is created, it is deemed desirable to spend more or less time on the practice. One could further argue that Shove and Pantzar’s (2005) element of competence is linked to how much time the practitioners have to spend. Hence, a more competent practitioner who knows where and how to find clothing second hand, has the competence to mend and sew and is familiar with the practice of sharing, spends less time than someone with less competence. However, the practitioner has spent much time in order to gain these competences.

It became evident that acquiring sustainable fashion is time consuming, therefore it can be hard to compete with less time consuming options such as fast fashion. When acquiring sustainable fashion, time is a resource that the practitioner has to invest. However, it may vary how much time someone is willing or able to invest

Practices as Configuring Temporalities

Reuse, upcycling, sharing and mixing practices relate to practices as configuring temporalities. Southerton (2013) states that coordination with other practices and people is necessary in order to perform a practice. Making use of the same quote as in the *Second hand* section of the analysis, it is exemplified how acquiring second hand is coordinated with the practice of going to work.

“Like, I go by Myrorna on my way to work so I usually take a look and do a quick lap to see if I find anything. And just, yeah, keep my eyes open.” (Johannes, 27)

Participants who instead went on one day or weekend trips to shop second hand also need to coordinate with other practices in order to free up a large amount of time. Drawing on the empirical findings, many participants stated that upcycling and mending garments requires a lot of time. As upcycling is time demanding, it occasionally loses to other practices. Similarly, sharing and mixing practices are time consuming, forcing the practitioner to decide if it is worth the time and coordination with other practices. This corresponds with Southerton's (2013) statement that a practice has to coordinate with other practices and time is needed to perform the practice in a satisfactory way. Further, the opening hours of the physical stores frame how the practice can be performed and how it has to coordinate with other practices. However, the increase of online stores and applications makes the practice less dependent and less framed by other practices. Without the restriction of opening hours, the meaning of how society structures the practice becomes less significant.

Evidently, independent of the practice - reuse, upcycling, sharing, new garments or mixing practices - the practitioner needs to weigh the time they feel is worth spending, compared with spending it on other practices. As previously stated, if the practice is too time demanding it could often lose to other practices. However, practitioners who find the sustainable practices important and meaningful often prioritised these in their coordination of practices.

Temporal Rhythms

Temporal rhythms (Southerton, 2013) were observed in relation to the practice of reuse and partially upcycling. Continuing from the statements that knowledge of store restocks are key when shopping second hand, many participants adjust their second hand shopping to these restocks to find the best bargains. Depending on what time of the month the participants visit a second hand store they have different expectations and in conjunction with restocks, more time is set aside for the practice in advance. This illustrates the participants' personal temporal rhythms (Southerton, 2013). Dedicated second hand shoppers were happy to follow the pace of the restocks when engaging in reuse and pride themselves on being aware of this rather advanced information.

"If I really need something I try to adapt my visit to when my favorite store restocks"
(Olle, 25)

It was found that in some cases, other practices, such as working or spending time with friends, can be put aside in favor of taking part of the practice of reuse when the store is restocked. When engaging in reuse online however, there is no clear pace to follow as the supply is updated sporadically. The participants continuously visit second hand stores online and many participants have habits of browsing the supply online before bed or when watching tv, illustrating the rhythms found when performing the practice online. Statements indicate that it is easy to lose track of time when browsing online. Nevertheless, some participants argue that it is more time efficient than second hand in store considering the possibility of filtering the supply, no travel times and having everything gathered in one place. Furthermore, rhythms were also observed in relation to upcycling. Most of the participants who were engaged in this practice put the clothes in need of upcycling aside for a period of time and then upcycled multiple garments at the same time.

Monetary aspects, Values and Dilemmas

Additional findings of interest will be presented and analysed in this section in order to develop further insights of acquiring sustainable fashion. This section is not delimited to practice theory, however, the findings originate from the study's practice theory perspective.

The prices in second hand stores are often lower than in commercial stores which can trigger unintended purchases. Low prices can lift restraints and inspire consumers to purchase more second hand garments than needed. This illustrates how the low prices second hand can counteract sustainability (Goworek et al., 2012), despite it often being the reason why consumers engage in the practice. The risk of missing out on an opportunity also triggers purchases. Unlike fast fashion, the items are often one of a kind which makes it complicated for the participants to take time and think through a purchase. Thus, impulsive purchases are not uncommon, leading to that the concept behind second hand can oppose the sustainable purpose.

The findings illustrated that the participants are less prone to value the clothes they buy second hand. Because of the low price tag and that the garments have been previously owned, this could restrict participants from engaging in the practice of upcycling as the garments do not seem to be worth it, resulting in a setback for sustainability (Niinimäki, 2013). From the analysis it became clear that participants were more willing to take the time to upcycle a garment if it was expensive. We argue that it is problematic and one must go from valuing clothes in terms of money to valuing the sustainable aspects of it. Another intriguing discussion of value relates to the sharing initiative - the clothing bag - started by one of the participants. For instance, how should one value a jacket compared to a t-shirt and are a pair of jeans equivalent to two tops? Further, one could question what the implications are if someone adds a garment with stains and holes in it. Initiatives like this, leave a lot of responsibility to the practitioner and require them to act ethically and make proper evaluations.

The participants were often in disagreement with themselves and sometimes contradictory in their behaviour. Many participants held the belief that when engaging in practices of reuse, upcycling or sharing, it is unquestionably sustainable. However, this is not always the case. One can argue that it is more sustainable to purchase a fast fashion garment if it is being used frequently over a longer period of time and upcycled at the end of its life cycle, than acquiring a garment in a sustainable manner that is left hanging in the closet. Thus, how a garment is used could define its sustainability. Despite the participants emphasising their knowledge of the fashion industry's negative consequences, their awareness could still be lacking (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Hence, practitioners could believe they make more sustainable choices than they in fact are. For instance when they purchase more items than they need due to the low price in second hand. Further dilemmas the participants were faced with was when they suggested that sharing gives them a sense of renewal without compromising their sustainable beliefs. However, depending on how often they engage in the practice, the sustainability aspect of it could be questioned considering the required shippings, usage, washing and other unsustainable elements. Another dilemma, regarding acquiring sustainable garments, is that the participants rarely get satisfied. They are driven to hunt for bargains and despite getting 'a high' when finding one, shortly after the urge comes back. Further illustrating the conflict of being sustainable and the short- versus long-term perspective of fashion and sustainability (Halkier & Jensen, 2011; Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the acquisition of sustainable fashion and the related practices of *reuse*, *upcycling*, *sharing* and *new garments*. Five focus groups, in combination with additional methods, were used to answer the research question: “*How do young professionals acquire sustainable garments and what characterises the different ‘doings’ of the practises of acquiring sustainable garments?*” From a practice theory perspective we were able to study the links between the elements of; material, competence and meaning in the different practices. By adding the concept of time and temporality, it contributed to another dimension leading to further understanding of the practices.

Depending on where the practice of *reuse* is performed, in store or online, different materials and competences are needed. The right knowledge is emphasised as a key component to be able to navigate in the reuse jungle. The meaning derives from being a sustainable and competent consumer. The following link between the elements was found: Possessing the right knowledge (competence) within the acquisition of second hand garments (material), enables consumers to make sustainable choices which brings value (meaning). The reason for partaking in the practice of *upcycling* was to be sustainable (meaning) and extend the longevity of garments (material). The practice can be performed in various ways and regardless, knowledge (competence) of performing ‘the doings’ is required. However, many of the participants wanted to perform the practice much more, but lacked the competence. This led to the practitioner feeling guilty as fast fashion was used as a shortcut when the practitioner's knowledge or time was inadequate. As the majority of the participants had not engaged in the practice of *sharing*, awareness and knowledge (competence) was lacking in regards to ‘the doings’ of the practice. However, those who were familiar with the practice expressed a sense of community (meaning) and the possibility of getting renewal in their wardrobes (material) whilst still being sustainable (meaning). High quality (material) and longevity are the underlying reasons for engaging in the practice of buying *new garments*. While these choices require insights (competence), meaning can be found in being environmentally conscious. By choosing quality over quantity, the practitioner felt a sense of responsibility (meaning). Practitioners also engaged in a *mix of practices*, such as a combination of reuse and upcycling. Knowledge (competence) and supplies (materials) from both practices are required and value is, in addition to being sustainable, found in the unique garment (meaning). Practitioners were however reluctant towards upcycling second hand clothes purchased without the intention of upcycling as the low price and used condition makes them discard its value. Concerning more expensive clothes, acquired through new garments, upcycling is regarded as a natural step in the product life cycle.

Evidently, *time* was found as an important factor affecting the consumer’s level of sustainability. In order to become a competent practitioner, time must be invested. The practitioner’s competence steers how much time is spent on a practice and, depending on how much meaning is created, it is deemed desirable to spend more or less time on the practice. If the practice is time demanding, the practitioner needs a high incentive to partake in the practice and the time requirement could act as an invisible barrier. Thus, sustainable practices are competing with less time consuming options such as fast fashion. In times of stress, it was found that the participants' ambition to acquire sustainable fashion is often lost to saving time. Sustainable practices are seen coordinating with other practices that are part of everyday life. Temporal rhythms were identified in relation to the practice of reuse and partially upcycling, as many have established habits of when to engage in the practice.

The additional findings illustrate setbacks for sustainability; The low prices, common within second hand, can encourage consumers to purchase more than they had intended. Purchases are also triggered by scarcity and risk of missing out on a garment as they are one of a kind. Further, garments purchased second hand are often valued less due to the low price tag and used condition. The participants' behaviour was sometimes contradictorios and, by reason of lacking knowledge, the practitioner could believe they made more sustainable choices than they actually did. Lastly, *how* a garment is used, rather than how it was acquired, could sometimes define the degree of sustainability.

To conclude; various materials are necessary to perform the practices and meaning was repeatedly found in the pride of choosing sustainable options and being a competent practitioner. A common denominator in all practices was that lack of competence makes practitioners reluctant to engage in the practice, partly due to the amount of time needed to get familiar with 'the doings'. However, those who found meaning from a sustainable practice, often prioritize it. Nevertheless, practices that are too time demanding generally lose to other practices. Thus, in a lack of competence or time, unsustainable options are often favored.

Future studies

The study aimed to explore the acquisition of sustainable fashion and the related practices of reuse, upcycling, sharing and buying new garments. After gaining insights to the acquisition of sustainable fashion, other phases of the consumption could be explored. Previous studies have contributed to understanding different phases within consumption, however studying different phases simultaneously could contribute to an understanding of the overall picture of consumption and deeper insights into sustainable fashion consumption as a whole. Future studies could investigate how resource intensive different practices related to sustainable fashion are. As a result, resource intensive practices could be identified and indications of how these practices could require less, or other alternative, resources could be found. Thus, identifying how sustainable fashion practices can be further developed in a sustainable manner.

More studies regarding how digitization relates to sustainable consumption are needed. We have acknowledged that digitalization has affected sustainable fashion, such as applications related to reuse and sharing initiatives administered through social media accounts. Taking it one step further, it can be investigated how digitalization affects the practices of sustainable fashion. New practices, and combinations of practices, could have appeared whilst old ones could be threatened. Shifting the focus from fashion, further studies incorporating the elements of a practice - materials, competences and meanings (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) - could lead to valuable insights in other sustainable contexts. With our study as the starting point, future research could emphasise the environmental consequences and implications of the different practices of sustainable fashion further, as a way of incorporating a more long-term perspective.

Lastly, regarding market research, more selective types of second hand stores have emerged in recent years and could be of further interest as they could be a starting point for inexperienced consumers who wish to acquire fashion in a more sustainable manner. Since the stores are more selective and structured, the consumer is not required to have the same type of knowledge, making it more accessible and less time consuming. Furthermore, based on the empirical findings, the practice of sharing is the least normalized one, therefore further research in the

field is highly relevant for insights in how to proceed with the practice, identifying more barriers and increasing the attractiveness and accessibility of the practice. Lastly, studies of different age groups or geographical areas could provide deeper understanding of the various practices within sustainable fashion by identifying similarities and differences between the segments. Therefore, the most effective ways to target different consumers can be found and an understanding of the general public.

Managerial implications

The purpose and main contribution of this study is to shed knowledge on how young professionals acquire sustainable fashion. By gaining knowledge about *how* the consumers act whilst performing certain practices, it could provide important managerial implications and guidelines. The practice theory perspective of this study has led to an increased understanding of ‘the doings’ of acquiring sustainable fashion.

Our findings regarding the link found between materials, competence and meaning in the various practices of acquiring sustainable garments, highlights the importance and possibilities of working with these elements. One of the most protrusive findings was that lack of competence often leads to consumers choosing less sustainable alternatives. Hopefully, this could lead to companies working with increasing consumer competence by enabling dialogue with the consumers, working towards a more sufficient practice. Further, as meaning was often created by the practitioner feeling sustainable, marketers could incorporate that meaning into the dialogue as well, thus promoting sustainable practices further. The study focused on participants engaged within sustainable fashion. By translating the findings to the general public companies can learn how to attract more consumers. An option towards reaching a wider range of consumers could be to work with reducing the obstacles in the practices, such as time and competence requirements. Many participants found meaning in being sustainable, however this might not always be the case for the general public. Thus, other meanings, such as a unique style, must be further associated with sustainable fashion acquisition to promote the practices further.

Since time was identified as an important factor, companies could work with decreasing the time spent on various forms of acquiring sustainable garments. For instance more organised stores, increasing the amount of filters on websites and applications or communicating knowledge and increasing awareness. Making the practice more time efficient, could possibly lead to consumers choosing a sustainable alternative over fast fashion. It is becoming increasingly important to work with the time aspect in the fast paced society of today. The importance of sustainability, found in our empirical findings, could motivate companies to work with their supply chains, materials and more to become more sustainable and attract young professionals. Further, as many of the participants were skeptical towards purchasing upcycled garments from companies, it implies that companies could benefit from increasing their transparency.

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Appendix 1

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
Elin	25	Female	Doctor
Jessica	24	Female	Strategy consultant
Oskar	24	Male	Investment banker
Patric	30	Male	Carpenter
Simone	24	Female	Financial adviser
Sandra	30	Female	Financial adviser

Focus group 1

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
Albin	25	Male	Court clerk
John	29	Male	Landscape architect
Jill	26	Female	Communicator
Liam	24	Male	Unemployed
Saga	25	Female	3D-coordinator

Focus group 2

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
Jasmine	26	Female	Project leader
Jesper	28	Male	Chef
Johannes	27	Male	Chef
Signe	24	Female	Barista
Sophie	24	Female	Student (Preschool teacher)

Focus group 3

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
Calle	27	Male	Student (Global studies)
Ester	25	Female	Student (Medicine)
Hedda	20	Female	Student (Sociology)
Judith	24	Female	Student (Psychology)
Olle	25	Male	Student (UX design)

Focus group 4

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
Mauritz	23	Male	Student (Marketing)
Meja	24	Female	Student (Textile technology)
Jaqueline	29	Female	Democracy and social responsibility
Jennifer	24	Female	Accountant
Jonna	23	Female	Student (Psychology)
Linn	25	Female	Waitress

Focus group 5

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Part one - General questions

- How long have you acquired clothes in a sustainable way and what made you start?
- What is your best shopping experience within sustainable fashion? Please share your experience and explain what made it good with practical, detailed examples.
- What is your worst shopping experience within sustainable fashion? Please share your experience and explain what made it good with practical, detailed examples.
- Discuss whether you think that sustainable fashion is something that suits everyone.
 - What are the potential barriers?

Part two - Presentation concentrated on reuse, upcycling and sharing

- Reuse: How would you describe your reuse behavior in regards to usage, acquisition and disposal of these types of garments? Please guide us through your reuse shopping with practical and detailed examples.
 - What 'kind' (in store/online/cheap/more exclusive) of reuse practices do you engage in?
- Upcycling: How would you describe your upcycling behavior in regards to usage, acquisition and disposal of these types of garments? Please guide us through your reuse shopping with practical and detailed examples.
 - Do you purchase clothes that have already been upcycled?
 - If you upcycle yourself, how do you do it and how much resources does it take?
- Sharing: How would you describe your sharing behavior in regards to usage, acquisition and disposal of these types of garments? Please guide us through your reuse shopping with practical and detailed examples.
 - What sharing practices do you take part in?

Part three - In-depth questions and scenario

- How much time do you spend when you acquire sustainable fashion and does it differ between the different types discussed in part two? Discuss whether it takes more or less time than fast fashion.
- On average, do you spend more or less money when you acquire sustainable fashion compared to fast fashion?
- What is acceptable to purchase in a sustainable manner? Is there anything that is not seen as acceptable?
- Does sustainable fashion exist or can it only be more or less sustainable?
 - Why/Why not?
- What is your stance regarding other sustainability related questions such as furniture, food and traveling.
- Lastly, a scenario: It is finally post corona. You are attending the first big party since the pandemic ended and everyone you know is going to be there. The day before the party you notice that the garment you were planning on wearing is torn. What do you do?

Appendix 3

Observation Guide

When doing the observations, the aim was to answer and understand the following:

- What does the store or website look like? (interiour, layout, color schemes and more)
- How is the store or website structured? (e.g. how are the clothes organized?)
- How does one navigate in the store or on the website?