FASHION BRAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION: MARKETING STRATEGIES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
In
International Apparel Management

By
Choyce N. Brown
2022
SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS: FASHION BRAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION: MARKETING STRATEGIES

AUTHOR: Choyce N. Brown

DATE SUBMITTED: Spring 2022

Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management

Dr. Helen X. Trejo
Thesis Committee Chair
Apparel Merchandising and Management

Anne-Kristin Erdmann-Burt
Lecturer
Apparel Merchandising and Management

Dr. Claire Whang
Assistant Professor
Apparel Merchandising and Management
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Helen X. Trejo as an integral part of this research. As a professor she has helped me with my writing and encouraged me to push further in my research. She has shared her knowledge of which I am grateful. I would also like to acknowledge my committee for being a part of this. Professor Ann-Kristin Erdmann for giving me the direction of focus for my thesis topic, participating in the interview process, and sharing industry knowledge. Dr. Claire Whang for helping me to see the psychological perspective related to the thesis topic from taking her class IAM 5450: International Apparel Consumer Behavior. Thank you all for sharing your expertise and knowledge that helped continue the work.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify effective measures currently taken by fashion brands to communicate their sustainability processes more transparently to consumers. Communication plays an important role in promoting sustainable consumption and it has become more nuanced as evidence of the growing field of sustainability communication. Although there has been progress in this area, communication in marketing to consumers regarding sustainability still lacks transparency. Transparency in marketing legitimizes fashion brands. Legitimacy theory states that an organization’s actions are in full accord with a society’s value structure. Therefore, the objectives of this thesis are (1) to identify key sustainable communication strategies used in fashion brand marketing, (2) to evaluate the best practices in sustainable communication based on legitimacy theory, and (3) to propose a strategic framework fashion brands can follow to promote their sustainability efforts clearly and accurately to consumers. Through a qualitative method of five interviews with fashion industry professionals who have experience in sustainability communication, the three objectives were fulfilled. Key sustainable communication strategies included educating consumers on the company’s environmental impact, transparency regarding sourcing, and creating community through collaboration, which then makes sustainability claims more legitimate as brands are then perceived as having a good reputation. The brands including The North Face, Eileen Fisher, Ecoalf, and 3 Women Co were found as having best practices in the industry. Considered as legitimately communicating sustainability in marketing as it pertains to legitimacy theory. They are moral and pragmatic organizations who demonstrate transparent actions. The sustainability communication framework
includes the identified strategies and best practices along with standardizations as a needed regulation in communicating sustainability to consumers. This research is meant to guide sustainability communication in marketing through the proposed framework to enable brands to be more transparent when communicating to consumers.

*Keywords:* sustainability communication, sustainable fashion, marketing strategies, brand messaging, legitimacy theory, transparency.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE ....................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................... iii

ABSTRACT ................................................................................ iv

LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................... ix

LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................... x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1

- Purpose of the study ................................................................. 1
- Justification of the study ........................................................... 3
- Fashion transparency index ...................................................... 3
- Legitimate transparency ............................................................ 4
- Consumer Awareness ............................................................... 4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................. 6

- Defining sustainability ............................................................. 6
- Communicating sustainability .................................................... 8
- Marketing strategies ............................................................... 11
- Transparency ........................................................................ 13
- Legitimacy theory ................................................................. 16
- Corporate moral responsibility ................................................. 18
- Patagonia ............................................................................. 19
- Ecoalf ................................................................................. 21
- The North Face ................................................................. 23
- Eileen Fisher ....................................................................... 24
3 Women co................................................................. 25
Research objectives......................................................... 27
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY......................................................... 29
Major interview topics......................................................... 29
Data analysis................................................................. 31
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS................................................................. 33
Participant backgrounds....................................................... 33
Identified main themes......................................................... 33
Sustainability Motivation....................................................... 34
Sustainability communication strategy.................................. 37
Legitimate Transparency....................................................... 39
Competition................................................................. 40
Discussion................................................................. 42
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Interview sample ................................................................. 31
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Select sustainable brands. ................................................................. 27
Figure 2: Conceptual model. ........................................................................... 31
Figure 3: Dedoose excerpt of main themes. ...................................................... 34
Figure 4: Framework ....................................................................................... 46
Figure 5: Dedoose excerpt of code presence. .................................................. 68
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

People have become more aware of the importance of sustainability now due to the tremendous waste the fashion industry produces each year. When clothing is thrown away, 73% of it is burned or buried in landfills with only 20% being recycled (Souchet, 2019; RU, 2018). In 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (2021) indicated that landfills received 11.3 million tons of (MSW) municipal solid waste in textiles, and the recycling rate for all textiles was 14.7 percent; this equated to 2.5 million tons of textiles being recycled. This is proof that the transition to sustainable practices in production are necessary.

As of 2021, the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of all global pollution coming in second after aviation (Woollygreen, 2021). This is a concern as the fashion industry produces over 2.1 billion tons of carbon emissions per year, stemming from manufacturing, transportation, and post-consumer textile waste, which ends up in landfills (Radonic, 2022). Carbon emissions are the amount of greenhouse gasses produced to support human activities and are usually expressed as equivalent tons of carbon dioxide, known as carbon footprint (RU, 2018). Most companies have yet to improve the ecological and social performance thus improve sustainability performance (RU, 2018). Consumers should know the importance, contribution, and value of sustainable fashion and opt to buy from sustainable brands (RU, 2018).

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to identify what effective sustainability communication means for fashion brands to reach consumers. According to the Business
Research Company (2022), several global brands make vague sustainability claims. Greenwashing is used to bait consumers who are interested in sustainable products. It is a form of marketing that deceptively spins a company’s practices in a way to promote a perception that their products are environmentally friendly (Ekstrand & Nilsson, 2011). It is a combination of poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance (de Freitas Netto, Ribeiro, Sobral & Soares, 2020). This is not a best practice among fashion brands as it gives the impression that a product or an activity of a company has a lower detrimental effect on the environment. A study by Bulut et al. (2021) shows that greenwashing effects decrease environmental concern on green behavior. While this is dangerous for sustainable progress, it is also dangerous to brand reputation. Inauthentic claims can damage the brand’s integrity and disrupt brand loyalty.

In 2020, only 12.5% (63 signatures) of fashion companies joined the Circular Fashion System commitment, aimed to transform their business model to include collecting and reselling used clothing, use recycled materials, and adopt circular design strategies (Radonic, 2022). This is encouraging progress; however, they did not reach their 213-signature target. The goals are aimed at transforming the company’s business models to more circular systems, including collecting and reselling used clothing, and using recycled materials (Radonic, 2020). According to the global fashion agenda (2017) website, “a strong ecosystem of collaboration is urgently needed to tackle the roadblocks ahead and governments and policy makers must play a strong role in creating a supportive regulatory framework.”
**Justification of the Study**

Interests in sustainable fashion first emerged in the 1960s when consumers became aware of the impact clothing manufacturing had on the environment and demanded the industry change its practices (Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2016). The idea of sustainable fashion is in part about producing clothing, shoes, and accessories in environmental and socio-economic processes, as well as changing patterns of consumption and use (RU, 2018). These ideas stem from the foundational pillars of sustainable development. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations (Brundtland Commission, 1987).

**Fashion Transparency Index**

Increased transparency is foundational to achieving systemic change in the global fashion industry (Fashion Revolution, 2021). The Fashion Transparency Index was developed by a collective of fashion industry leaders including designers, policymakers, academics, and marketers. It was developed in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013, where many factory workers were killed in a fire (Fashion Revolution, 2021). The Fashion Transparency Index tracks the progress of 250 fashion brands and retailers by scoring them in five key areas including: policies and commitments, governance, supply chain traceability, know, show, and fix, and spotlight issues (Fashion Revolution, 2021). Transparency is a tool that helps to engage change, holding brands accountable, and leading to a positive impact on the fashion industry (Fashion Revolution, 2021).
**Legitimate Transparency**

Exploring legitimacy claims can provide consumers the information needed to understand a brand’s authenticity, integrity, and commitment to transparent communication. Legitimacy theory states that organizations seek to ensure they are acting in line with the values and norms of society and their stakeholders (Wells et al., 2021). This embraces the idea that corporate social and environmental disclosures are motivated by a desire to legitimize an organization’s operations and influence external perceptions about the organization (Wells et al., 2021). Seamless implementations of sustainability practices in the apparel supply chain business model, while being transparent in communication can increase consumer loyalty (Bailey, 2020). This also applies to prioritizing people throughout the entire supply chain while maintaining transparency and authenticity (Bailey, 2020). At the consumption end of the supply chain, the question of communicating the sustainable fashion message is key in terms of how it is used to transition people from awareness to advocacy of new concepts (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018). The goal is to show that responsibility in communication can create brand value and generate consumer loyalty to buy from sustainable fashion brands. Authentic communication between consumers and retailers can create loyalty, sending a message that puts both retailers and consumers on an environmentally healthier path (Bailey, 2020). This action can lead to more sustainable communication behaviors in marketing, supply chain flow, and transparency (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018).

**Consumer Awareness**

The way brands communicate sustainability is of interest, especially the incorporation of storytelling to share the brand message, a continuous thread that survives
throughout the entire lifecycle of the brand. The need for sustainable fashion increases as the state of the climate becomes more of a priority; brands that are successfully communicating sustainability can be held as a standard for others to follow. This is important for consumer awareness, heightening the demand to purchase sustainable goods, and causing brands to make a conscious effort toward sustainability in apparel (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018).

This study aims to identify effective measures currently taken by fashion brands to communicate their sustainability processes more transparently to consumers. A local brand like 3 women co, or women’s lifestyle brand Eileen Fisher, outdoor brands Patagonia and The North Face, and sustainable recycle brand Ecoalf. In reiteration, the objectives are to (1) identify key sustainable communication strategies used in the fashion industry, (2) evaluate best practices in sustainable communication based on legitimacy theory, and (3) propose a strategic framework fashion brands can use to promote their sustainability efforts. Since the transition to sustainable practices in production is necessary, it is important for brands to communicate these transitions effectively to consumers. How brands are communicating sustainability can affect consumer purchase intentions. Brands that have integrated sustainability into their marketing strategy are not necessarily holistically practicing sustainability. Proposing a framework can help encourage improvements in sustainable behaviors in every sector of the fashion industry.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Sustainability

Sustainability is an effort within the fashion industry that aims to reduce clothing waste and its environmental impact (Henninger et al., 2016). Sustainable development means “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission, 1987; RU, 2018). Sustainability is improving human well-being and ensuring social equity for present and future generations, while safeguarding the planet’s life-supporting ecosystems (Boone, 2021). Moreover, it includes a long-term strategy, which includes economy, social, and environmental resources (RU, 2018).

The United Nations (2015) identified 17 goals for sustainable development, a shared blueprint for peace, prosperity for people and planet, in both developed and developing countries. It is a global partnership to end poverty, hunger, and world inequalities. Included in this initiative is promoting responsible consumption and production around the world. On the opposite spectrum of individual cases, what is being done to highlight the efforts of fashion brands who are becoming more sustainable. A 2019 poll showed that 46% of consumers equate products with sustainability and not brands (Huifeng, Kwok-pan, & Woo, 2019). This provides an opportunity for brands to communicate how their products are made. Under the auspices of UN Climate Change, 43 leading fashion brands, retailers, suppliers, and other organizations agreed to collectively address the climate impact of the fashion sector across its entire value chain (Huifeng et al., 2019).
Producers should abide by international environmental codes of conduct by ensuring ethical business practices at every interaction (Vehmas et al., 2018). These codes can translate into sustainable communication. The goal being to encourage consumers to purchase less clothing by creating sustainable fashion and products that have a longer life cycle. High quality clothing is easier to upcycle or repurposed thereafter providing a cyclical life cycle. In practice, sustainable production involves improvement at each stage of the product’s life cycle from efficient use of natural resources, utilizing renewable energy sources in the supply chain, as well as maximizing repair, remake, reuse, and recycling of each component (Vehmas et al., 2018). Other options include utilizing biodegradable materials that can return to a useful place in the soil (Rhodes, 2017).

Studies convey that the global consumer want more sustainable brand options (Vehmas et al., 2018). Vehmas et al. (2018) interviewed five Finnish consumers chosen because they had no particular interest in sustainability, and found that interest toward recycling and sustainable solutions has increased; these consumers were asking for more visible and concrete information about circular fashion systems. Some research findings explain that environmentally prudent consumers respond favorably to green brands (RU, 2018). For instance, a U.S. consumer study polled 2,000 people (Bailey, 2020). Key findings were that 81% wanted to buy more from sustainable fashion brands, 78% planned to invest more in sustainable companies, and 56% wanted brands and government to prioritize sustainability. This is evidence that more policies should be implemented for the global consumer. In China, among affluent consumer spenders, 83% intended to do more for the environment, 81% wanted to buy more from sustainable
brands, and 78% planned to invest more in sustainable companies (Bailey, 2020). In Germany, 64% of consumers stated that they have cared about one sustainability aspect while shopping online (Bailey, 2020). These are valid implications that consumers want a shift towards a more global, sustainable fashion industry. The United Nations is tasked with a holistic approach for more responsible production and consumption in global sustainable development goals directly affecting the fashion industry (United Nations, 2015).

**Communicating Sustainability**

Communication is defined as the process that occurs when ideas, information, and feelings are conveyed between individuals or groups for deliberate purposes (Genc, 2017). While there are sustainable retailers who succeed in business, the question is what are they doing to communicate this to consumers? With sustainability emerging as a “megatrend,” organizations use buzzwords such as “eco,” “organic,” “environmentally friendly,” or “green” in their marketing communications (Henninger et al., 2016); words like “organic” and recycled are used and can lead to confusing messaging (Genc, 2017). The words brands use matter as they mean different things and consumers must be aware of the differences. Some fashion brands use these words to frame their brand story only to simulate sustainable behaviors and consequently, the impact of sustainable fashion marketing discourse can be seen as greenwashing for the brands (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018). Delivering false messaging can create distrust among consumers of fashion brands who cannot back up sustainability claims. There is extensive research that focuses on the discourses of the marketing practices in sustainability (Genc, 2017). However, here we focus on solutions to such issues.
In any sustainable plan or strategy, communication plays a vital role, both internally and externally (Genc, 2017). An internal investigation followed by an external plan of action, using appropriate terminology for effective communication to help move in the right direction (Genc, 2017). External communication being the exchange between consumers and retailers. What the retailer conveys is what customers will expect; a disconnect in the perception of sustainable communication from retailers can lead to significant loss in sales. Genc (2017) indicates that it has become essential to create a common understanding regarding societal values on sustainability and identifying some concrete goals to be followed. The fashion industry can take part in a global conversation addressing sustainability issues, arguments, and claims to establish a common understanding of what is at stake. There is a revolution in sustainability reporting, used as a means of communicating strategic corporate social responsibility, and to provide researchers with a way to understand sustainability priorities (Wells et al., 2021).

Companies joining forces can help solve common sustainable marketing problems and collaboration can create stronger brand messaging (Bailey, 2020). Brand messaging refers to the words, visuals, and information conveyed around the brand (Fondalo, 2019). It is important because it establishes value and recognition with consumers. Combining resources and using the strengths of each company respectively can save money and help generate revenue. The recent, The North Face x Gucci collaboration is a prime example of a brand effectively building upon their strengths and creating sustainable fashion by blending functionality with luxury. GQ magazine named it the best collaboration of 2021 so far (GQ, 2021). The North Face (TNF) x Gucci collection focuses on wardrobe staples in materials built to last, falling in line with a new mantra, “fashion for life” not just the
season (Carruthers, 2021). This collection was both functional and fashionable with beautiful ‘70s inspired prints on performance pieces. These pieces hold up as streetwear as well as in outdoor adventures. TNF x Gucci launched a part 2 cross-category collection, building on the success of the initial collaboration. In mid-January 2021, Gucci curated in-store pop-up shops opened in New York, Aspen, Chicago, and Toronto, with limited items online. The North Face carried parts of the collection in New York, Beijing, Shanghai, and Tokyo stores.

In 2018, Eileen Fisher collaborated with fashion brand Public School on a line of upcycled garments (Read, 2019). This collaboration was effective because it was a prime example of sharing best practices in the renewal process. According to the Public-School website, “no one company or designer will be able to tackle the effects our industry continues to leave on the climate and environment on their own, so the spirit of this collaboration is to prove that we all must work together to make a change” (Public School, n.d.). Public School now has a more sustainable way of design and production because of the Eileen Fisher collaboration. Collaborations communicate strength in sustainable fashion messaging. This kind of communication translates well to consumers seeking more sustainable fashions. Furthermore, collaboration among textile manufacturers, sustainable designers, fashion retailers and waste collectors may result in synergies and drive innovations in manufacturing (Islam, Perry, & Gill, 2021). Both brands’ customers become aware and participate in furthering the innovation.

In some ways, smaller companies are surpassing top tier brands in their sustainability endeavors. Although most major brands have the resources to become more sustainable, their already established model of operations puts them at a disadvantage.
Having many links in their supply chains deem it harder to make swift necessary changes. As an example, small but growing sustainable fashion brand 3 Women creates limited edition clothing lines and their materials are locally and ethically sourced; they specialize in custom-tailored designs in which the customer takes part in the process (Early & Mumford, 2021). The customer having a vested interest in the creation of the garment plays an important part and garners an emotional or sentimental attachment, which engages the customer to take care and keeps the garment longer. It is easier for a fashion brand to begin this way rather than to evolve into this. More companies using this business model are emerging in the market.

**Marketing Strategies**

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Varadarajan, 2010). Retailers are in a unique position to choose from a variety of successful retail channels to access and market directly to their consumers (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Of all the retail marketing outlets, the Internet is the most globally accessible. With such a vast audience, fashion brands need to use caution when promoting sustainability. In accordance with the general marketing practices, a requirement when using environmental and ethical claims in marketing, the claims must not be misleading to the consumer (Ekstrand & Nilsson, 2011).

Brands like Gucci and Stella McCartney are involved in promoting sustainable fashion using “green” or “eco” language (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018). These words can often receive mixed user interpretations and have a negative impact on the intended
audience. This results in user frustration because of disconnected messaging, rather than the intended positive brand value and informed brand decision-making as the outcome of the promotion (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018). Furthermore, consumer studies have shown that the word sustainability has a broad meaning covering issues of society, environment, and economy; it is the most fragmented in its understanding to fashion consumers (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018). This is evidence of a failure in the marketing strategy where the word sustainability is concerned. The vagueness broadens the meaning; therefore, fashion brands avoid accountability where illegitimate claims are concerned.

Kotob (2011) found that the meaning of sustainability has evolved over time and is no longer environmentally bound. Specification is needed in this area to help consumers comprehend exactly what it is they are buying into. The sustainable fashion glossary, created by Conde Nast in partnerships with the London College of Fashion’s Center for Sustainable Fashion created a defining resource to educate consumers of the terms used specific for the fashion industry regarding sustainability (Chan, 2021). Terms like circular economy, circular design, closed-loop recycling, recycling, and re-sale are defined in the glossary (Conde Nast, 2022). This resource enables the average consumer to understand what these terms mean and more specifically for what and how the fashion industry uses them. A prime example of successfully marketing is with the NYC women’s wear brand Eileen Fisher. It uses branding such as, “sustainably conscious,” not “sustainable” since it is a work in progress.

While some fashion brands are accused of green marketing to promote their brands, consumers are equally as fickle when engaging to purchase sustainable brands
(Vehmas et al., 2018). More research involving what consumers want and how they want the information to be presented to them will give more concrete results. Brands have an opportunity to promote more specific operations like “slow growth” and “conservation.” By incorporating a marketing strategy of buying sustainable quality fashion, consumers will learn to keep what they have longer. Brands have an opportunity to hold less inventory and raise their price level accordingly. Therefore, growth will happen, just at a slower more manageable pace. These previous concepts give fashion brands more time to be thoughtful in their communication and marketing processes. By making people aware of this, and the benefits, it will create more sustainable minded consumers.

**Transparency**

Transparency in marketing refers to the extent to which an entity reveals information about its own decision process, procedures, functioning, and performance (Cambier & Poncin, 2019). With rising warning messages regarding the growing environmental decline of planet earth’s resources, the global warming crisis has sparked a new movement in fashion to become a more sustainable industry. Magrath and McCormick (2013) found that, “informative content” (information about specific items), is essential for product understanding and provides the consumer with an elevated perception of trust and satisfaction. It increases purchase intentions, alleviates perceived risks, and therefore makes it lucrative for product purchases (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Transparency is a key element in sustainable fashion when communicating with consumers on every retail channel.

Sustainable fashion helps to promote and define “slow fashion”. Slow fashion is not time based but quality based, it is about designing, producing, consuming, and living
better (Fletcher, 2007). Thrift stores are a tool in helping to slow down clothing production. Slow fashion is about slowing down the process to provide greater transparency about the production process and its impacts on workers, communities, and potentially ecosystems to consumers (Fletcher, 2007). Promoting thrift stores online has made it acceptable for consumers to be more sustainably minded.

There are ways to decrease inconsistency between sustainability and fashion. One of which is to promote less consumption to customers. Encouraging consumers to utilize versatile garments for a long time, buy fewer new ones when they are able, and to wear the same garments in different ways (Vehmas et al., 2018). The increased demand for transparency in supply chains stems from non-governmental agencies raising awareness by launching campaigns against specific companies and social media quickly spreading information (Cattermole, 2016). Disclosing facts and information regarding the sustainability practices of firms to each other will build a foundation of transparency throughout the fashion industry. Transparency requires clear explanations, so participants can develop their own expectations (Cambier & Poncin, 2019). Furthermore, the internal organization leaders are responsible for overseeing sustainability communication for their company.

Brands need to ensure their sustainability goals can be tracked and measured with progress or lack of, and rewarded or penalized depending on performance (Bailey, 2020). Holding themselves accountable to this will help maintain open communication within the company as well as in the fashion market. There will be legal accountability for brands that accept government bailouts to use toward implementing new sustainability
processes into their business model (Bailey, 2020). This is good because it will encourage them to take greater care in the transparency of their marketing strategies.

The visibility of what sustainability is for consumers is important for awareness. Seeing the convenience and benefits sustainability can have on lives and the lifecycle of the fashion industry first-hand can encourage a change in consumption behavior. Consumers will appreciate a more sustainably conscious standpoint from fashion brands. Cambier & Poncin (2019) found that valuable information can drive integrity perceptions. Evidence that transparent communication from fashion brands enhances consumer trust.

The Higg Index is a collaborative sustainable apparel coalition of 137 brands and retailers that asks qualitative questions to gauge the degree of social and environmental sustainability performance of fashion brands, and drive improvements in the behavior across supply chains (Sustainable Apparel, 2021). Thus, creating a standard in the fashion industry to follow based on a collective effort to maximize the use of sustainable systems for its members. Matt Hamilton the director of sustainable operations for the VF Corporation stated, “this tool can encourage a collective action of lower impact and complete supply chain transparency “, (Sustainable Apparel, 2021).

Another avenue of transparency for brands is through corporate reports. However, these reports may be designed to pacify a corporations’ stakeholders and may not reflect actual changes to behaviors, values, and norms (Wells et al., 2021). The report is just a way to satisfy stakeholders; however, most consumers do not seek out information in these reports. Signaling a brand’s sustainability position through channels such as branding, social media marketing, and Corporate Social Responsibility reports allowing organizations to communicate their core values to stakeholders (Wells et al., 2021). Most
consumers only see the branding, marketing, and social media messaging that is easily transparent to them.

**Legitimacy Theory**

Legitimacy theory states that organizations will seek to ensure they are acting in line with the values and norms of society and their stakeholders (Deegan, 2002; Wells et al., 2021). Emphasizing information disclosure can be a positive strategy for fashion brands. Within a systems-oriented perspective, the entity is assumed to be influenced by, and in turn to have influence upon, the society in which it operates (Deegan, 2019). Moreover, legitimacy theory argues that legitimacy is something upon which the organization is dependent for survival; if the values and norms of the organization do not mirror those of stakeholders, it will result in threats to legitimacy (Wells et al., 2021). However, it is a resource that an organization can impact or manipulate (Aerts & Cormier, 2009; Deegan, 2019).

Suchman (1995) states, legitimacy is the idea that the actions of an organization are in line with a societal systems norms, beliefs, values, and definitions. The idea of “legitimacy” can be related to the concept of a social contract that an organization's survival will be threatened if society perceives that the organization has breached its social contract (Deegan, 2002; 2019); in other words, legitimacy is a “social judgment” (Crossley, Elmagrhi, & Ntim, 2021). If a brand is seen as being without legitimacy, consumers have the power to reduce or eliminate demand for the products a business has to offer. The organization must justify its existence through legitimate economical, and social actions that do not jeopardize the existence of the society in which it carries on, nor the environment (Burlea-Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013). O’Dwyer (2002) found that social
pressures generated a need for companies to be responsive with managers in environmentally sensitive sectors indicating that their annual report disclosures tended to be reactive and tied to a desire to repair legitimacy. If fashion brands preemptively disclose sustainability information, rather than react to social suspicions defensively, positive perceptions of legitimacy are more effective.

Aerts and Cormier (2009) found that negative media legitimacy is a significant driver of environmental press releases. A firm’s environmental communication efforts, through environmental disclosures in annual reports and environmental press releases represent predictable opportunities for impression management, and legitimation of the firm’s environmental activities and performance (Aerts & Cormier, 2009). Thus, posing an advantage in developing positive relationships between corporation and consumer. Because the media is sometimes the only source of information, it has great influence on public opinion. Environmental issues are generally perceived as unobtrusive, and therefore reinforcing the relevance of a media proxy for environmental legitimacy (Aerts & Cormier, 2009). From a management’s perspective, media evaluations are a persistent and long-term proxy for collective legitimacy impressions on which a company can model its environmental communication strategy (Aerts & Cormier, 2009).

Legitimacy as an organizational framework has many layers. Suchman’s (1995) dynamics of legitimacy framework also adapted by Crossley et al. (2021), implies that pragmatic legitimacy and moral legitimacy are both crucial to the structure of an organization. Pragmatic legitimacy involves the exchange of ideas, educating constituents, utilizing traditional products for influence, and job security for and handling employees (Crossley et al., 2021). Moral legitimacy includes espousing socially
acceptable goals, offering apologies, denial, concealment, removing negative imagery, reframing issues with legitimate values, and ceremonial conformity (Crossley et al., 2021). These are building blocks in which brands can communicate effectively within an organization as well as to consumers. This foundation carries over into sustainability practices where fashion brands can become more transparent using this legitimacy framework based on the moral and pragmatic foundations to build upon.

**Corporate Moral Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) includes sustainability practices and efforts that strive to create and distribute products in a manner that will minimize harm to people and the planet while supporting the profitability goals of a firm (Michel et al., 2019). These efforts are integral to the moral legitimacy of a firms’ practices. Ethicists and philosophers argue that both corporations and individual human beings have a moral responsibility to do the right things (Ha-Brookshire, 2015). In this light, the road toward corporate sustainability is evaluated from the corporate moral responsibility (CMR) perspective (Ha-Brookshire, 2015). The innate knowledge of morality is apparent in all of us whether it is recognized or not. From a philosopher's perspective, it descriptively refers to certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her own behavior (Gert, 2002). It is simply, principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior (Merriam Webster, 2021). Moreover, an attempt to implement normative codes into society that gauge the degree of one's internal intentions turned into actions. Furthermore, for firms it means to espouse socially acceptable goals, offer apologies, denial, and concealment,
removing negative imagery, re-framing issues with legitimate values, and ceremonial conformity (Crossley et al., 2021).

When approaching a firm regarding their sustainability practices and communication, one can appeal to this sense of corporate moral responsibility (Ha-Brookshire, 2015). The responsibility is not only to the actions of sustainability practices, but also to the communication that is conducive to the actions. Consumers have more access to information and can find out the legitimacy of the claims. If the company is transparent, it should be easy for customers to view their processes. Ha-Brookshire (2015) found that the reality of corporations' moral responsibility is that most businesses still put financial gains as their priority above social and environmental bottom lines, which is the opposite of their capabilities. According to Ha-Brookshire (2015), corporations are capable of intentional actions through their own commitments toward their goals, including morally responsible acts. In connection with legitimacy theory, specifically moral and pragmatic the key brands were chosen based on their demonstrated uncompromising sustainability practices in collaborations, transparency, and circularity as well as innovation in communication. Patagonia is at the top as an influence brand who the others have adopted marketing strategies from to establish legitimacy.

**Patagonia**

Patagonia, a California-based outdoor apparel, and equipment company founded in 1973, has a brand image that is synonymous with concern for the environment and sustainability through responsible manufacturing and consumption (Michel et al., 2019). As mentioned previously, Patagonia has proven successful in promoting sustainability through the then, Common Threads Initiative (CTI), while putting corporate moral
responsibility before financial gain, which turned out to double their profits from the previous year. The "Don't buy this jacket" campaign was met with some criticism. Some consumers and industry professionals questioned whether the statement was disingenuous coming from a for-profit apparel retailer and manufacturer (Michel et al., 2019). The truth is retailers are profit motivated. However, to make a difference, at some point changes must be made and Patagonia was brave enough to take that leap, which ultimately paid off.

In 2011, outdoor brand Patagonia offered a plea to consumers to only buy what they need and an online pledge to reduce, repair, reuse, and recycle whenever possible (Lancaster, 2011). Their ongoing marketing strategy led by the message “Don’t buy this jacket,” encouraged shoppers to restrain from consumption but if they must buy something, buy Patagonia’s 60% recycled polyester, long-lasting fleece jacket (Bovy, 2015). The message had a reverse psychological effect that brought in more revenue. This is evidenced by consumers responding to authentic sustainability messages.

Patagonia's CTI program later evolved into the Worn Wear program with the intent to emphasize customers' emotional attachment to garments, extending the lives of pieces loved by embracing and mending signs of wear instead of discarding them (Michel et al., 2019). Patagonia is morally responsible as a corporation by encouraging consumer-related sustainability through marketing (Michel et al., 2019). Furthermore, they provide services to society (customers) such as, sewing tutorials and offering garment repairs to give garments longer lifespans. Patagonia encourages sustainable choices, builds emotional attachment, and encourages brand love. The company approaches a “new materialism” promoting value in sustainability achieved by experiential engagement in
long use and repairing for reuse of products that acquire emotional, almost magical, meanings over time (Michel et al., 2019).

Ecoalf

Ecoalf is a sustainable ready to wear fashion brand originating in Spain founded by CEO and President Javier Goyeneche in 2009. Their aim from the beginning is to prove that it is possible to produce high-quality items while making responsible use of natural resources (plasticslemag.com, 2019). Deemed the pioneers of ethical fashion, Ecoalf, as of 2019, has developed over 300 types of fabrics using recycled plastic bottles, nylon, tires, cotton, wool, coffee, and more (plasticslemag.com, 2019). Their materials are ethically sourced in close partnerships with other brands using their generated waste to create new materials.

In 2020, they took a page from Patagonia and created the #recycleblackfriday movement in protest to over consumption. They did not offer discounts and encouraged consumers not to purchase from their establishment (CTRL, 2021). Ecoalf continues to revolutionize sustainability communications led by their “because there is no planet B” motto, many have joined the community of more sustainably minded consumers. Although their focus is on textile innovations using natural resources, the results are enticing garments. The promise of high-quality is apparent in the construction and expensive appearance. They have struck quite the balance of sustainability, comfortability, and quality.

In 2015, they began to invest in local fishermen to convert waste recovered from trawl nets into workable thread (plasticslemag.com, 2019). This revolutionary initiative called “upcycle the oceans,” has grown into partnering with over 3,000 fishermen in 60
Spanish ports, extracting 400 tons of waste each year from the ocean floor (plasticslemag.com, 2019). Expanding into Thailand, it is now a circular system of its own utilizing the recovered waste to create Ecoalf collections of swimwear and sneakers which are completely recyclable.

In 2018, Ecoalf became the first fashion company from Spain to receive a B-Corporation certification. The B-Corp certificate identifies the company meets the highest standard of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and the purpose the company was built for (Ecoalf.com, 2021). Recognized as one of the best companies for the world, creating a standard for successful sustainability practices in every area. Other brands who have a B-Corp certification are Eileen Fisher, and Coyuchi an apparel & home brand using all ethically sourced organic cotton. This is an honorable membership which helps to establish the legitimacy of a fashion brands sustainability claims.

An innovative transparency measure in place at Ecoalf is the display of carbon emissions used in kilograms and liters of water saved in producing each garment (Ecoalf.com, 2021). These facts are easily viewed on their website, before adding an item to the cart. In addition, there is a sustainability report, which includes best environmental ratings for the planet, social, ethical practices, as well as best traceability practices (Ecoalf.com, 2021). This display is made possible in partnership with a company called BCome; a sustainability platform software founded in 2019, to empower apparel businesses to build responsible supply chains, guarantee transparency, and bring it to the final customer (BCome, 2022). This is important to keep fashion brands accountable and engaged in continuous improvements. There is limited peer-reviewed research regarding
Ecoalf, hopefully that changes in the future. Ecoalf is seemingly positioned for major contribution to the global sustainability standard of communication in the fashion industry.

**The North Face**

The North Face is an outdoor apparel brand founded in 1966 by hiking enthusiasts Douglas and Susie Tompkins (The North Face, 2021). Their many collaborations stem from an early on open door of co-branding efforts and currently garners strong brand messaging in communicating sustainability. The North Face has developed innovation in sustainable textiles, creating over 9 different materials of high quality, made to endure intense climates, in their durability (The North Face, 2021). Futurelight, The North Face’s most advanced breathable waterproof technology is made from 90% recyclable materials (The North Face, 2021). They are committed to becoming 100% responsibly sourced with apparel, footwear, and equipment fabrics by 2025 (The North Face, 2021).

In 2013, The North Face introduced their “Clothes the Loop” campaign, which is a recycling program for consumers keeping clothing out of landfills (Jiang et al., 2021). It encourages customers to used garments back. It is incentivized with the issuance of a North Face $10 gift card (The North Face, 2021). Furthermore, a renew shop is also part of The North Face portfolio having this in common with Eileen Fisher. Consumers are able to purchase re-furbished TNF products online.

The North Face’s many collaborations have led to success and celebrity endorsements on social media. Previous collaborations with MM6 Maison Margiela were endorsed on Instagram by model celebrities such as Hailey Bieber and Bella Hadid (Huber, 2020). Influencers have a lot to do with the communication process in fashion as
it stands today. Furthermore, TNF has partnered in the past with Supreme, Brain Dead, Junya Watanabe, and Timberland (Huber, 2020). They also successfully use terms like reclaim, recycle, and re-use as a specific way to describe their efforts in circularity that can be easily understood by their target audience. Term usage is important to declare company sustainability efforts and avoid greenwashing.

**Eileen Fisher**

Lifestyle brand, Eileen Fisher was founded by its namesake in 1984 with just 3 simple pieces designed to make getting dressed easier (Eileen Fisher, 2022). Like Ecoalf, it is a BCorp certified brand that partnered with the Savory Institute in 2019 to responsibly source wool and invest in regenerative agricultural practices. The Savory Institute is a U.S registered charitable organization that facilitates large-scale regeneration of the world’s grasslands through holistic management (Savory Global, 2019). Eileen Fisher is committed to using sustainable fibers and works to close the loop on its manufacturing. Eileen Fisher believes in business as a movement, stating the belief that they can leave places touched by the company better than they found them (Eileen Fisher, 2022).

Eileen Fisher has aggressively initiated their recycling program and zero-waste initiatives as transparently as possible to prove that sustainability is not out of reach (Milnes, 2017). They even launched a 2-week long exhibit called “Circular by Design” to market their cyclical efforts (Milnes, 2017). One of their marketing strategies, a campaign called “Renew” is to simply ask for the clothing back, started in 2013 to minimize textile waste (Milnes, 2017). The company re-purposes damaged clothing into new garments and gently used clothing is refreshed and resold; taking them back and
reselling at a discount clean and repaired (Read, 2019). It has been successful thus far bringing in about $2 million per year with recycled garments accounting for 2% of the overall inventory as of 2017 (Milnes, 2017). In 2018, $3 million of Eileen Fisher’s $500 million in revenue came from the Renew recycling program (Read, 2019). This would not be possible if the garments were not first produced in a high-quality manner made to last.

3 Women co.

Opened in 2018, 3 women co is a local sustainable apparel brand that promotes sustainability as a lifestyle much like Ecoalf. 3 women co is named after a former Canadian rice company, the family legacy of one of the owners. 3 women’s mantra is “A threefold cord is not easily broken” which explains the commitment to community and the values for which the brand was founded. The basis for the brand’s mission is creative collaboration, community, and love (Early & Mumford, 2022). They often collaborate with local artists and designers to create new collections or jewelry (Pau, 2021). 3 women is dedicated to sustainability and repurposes used fabrics into wearable designs. Even as Mumford and Early dream and plan steps to grow production, they are not prepared to sacrifice sustainability to do so (Pau, 2021).

3 women customizes clothing, made to measure, in collaboration with customers using all local sewers to execute the process. Customers are encouraged to select their fabric of preference from the 3 Women collection (Rikhy, 2021). It sources all fabrics locally and repurposes where possible, “carrying on a tradition of resourcefulness” (Pau, 2021). 3 Women uses vintage textiles to make stunning repurposed garments, from trousers to dresses to button-down shirts (Rikhy, 2021). Also selling vintage and used
clothing in store, online, and frequently at flea markets. They are well documented on social media sites such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. Using social media as a means for transparency 3 women has a healthy following of loyal customers.

*Figure 1* shows the fashion brands found during the research process who are uniquely communicating sustainability efforts toward improvement. What makes them different are the many collaborations and partnerships they foster. The goal in partnerships is to create community that will echo throughout the fashion industry building upon innovations leading toward conversations which create global change in sustainability. These brands have also embraced unique ways of communicating sustainability in transparent ways, allowing consumers to feel secure in investing in the businesses. Ecoalf with their BCome partnership relaying carbon emissions, water saved, social, and ethical ratings. The North Face with its openness to share its supply chain traceability in maps. Eileen Fisher with their successful Renew program deeming themselves as “sustainably conscious.” Lastly 3 Women Co who shares their sustainable lifestyle through complete social media transparency.
Research Objectives

The identified gap in the research where sustainability communication is concerned is the scattered approach to communicating sustainability in the industry and a lack of information regarding how to fix the issue. Most of the literature suggests there needs to be a better way (Evans & Pierson-Smith, 2018; Henninger et al., 2016), but none offer a global standard of communication which would remedy greenwashing and any confusion of where fashion brands stand in their sustainability processes. Therefore, this study aims to:

- Identify key sustainable communication strategies used in fashion brand marketing.
- Evaluate best practices in sustainability communication based on legitimacy theory.
• Propose a framework to be used by fashion brands.

By reviewing sustainability communication through integrated marketing strategies, this study will identify a framework for a global standard that can be used by fashion brands. Brands can use the framework to make the necessary changes to transition into more legitimate transparent communication practices.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative method of study using a small sample of interviewees which has proven successful to gain insight into the company practices of participants (Schultz, 2019). Schultz (2019) conducted twenty semi-structured interviews with consumers that lacked any insider information; this study involved five “semi-structured” interviews with fashion industry leaders who have experience in sustainability communication. This is helpful to the research because the current theories and research regarding sustainability communication can be further developed by gaining insider in-depth information.

Major Interview Topics

These interviews are “semi-structured” so to allow interviewees to elaborate beyond the questions and were probed with more company specific tailored questions where needed to enhance the flow of information. The industry semi-structured interviews included open ended and closed questions. The questions were developed in relation to a pragmatic and moral regard for sustainability communication. They were written and then re-written with a knowledgeable consultant on the researcher’s thesis committee. The questions were made simpler and more focused so that they would be easier to understand by the participants.

Twenty interview questions were formulated based on the major themes. Q1 through Q6 are about personal sustainability motivation, Q7 through Q12 are Likert scale questions with a 1 – 5 scale (not very important – very important) regarding company sustainability communication strategy. Next, Q13 – Q17 are regarding the legitimate
transparency of the company, and lastly Q18 – Q20 are about the sustainability communication of competitors and if it effects their companies.

Several methods were used to develop a list of potential participants. The first list was found using google search, word of mouth, and social media, specifically LinkedIn and Instagram. A Forbes online article called “46 women leading the way in sustainability” provided a sample of fourteen potential participants (Townsend, 2018). Narrowed down to eight, and later narrowed down to two, who responded positively for interviews through LinkedIn.

The current list as Table 1 shows, is the accepted and final list of actual interviewees. The final came through word of mouth (P1, and P3 – P5), and P2 through Instagram and email correspondence. Five total interviewees will suffice as five is the minimum allotted for this type of research. The pseudonyms P1 – P5 were given maintain confidentiality. The criteria for the participants were that they have a minimum of five years’ experience in sustainability, marketing or transparency relating to the fashion industry.

The interviews were scheduled after obtaining IRB authorization under protocol IRB# 20-124. The questions were sent a week in advance of the actual interview. The interviews were conducted via zoom for a minimum of 30 minutes with an allowance of one hour each. Four of the interviews took place in March and the final one in April 2022.
Table 1

*Interview Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Position of Interviewee</th>
<th>Retail Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Brand Current</td>
<td>Founder/Consultant – P1</td>
<td>Marketing/Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 women co.</td>
<td>Boutique Owner – P2</td>
<td>Custom Sustainable Fashion/Vintage Apparel retailer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyuchi approx. 50 employees</td>
<td>Public Relations / Marketing – P3</td>
<td>Sustainable Apparel/Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyuchi approx. 50 employees</td>
<td>Global Sustainability Manager – P4</td>
<td>Sustainable Apparel/Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 employees</td>
<td>Co-founder – P5</td>
<td>Sustainable Beauty/Skincare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biophile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2* below shows the initial building block for the framework before the results from the interviews revealed themselves.

**Figure 2**

*Conceptual Model (Building block for the framework)*

![Conceptual Model](image)

**Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Lochmiller, 2021). The more frequent codes appear in the data set the more
likely the appearance of relative information. Identifiable themes that emerge are considered dominant ideas that unify the results. The job of the researcher is to assess the meaning behind the underlying data set and this analytic approach serves as the foundation for many types of qualitative analysis, including content analysis and ethnography (Lochmiller, 2021).

Each interview was transcribed manually, and a codebook developed of recurring topics and definitions. The major codes were collaboration, reputation, sustainability communication, legitimacy, marketing, environmental impact, transparent, standardizations, and education. These were in line with the information given in answer to the interview questions. The codebook is referenced in the Appendix. The data analysis software Dedoose was used to analyze the interviews by excerpting and coding the text and audio to pinpoint themes and phrases from the uploaded information. Dedoose is a web-based application designed to analyze and organize research data. The software helped categorize emerging themes to allow descriptive analysis.

Uploading the media in the software allowed word frequency recognition. Its excerpts of relevant recurring information showed the ways in which these firms are effectively communicating sustainability through current marketing strategies throughout their supply chain. Pinpointing what is working in the industry and deducting what needs improvement. The research report includes a simple framework that will allow the fashion industry to move toward practical sustainability messaging for true transparency in marketing strategies using thematic analysis.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Participant Backgrounds

The five interviewees contributed their knowledge and expertise in response to the questions from the perspectives of specific fields of the apparel, textiles, and beauty related industries. Each having five years or more experience in sustainability, marketing, and / or transparency. P1 is the founder of a marketing consultancy firm for fashion brands and is an expert in sustainability. P1’s responses were pertinent to the research as they have worked with many retailers as an influence in company decisions to become more sustainable. P2 is a sustainable apparel boutique owner and is the quintessential example of starting with a sustainable business model and strategizing to maintain it consistently. P3 is in public relations / marketing for a sustainable textile brand and understands the importance of communicating transparently to consumers. P4 is a global sustainability manager for a sustainable textile brand who utilizes sustainable processes through an established company framework (pillars), that help them to maintain sourcing responsibly. P5 is the founder of a sustainable beauty and skincare brand that has created a circular system using mushrooms as their main resource and lab technology to develop them in circularity. Each has a unique take on sustainability in the retail industry; however, have many things in common as far as knowledge of sustainability and the importance of transparency in the industry.

Identified Main Themes

The main themes identified from the answers were a good reputation of the brand, sustainability, sourcing responsibly, lifestyle, community, communication, education,
legitimacy, environmental impact, marketing, transparency, and standardizations. These themes are relevant to the participants who work in the industry. These themes were also recognized in the research as being practiced by the identified fashion brands such as The North Face, Eileen Fisher, Ecoalf, and 3 Women Co. Each main theme came from questions related to sustainability motivation, legitimate transparency, sustainable communication strategy, and competition. Trying to identify sustainability strategies and evaluate best practices in marketing sustainability communication. The data collection and analysis are presented according to which section they are under in connection to the themes. The sections are key to building the framework as shown in Figure 3, the Dedoose excerpt of the main themes.

**Figure 3**

*A Dedoose excerpt of main themes*

![Dedoose excerpt of main themes](image)

**Sustainability Motivation**

Further analysis of the participant’s answers gains insight into their personal views about sustainability. Explored here is how that translates into their individual roles
in each respective company. All participants value sustainability and believe it is important to remain honest and open when marketing to consumers. Sustainability is a main motivator among them as well. \textit{P1} noted that having a good reputation in society is a priority and is key in a business’ success. \textit{P4} said, “…it is of great importance to have an honest reputation and to be able to make claims that we can back up.” \textit{P2} mentioned having built their business on values of community, collaboration, and sustainability. \textit{P2} even further exclaimed that these factors “go hand in hand, and work on scaling our business without sacrificing those values.” These efforts are in line with the company’s corporate social and moral responsibility and as a personal motivator for everyone.

Further, \textit{P3} and \textit{P4} had similar motivations to building a sustainable business. Recognizing a gap in the market and transitioning to be a part of the solution instead of adding to the problem. While \textit{P2} also began their sustainability journey from their beginnings in buying and selling vintage clothing sourced from thrift stores. “Shopping at thrift stores out of resourcefulness or necessity and as an avenue to feel creative with self-expression, I think it was our lifestyle to start with,” said \textit{P2}. This speaks to an authentic background that carries over into legitimate claims of sustainable practices within the organization and introduces another recurring theme of lifestyle as an authentic sustainable claim and personal motivator.

All participants expressed concern for their personal environmental impact as well as the impact of their respective companies. \textit{P1} mentioned the climate crisis and how it affects the way she shops and recycles. They included, “…we are constantly educating ourselves and improving because we believe that everyone has the opportunity to impact change.” \textit{P3}, also talked about gaining knowledge and supporting businesses that are
doing things in sustainability. P2 mentioned feeling the weight of the consequences of their actions and believing in an immediate impact. Herein, a main theme of education is revealed. Educating oneself about sustainability and later the consumer as they also need to understand.

All participants stressed the importance of having current information regarding sustainability affecting daily tasks. Things are changing quickly in favor of sustainability communication so listening to the news for updates on regulations is crucial. P4 mentions giving back as a form of sustainable collaboration and using fairtrade in this way as a task in their job description. Once again, education arises as having current information is important to inform consumers and giving back to establish community.

All participants agreed that standardized communication is possible and needed, except P3 who believes that it is not possible; but that it would be more helpful to focus on environmental goals. While P4 believes that certifications are good standards such as Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) formed to recognize requirements for organic textiles. It is designed to ensure credible assurance of environmental and socially responsible manufacturing of a company’s practices for the consumer (OTA, 2022). The problem with this is that it holds consumers solely responsible for finding out the who, what, and where of this. It isn’t something that consumers can clearly see, as most are not aware of these kinds of coalition certifications. Whereas a regulated standard form established for all fashion brands will help consumers clearly see proof of a company’s sustainability journey as a uniform for all.

Regarding best practices in the industry, in educating themselves all participants acknowledge noticing communication practices in the fashion industry. P1 highlighted
fashion brands The Real Real and Ecoalf as showing customers how much water saved, carbon emissions, and the social impact on their webpage as you click to view items before purchasing. This is taking sustainability communication to the next level of transparency. It allows customers to see their immediate impact as well as the company’s environmental path in creating each garment in the case of Ecoalf. This is relevant to legitimate transparency and how consumers can clearly see the sustainability path being taken. Ecoalf gives themselves letter grades in partnership with a software media company called BCome. BCome uses RFID tracking throughout a company’s supply chain to generate the environmental impact in real time. When P1 brought this to light it became clear that this could be a motivating factor that makes other brands act also using this as a strategy to communicate sustainability.

**Sustainability Communication Strategy**

All were in favor of high importance to hiring people with a sustainability background or they must be open to learning about it. There was a uniformed consensus regarding the importance of having a sustainability team or department within the company, a 5 was given from all four participants. It was highly important for sustainability to be included in their company’s brand messaging as well. All agreed to the importance of marketing sustainability to consumers. P1 stated that it is extremely relevant and needs to be communicated. P2’s main objective to emphasize to consumers is collaborative production and everyone that is involved in the process. P3 wants consumers to know that they should support businesses that make things that will last. Furthermore, P3 says “…if we’re using quality materials, we can keep things in the supply chain longer.” P4 said that constantly educating consumers on how they define
sustainability and clarity on the importance is a priority. Hence, marketing sustainability, educating consumers, and collaborative production (community) arise as main themes.

There was a majority consensus regarding the importance of using correct terminology to effectively communicate sustainability to consumers. P2 was the exception, explaining that she is still learning about the different terms and their meanings. P2 says, “I think messages work better, not just terms, until we all know, and it becomes second nature to us.” This was said in context to the fact that most consumers also don’t know how to define certain sustainability terms such as circularity. P1 stated the importance of a “standardized language” which would aid in relieving confusion for consumers. P3 and P4 agreed on cautious usage of terms because they are basically claims, and should only be used if a company has the legitimacy to back up such claims. Therefore, a standardized for of communicating sustainability come up again giving relevance to letter grades as a simple form of communicating eliminating the vagueness of certain terminology and potential to claim falsities.

All participants agreed regarding the importance of transparency, legitimacy, and morality when marketing sustainability in campaigns. P2 said that when they make purchases, if they can’t easily find out who the owners are or any background information, they feel uncomfortable. It then makes them more called to be transparent for their brand. P4 had a slightly different perspective regarding marketing content. Stating, “these are areas that we really put at the forefront of what we are trying to achieve.” So, the answers are in line with transparency, legitimacy, and morality as an integral part of sustainability communication strategy.
Legitimate Transparency

These numeric answers are regarding the legitimate transparent practices of the company. Designed to see if they are aware of the consumer view and how comfortable they are with openness for the consumer’s sake. This section is about how transparent the company is with their sustainability process.

Regarding the level of transparency, P1 was indecisive because of the way their website is currently set up, but recognizes the importance of complete transparency. The website currently does not give as much information about the company; however, this will change in the future. P2 and P3 agreed, P2 stated plainly “we’re an open book”, and P3 regarded their website as being transparent because they give access to the intricacies of the supply chain. While P4 added, their intention is to be 100% transparent, however acknowledging that there are some things they hold back. This is in consideration of their competitors stealing as textiles is high in design theft, but not to hide from consumers.

Regarding the legitimacy of their sustainability claims, the majority agreed. P4 recognized the lack of public data as a hinderance, and not that their claims are not legitimate. The other participants were very sure that their company claims are legitimate. Speaking of the display of in-house processes to customers, all were very comfortable displaying them. Except P4 who again emphasized not sharing some information. “…there is a lot of copying in textiles, so we need to protect our designs and our fabrics,” they said. So, not giving the names of factories and protecting some of their partners. This is just more proof that transparency is crucial in retail now as consumers are demanding more information as to the legitimate claims of brands.
Participants were asked if they think transparency is important to their target audience. Again, all agreed apart from P4 who thinks customers are satisfied with the level of transparency provided. P2 says, “I think if they are going to spend it, then they want to know.” They also think it is important to consider transparency in marketing; All participants agree. P1 had a unique perspective and said, “In terms of brand marketing and image, there is definitely a positive impact on brand loyalty.” So, it pays in the long run to be transparent in marketing. P3 thinks, “consumers are increasingly aware and want to support those things that align with their values.” Understanding that there is a need for transparent marketing and how it can increase revenue in the long-term because it garners a perceived trust with consumers.

**Competition**

Sustainability communication when done creatively stands out in the competitive market. Whether or not brands pay attention to the process of other brands speaks to the effectiveness it has on their willingness to change. Flexibility is important in sustainability as things are changing quickly in response to consumer demand. If a standard of communication is implemented brands will need to address the issue.

This section produced some diverse answers. P1 and P5 both co-founders at their respective companies insisted that it was imperative to always know what the competition is doing. P1 pays attention to see “what others are offering in sustainability and how they can tailor their program better.” P5 says, “You have to, all the time.” If everyone had the same standard of communication, it would save time in always having to check out the competition in this area. P2 stated that from their understanding there are two sides of it. But the relevance is if everyone was talking to each other more, the same challenges that
companies face can be figured out together as sharing resources is a great way to move the needle forward faster and more efficiently. They were then asked if what other brands are doing motivates them into new measures? P2 said “Absolutely, if they are doing something great in a way I have never seen before, then I am totally stoked to see it and going to learn more about it.” P5 stated, “I think there is a pull in the industry, a need to get better and improve so I think that is definitely a motivation.” This speaks to the increased demand for sustainability transparency and consumers wanting more engaged communication. While also showing that the competition motivates companies into action.

Lastly, we aim to find out if they would utilize a standardized way of communicating sustainability which would eliminate companies from greenwashing. It would keep them from using vague terminology to describe their sustainability processes. It would help them to focus on each step in their process and even communicate their shortcomings so they will strive to do better. P1 said, “If there were a tool that could make everyone’s life easier, a baseline communication strategy and always adding on to it.” It could be a foundational design for marketing teams to utilize as a segmented framework.

P5 suggested, “to segment pieces of it like the water with fashion.” As water savings has been a conversation in fashion production. P2 added that hopefully everyone can be involved in the conversation. P3’s opinion was that their company would be willing to participate depending on what the message is. Most of these companies already adhere to some certifications for the materials they use so using a standardized
communication describing their practices is the next step in sustainability. P4 agrees with P5 regarding segmenting the standards of communication to categories.

Discussion

The interviews revealed that sustainability communication includes educating consumers as to what terms mean for specific fashion brands and what actions are being taken toward sustainability claims (Conde Nast., 2022). It speaks to Suchman’s pragmatic legitimacy of educating constituents as a way of influence (Crossley et al., 2021). Communicating a company’s environmental impact is important for claims as seen in Figure 4. Giving information about carbon emission, water usage or savings, as well as the social impacts with sourcing ethics and supply chain intricacies increases consumer awareness (Ecoalf, 2022).

Environmental impact and education can also be used in marketing strategies as seen in Figure 4. Consumers want to know the effect the company processes have on the planet and the measures taken to improve functions. Collaboration is a strong marketing strategy as well included in the framework of Figure 4, it communicates the willingness to share and create lasting relationships that will help reduce carbon footprint. This links to pragmatic legitimacy as well involving the exchange of ideas (Crossley et al., 2021).

Partnerships in the fashion industry are growing; global conversations are needed to create a standard of sustainability communication.

Since consumers now expect transparency, the demand for it has increased therefore brands must remain open to sharing information with consumers regarding business practices, to further back up their claims. Sourcing responsibly came up, shown in Figure 4 as a main factor in transparency, as well as lifestyle, and community.
Speaking to how the business treats employees throughout the supply chain. Who their partners are and how they are making each other better to form healthier and equitable communities? Consumers are concerned about these aspects of fashion brands.

Moral legitimacy as it pertains to the consumer view is if the company has a good reputation. Having socially acceptable goals and values (Crossley et al., 2021). If a company shows, they are in line with societal values they seem legit. However, when it comes to communication it is also about honest claims. Consumers want to trust brands who claim sustainability in ways that are accessible to the consumer. The results of the study show that an established good reputation is in line with legitimacy and standardizations are a good way to communicate legitimacy to them. Figure 4 shows, standardizations as a needed entity, like B-Corp and GOTS show consumers that the company has taken steps toward legitimizing their claims having gained certification.

After identifying the key sustainability strategies that are used, the next step is to evaluate the best practices. Gleaming from the research and the interviews the best practices emerged from the highlighted fashion brands. The North Face with its many collaborative efforts creating sustainable collections with other brands which pragmatically communicates sustainability to consumers and ad campaigns showing an outdoor lifestyle that is authentic to the brand (Carruthers 2021; GQ, 2021). Ecoalf has the upper hand in communicating sustainability through the letter system BCome (Ecoalf, 2022; BCome, 2022). It generates their social, ethical, and environmental impact on the planet, which is a clear avenue for other brands to use. This technology can help form the new standard in sustainability communication. Eileen Fisher has the best renew program trying toward a circular system, naming themselves “sustainably conscious” (Milnes,
2017). This communicates well as it is perceived or assumed their actions are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially structured system (Suchman, 1995). Furthermore, 3 Women Co. are a local sustainable apparel boutique whose transparency translates through active social media accounts. Sustainability is not just a brand image but rather their lifestyle.

The proposed framework is simply to use all digital outlets to educate consumers on the environmental impact of the firm. Collaborate with other brands to share resources, build community, and have conversations to figure how to reduce carbon footprint. Be transparent in how and where the company sources materials, offer lifestyle tips to help enhance the customer’s personal sustainability impact. Establish a good reputation with consumers by enacting pragmatic and moral legitimacy factors into your company structure, seek out certifications for legitimacy in your claims, and embrace new ideas of a global standard of sustainability communication when it arrives.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

Framework

The framework in Figure 4 is an extended foundation from the original concept. The main themes for communicating sustainability to consumers are straight forward and can be considered when planning a strategy to market a sustainability plan to which consumers will respond. These themes are currently being used as best practices in the fashion industry.

Therefore, the research objectives were accomplished. (1) the identified key sustainable communication strategies used in fashion brand marketing are educating consumers on sustainability journey as well as environmental impact, collaborating which communicates a willingness to share resources and building community, responsible sourcing, and having a transparently displaying the lifestyle of the brand. Lastly, a good reputation and standardizations give brands more legitimacy. (2) The best practices in sustainable communication based on legitimacy theory were found in the previously mentioned 4 brands, Ecoalf, The North Face, Eileen Fisher, and 3 Women co. Be open to many collaborations to create sustainable fashion collections. Utilize the letter grading system to communication sustainability ratings in the social, ethical, and environmental impact of the company. Creating circular systems within the brand to eliminate textile waste. Lastly, maintaining transparency on all digital platforms. (3) The proposed strategic framework fashion brands can follow to promote their sustainability efforts clearly and accurately to consumers has been developed in Figure 4.
Figure 4 is the completed framework created from the thematic analysis of the results. As the main themes appeared in the results, connections to the major themes were made to build the framework. These are sustainability communication, marketing strategies, transparency, and legitimacy theory of which the outcomes centered more around pragmatic and moral legitimacy. From sustainability communication came education and environmental impact as key factors in sustainability communication, which linked to marketing strategies and collaboration as an influence that connects with consumers. Transparency brought on sourcing responsibly, lifestyle, and community as drivers in communication as well. Lastly, from legitimacy theory (moral), having a good reputation is important and standardizations as a way of legitimizing firms.

**Figure 4**

*Framework tool developed by author for sustainability communication*
**Recommendations**

Communication is important in sustainability as things begin to rapidly change in this area (Fischer et al., 2021). Needing a standardized way of communicating it by fashion brands was agreed upon by each participant. A global conversation will best approach this idea and is slowly being reached through fashion brand collaborations. Partnerships that share resources, reduce waste, create long-lasting quality collections, and renew garments in efforts toward circular systems like Eileen Fisher and Ecoalf. These brands are leaving their collaborative partners with better sustainable processes.

The term community came up more frequently than collaboration as it encompasses the consumer as well as a sense of brand togetherness. Indicating that brand-influencer collaborations enhance consumer attitudes toward the message, their purchase intentions, and their perceived credibility (Arino, Belanche, Flavian, & Sanchez, 2021). Educating consumers also goes a long way and is a part of sustainability communication. It is a main aspect of how informative content can enhance trust in consumers (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). They are more than ever aware of the harmful effects of the fashion industry on the environment and want to support companies who are making strides to improve not harm the planet (Cattermole, 2016). Sourcing responsibly, reducing the environmental impact a company has, and letting customers know the ins and outs of this is now essential to transparency.

A standardized way of communication will help to legitimize marketing claims. If everyone is issued a code for each new step they take, consumers can learn those codes. For example, restaurant codes rate restaurants on overall health; Fashion brands could be rated in such a way. Some are already taking this measure like Ecoalf with BCome, and
The Real Real used designer fashion retailer. Each interviewee agreed to participate in this if it were a regulation. There are communities of brands who participate in certifications like The Higg Index, B-Corp, and GOTS, to name a few. However, it is a very fragmented system and not a regulated or enforced membership. Therefore, standardized communication codes are necessary and will help to eliminate greenwashing in the fashion industry. It can help restore a brand's reputation. Arino et al. (2021) reported that brand reputation resembles consumer satisfaction and is the perception of quality associated with the brand. The standardization codes can eliminate consumer confusing with the general sustainability term and give a simple, accessible way of understanding it.

**Limitations of the Study**

Some recognizable limitations of the study are that the interviewees do not realistically represent the entire fashion industry, it is more a general approach to the individuals’ using specific experiences within their respective companies and positions. However, it does not attempt to generalize the global fashion industry, only to suggest a plan to help move it forward. Although the sample size is appropriate for this study, it is very small, an ideal sample would be 15 - 20 participants. However, due to time constraints five participants will suffice. Since fashion sustainability and greenwashing in fashion marketing is a global phenomenon, this study does not touch the whole scope. But is a way to move forward in sustainable communication to help find a simpler way to legitimize claims using a standardized way of communication.
Future Research

Further studies of more industry professionals could include professionals who operate in the mainstream fashion industry. Especially the ones who have influence over major marketing and media outlets, and major fashion houses both in the U.S and abroad. Further studies could also include consumer research, as the communication in this study is about connecting to the consumer in the best way possible. Genc (2017) indicates that it has become essential to create a common understanding regarding sustainability and identify some concrete goals to be followed. Using surveys to gain insight into the way the consumer wants to learn about their favorite brand’s sustainability journey, challenges, and triumphs could be useful for marketing strategies in the fashion industry. Finding out the most effective way to communicate to consumers by asking them through a serious of survey questions can help retailers with their marketing strategies. Including website set up, social media engagement, and brand message communication. Learning consumer needs in how they want to get to know a brand is important for business.

This study used Crossley’s legitimacy theory adapted from Suchman’s 1995 framework. However, Gutman’s means-end theory can be used in future research to gain insight into consumer behavior regarding simplifying the sustainability concept. The means-end theory is based on two assumptions; First is that values play a dominate role in guiding behavior, and second that people cope with the tremendous diversity of products that are consistent with their values by grouping them into sets or classes to simplify the process of making choices (Crawford & Manyiwa, 2002). This makes sense regarding the simplification of such a complex issue. Consumers are put off by complexity when making purchase choices.
More future research could include how to approach implementing standardized codes to fashion retailers as a way of documenting their specific sustainability journey for consumer ease. It is an easily accessible way of seeing proof that retailers are acting toward sustainability and clearly communicating it to consumers. This is a great avenue so that consumers do not have to dig for information. It can be government regulated for credibility and consumers would not have to wonder if the brand’s claims are legitimate. This is a progressive step in transparency which can garner consumer perceived trust, ease of use, in-turn creating brand loyalty, and maximizing sales in the long-term because it will not deter customers but engage them.
REFERENCES


https://bcome.biz/

https://schoolofsustainability.asu.edu/about/defining-sustainability/

https://newrepublic.com/article/123561/dont-buy-this-jacket

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

doi.org/10.1108/YC-10-2020-1241.

social responsibility. 1579-1584

Cambier, F., Poncin, I. (2019). Inferring brand integrity from marketing communications:
The effects of brand transparency signals in a consumer empowerment context.


Carruthers, C. (11 Jan 2021). The north face x gucci collaboration takes to the street with

Chan, E. (2021). The sustainability terms you need to know for earth day and beyond.

Crawford, I., Manyiwa, S. (2002). Determining linkages between consumer choices in
social context and the consumer’s values: A means-end approach. *Journal of
Consumer Behaviour*. 2 (1), 54-70.

https://www.condenast.com/glossary/key-elements-of-fashion-and-sustainability

theory: The case of sustainable social and environmental practices of small and


https://www.3womenco.com/pages/3-women


Evans, S., Peirson-Smith, A. (2018). The sustainability word challenge exploring consumer interpretations of frequently used words to promote sustainable fashion


Read, B. (2019). In the future, we’ll all be wearing Eileen Fisher. *Vogue.*
https://www.vogue.com/article/in-the-future-we-will-all-be-wearing-eileen-fisher


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/THEMES

Personal sustainability motivation

1. In terms of your company, is having a good reputation in society a priority?
2. How did your company get started in sustainability? Was there a specific reason or event that occurred?
3. What does sustainability mean to you on a personal level?
4. In what ways does sustainability affect your daily tasks in your job position?
5. Would you say a global standard of sustainable communication is possible?
6. Have you noticed any kinds of best practices being implemented in the fashion industry?

Company sustainability communication strategy

7. How much emphasis is the company putting into hiring people with a sustainability background (scale of 1 to 5), 5 being highly important?
8. On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is having a sustainability team to your company? If your company does not have this, are they planning to expand into this?
9. On a scale of 1 – 5, Does sustainability play a role in your brand messaging?
10. How important is marketing sustainability to consumers, to your company (scale of 1 to 5) 5 being highly important? And what is your main objective when communicating sustainability to consumers?
11. On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is the terminology that your company uses to effectively communicate sustainability? If so, what are those terms?
12. Rating their importance on a scale of 1 – 5, How important is transparency, legitimacy, & morality in your company's sustainability marketing campaigns?

**Legitimate Transparency**

13. On a scale of 1 – 5, how transparent is your company with its sustainability processes, five being highly transparent?

14. On a scale of 1 – 5, Are your company’s sustainability claims legitimate?

15. On a scale of 1 – 5, how comfortable is your company with displaying in-house processes and procedures to consumers?

16. On a scale of 1 – 5, Do you think transparency is important to your target group of customers?

17. On a scale of 1 – 5, Is it important to consider transparency when marketing to your customers?

**Sustainability communication of competitors**

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, (5 being highly important) how important is it to pay attention to what other brands are doing in sustainability

19. On a scale of 1 – 5, Do the sustainability practices of other brands motivate you into new measures?

20. On a scale of 1 – 5, Would your company be willing to participate in utilizing the standard?
Each interview was transcribed manually, and a codebook developed of recurring topics and definitions. The major codes were collaboration, reputation, sustainability communication, legitimacy, marketing, environmental impact, transparent, standardizations, and education. These were in line with the information given in answer to the interview questions.
APPENDIX B

CODEBOOK - Defining main themes

Codes for MOTIVATION

1. In terms of your company, how important is your reputation in society?
   - Successful - a good reputation is key to success
   - Values - sustainability
   - Honest - transparent processes
   - Engage in communication - marketing to consumers
   - Community - reference to collaborations

2. How did your company get started in sustainability? Was there a specific reason or event that occurred?
   - Stay ahead of trends - marketing
   - Importance of sustainability - legitimate
   - Necessity - sustainability
   - Creativity - marketing
   - Lifestyle - legitimate
   - Gap in the Market - sustainability

3. What does sustainability mean to you on a personal level?
   - Climate crisis - global environmental impact
   - Recycling - use less waste (one-use items)
   - Self - Education - learning and evolving into more sustainable practices
   - How I buy and where I shop - sourcing materials responsibly and supporting sustainable businesses.
• Immediate impact - accessible ways of change
• Healthier & Equitable community - solving sustainability challenges
• Create thriving relationships - positive human connection

4. **In what ways does sustainability affect your daily tasks in your job position?**
• Constant personal education - sustainability
• Current information - sustainability
• Using second-hand materials - sustainability
• Recycle - daily sustainable act
• Listening to the news - sustainability information
• Fairtrade - community & collaboration
• 100% organic - sustainable materials
• Giving back to community - collaboration

5. **Would you say a global standard of sustainable communication is possible?**
• Standardizing communication - transparency
• Transparent - standards
• Global conversation - sustainability communication
• Certifications - sustainability communication standards
• Emission goals - sustainability communication standards

6. **Have you noticed any kinds of best practices being implemented in the fashion industry?**
• carbon - environmental impact
• Water saved - environmental impact
• Social impact - consumer education
• Apps - consumer education
• New business models - resourceful & transparent
• Reshaping practices - resourceful & transparent
• Custom clothing - more sustainable
• Social media - sustainability movement
• Certified - transparent
• Goals - sustainability

Codes for Sustainability communication strategy

7. How much emphasis is the company putting into hiring people with a sustainability background (scale of 1 to 5), 5 being highly important?

• 5 (P1)
• 5 (P2)
• 5 (P3)
• 5 (P4)

8. On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is having a sustainability team to your company? If your company does not have this, are they planning to expand into this?

• 5 (P1)
• 5 (P2)
• 5 (P3)
• 5 (P4)

9. On a scale of 1 – 5, Does sustainability play a role in your brand messaging?

• 5 (P1)
10. How important is marketing sustainability to consumers, to your company (scale of 1 to 5) 5 being highly important? And what is your main objective when communicating sustainability?

- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

11. On a scale of 1 – 5, how important is the terminology that your company uses to effectively communicate sustainability? If so, what are those terms?

- 5 (P1)
- 4 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

12. Rating their importance on a scale of 1 – 5, How important is transparency, legitimacy, & morality in a company's sustainability marketing campaigns?

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

Codes for Legitimate Transparency
13. **On a scale of 1 – 5, how transparent is your company with its sustainability processes, five being highly transparent?**

- 3 or 4 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 4 (P4)

14. **On a scale of 1 – 5, Are your company’s sustainability claims legitimate?**

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 4 (P4)

15. **On a scale of 1 – 5, how comfortable is your company with displaying in-house processes & procedures to consumers?**

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 4 (P4)

16. **On a scale of 1 – 5, Do you think transparency is important to your target group of customers?**

- 2 or 3 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 4 (P4)
17. On a scale of 1 – 5, Is it important to consider transparency when marketing to your customers?

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 5 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

Codes for Sustainability communication of competitors

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, (5 being highly important) how important is it to pay attention to what other brands are doing in sustainability?

- 5 (P1)
- 3 (P2)
- 4 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

19. On a scale of 1 – 5, Do the sustainability practices of other brands motivate you into new measures?

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 3 (P3)
- 5 (P4)

20. On a scale of 1 – 5, Would your company be willing to participate in utilizing the global standard?

- 5 (P1)
- 5 (P2)
- 3 (P3)
- 3 or 4 (P4)

**APPENDIX C**

**Figure 5**

*Code Presence calculated by Dedoose*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Presence calculated by Dedoose</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Stewardship</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Environmental Impact</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS P5.docx</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS P4.docx</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS P3.docx</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS P2.docx</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS P1.docx</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>