

Dress for the Press – Creating alternative news media agendas for fashion commerce

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<p>The objective of the thesis project was to explore and portray the current states of news media visibility of fashion commerce in Finland and the societal – economic, environmental and cultural – importances of fashion commerce, to be able to develop new alternative news media agendas that can benefit the fashion commerce business sector while diversifying the case organization’s role as a societal voice.</p> <p>The case organization is the nationwide representative of the entire commerce sector, of which fashion is part. It is in the interest of a public advocacy organization that the news media coverage of their member companies reflects the societal effects in a versatile way because media has the power to shape people’s opinions and attitudes.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of the study is based on is public relations and stakeholder relations, namely media as a stakeholder. Furthermore, it uses theories of lobbying and agenda setting. The study also uses literature review of fashion commerce’s importances as research method, therefore fashion research, statistics and news sources are also featured in the theoretical framework.</p> <p>The study was a mixed-method constructive research consisting of a news media article content analysis, whose purpose was to portray the current state of news media coverage of fashion commerce; and a literature review based on topical sources, whose purpose was to portray the current state of the societal effects of fashion commerce. The practical outcome of the thesis was constructed in the last phase, which was the creation of alternative media agendas for fashion commerce. Mixed method was used – the content analysis was done using both qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> <p>The results show that the fashion commerce sector has substantial and far-reaching effects, both economically, environmentally, and culturally. The sector is large and multifaceted both nationally and globally, and fashion as a product group plays an important role in the success of the commerce sector as a whole. Analysis of news coverage shows that wider and more diverse news media visibility could be possible, based on the findings about the sector’s importance.</p> <p>New alternative media agendas that can realistically be taken to use in terms of immaterial resources in case organization were produced during the study project. The agendas can benefit the case organization by diversifying or strengthening its role as a societal spokesorganization. The outcomes of the study can also be utilized by its member associations and member companies. Fashion commerce sector can benefit from taking the new alternative agendas to use. This in turn can advance the success of commerce, Finland’s largest industry field and employer, as a whole.</p>	
<p>Key words Fashion Commerce; Public Relations; Stakeholder Relations; News Media Coverage; Agenda Setting; Lobbying</p>	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Topic Introduction	4
2.1	Media and the public opinion.....	5
2.2	Case sector: Fashion commerce.....	6
2.3	The commerce sector in Finland and the case organization.....	7
2.4	Case organization's links to fashion commerce	11
2.5	Definitions of terms.....	12
3	Research setting.....	15
3.1	Research questions.....	16
3.2	Research process	16
4	Fashion commerce	19
4.1	Fashion commerce as a societal force and phenomenon	19
4.1.1	Economic effects of fashion commerce.....	21
4.1.2	Environmental effects of fashion commerce	24
4.1.3	Cultural effects of fashion commerce	29
4.1.4	Fashion commerce as part of man-made environments	33
4.1.5	Fashion as a pastime	34
4.2	Case organization and the societal effects of fashion commerce	35
5	Public relations	37
5.1	Lobbying.....	37
5.2	Stakeholder relations.....	39
5.2.1	News media as a stakeholder	39
5.2.2	Agenda setting theory	42
6	Conducting the research.....	44
6.1	Research method: Constructive research	44
6.1.1	Conducting part I: Current state analysis of media coverage... ..	47
6.1.2	Conducting part II: Current state analysis of societal effects	61
6.1.3	Conducting part III: Creating alternative agendas	65
7	Conclusion	69
	Bibliography.....	73
8	Appendices	1
	Appendix 1: Search words.....	1
	Appendix 2: Current state of media coverage (Confidential)	2
	Appendix 3: Current state of societal effects of fashion commerce	3
	Appendix 4: Alternative agendas for case organization (Confidential)	17

1 Introduction

As one of the largest business sectors in the world and a commodity that all use, fashion is part of our everyday lives, and has been in all ages and around the globe. Due to growing concerns about climate and other environmental issues, fashion business faces a lot of scrutinizing over its practices and policies and demands to deduct its impact on the environment.

The critical approach manifests itself in many ways, from consumers asking for more information about the environmental effects of a garment to downright shopping strikes, such as Buy Nothing Day. The fashion business sector has reacted to customers' demands in many different ways, but the notion that we all should just stop buying apparel and footwear has lived on and has led to the sector seeming to fight for the entitlement of its whole existence. At the same time, paradoxically, the sector is predicted to grow noticeably and to the unforeseeable future, due to growing populations and prosperity globally.

The reputation and visibility of fashion commerce as a phenomenon has an effect on the success of companies operating in the field. Fashion products are one of the major product categories for commerce and therefore the way fashion is viewed has an effect on the business of those companies that trade fashion, and thus on the whole commerce sector, as some of the world's biggest corporations also have major business trading fashion.

The study's case organization Finnish Commerce Federation is the lobbyist for the commerce sector in Finland. While it is not focused on fashion commerce especially, its member companies do represent the majority of fashion commerce in Finland. Commerce as a whole is Finland's biggest taxpayer, one of the biggest investors, and the biggest employer, employing nearly 300 000 people across the value chain. Therefore, the success of the commerce sector has a direct impact on the prosperity of the whole country.

Reputation is partially built on people's views that are in part formed by what has been written in the news. Media has an important role as the transmitter of information. Even though social media has changed the way information and news travel – making it faster and more democratic, as anyone can act as media – traditional news media still has a significant role as one of the most trusted information sources available, in telling people

about happenings, phenomena, people and developments, thus affecting our perception of the world around us.

Media is one of the most important stakeholder groups for many organizations, also for the case organization of this study. As a nationwide lobbying organization, whose missions include maintaining and improving the reputation of the companies in its scope and even more importantly, achieving the societal advocacy objectives that improve the operational conditions of the commerce sector, media is an important partner, that transmits the data and views provided by the organization.

This study seeks to portray how fashion commerce currently is reported about in the news media and on the other hand, to portray fashion commerce's societal significances. Finally, the thesis attempts to compare and reflect the two, to create alternative news media agendas that might help mirror fashion commerce's importance in an appropriate way.

The ongoing spring of 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic has caused an unforeseen downfall in some commerce sectors worldwide, as countries have faced restrictions on movement and social gatherings, slowing down shopping and in the case of fashion, also the acute need for new clothes. In Finland, especially apparel and footwear commerce has plummeted dramatically, as can be seen in Image 1.

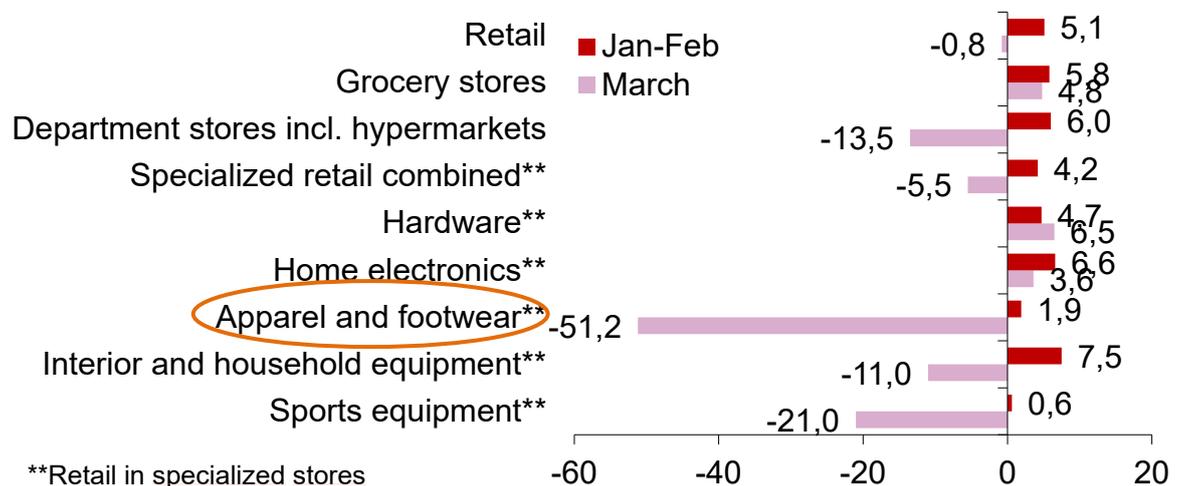


Image 1. Fashion retail has plummeted due to the coronavirus crisis of 2020 (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2020).

In times of crisis many business sectors that have suffered from the coronavirus pandemic have innovated a variety of ways to continue doing good business in a new environment,

and many have reached out to both governmental bodies and individual citizens for support. Indeed, many forms of direct support, goodwill and the intent to help others has emerged nationally and on a global scale, between citizens and organizations. While this study doesn't attempt to answer the question if different kind of reputation of fashion commerce could have protected it in time of crisis or subsidized its efforts to be heard as a sector that needs and deserves support, the traumatic spring has been an interesting time to work on the study, raising questions of if fashion commerce's significance to society is fully understood and communicated, and if commerce news from the fashion sector during the spring would have been different in some way, had fashion commerce been handled in news media as a phenomenon of societal importance.

The study begins with a chapter explaining the main concepts and the context of the study. Chapter 3 describes the research setting; research questions, process and structure. The literature review of this study is divided into two parts: chapter 4 explores fashion commerce and the societal importances of it and is the basis for answering research question 2. Chapter 5 offers the theoretical framework of the study and focuses on public relations, moreover on lobbying and stakeholder relations, and the role of media – more precisely news media and agenda setting – in the entity of public relations. Chapter 6 explains how the research was conducted and is further divided into three parts, all of which tackle one research question at a time. Finally, the research and thesis project is discussed and evaluated in chapter 7.

The study includes confidential content that is presented to the case organization only. The current state analysis of media coverage (Appendix 2) is confidential, as is Appendix 4 which answers research question 3 and simultaneously is the concrete outcome of the thesis project.

2 Topic Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the main concepts and context of the research and development project. The chapter looks into the operating environment of the case organization, to the sectors of commerce and further fashion commerce in Finland, and to the connections between the beforementioned. In addition, the chapter explains how media effects public opinion and thus its significance to an organization looking out for the interests of its member companies, in this case companies operating in the field of fashion commerce. Finally, the chapter defines the terms and definitions of the topic covered in this study.

This study seeks to explore the current state of news media visibility of fashion commerce in Finland and based on the state analysis and topical sources regarding fashion commerce and its societal importances, to provide new ideas for developing the visibility for the benefit of fashion commerce business sector.

The author's employer, Finnish Commerce Federation, will be given the set of new ideas for reviewing if untapped socio-economic opportunities that the organization can frame for its own benefit, have been found. The outcome of the thesis is a set of alternative media agendas; ideas of themes and subject matters that can be used by Finnish Commerce Federation to diversify its own role as a societal voice. The alternative agendas of themes and subjects can also be utilized by member associations or individual member companies of Finnish Commerce Federation, in addition to or instead of the case organization.

Fashion commerce holds many attributes that touch people on many levels, and thus could be a rewarding area to unearth themes and subjects to be communicated to the news media.

As an organization representing the whole commerce sector in Finland, a versatile voice reflecting the multifaceted member companies is one factor that can amplify the voice of Finnish Commerce Federation. In this thesis, fashion commerce is one case example of a commerce sector that might have the potential to strengthen the voice of Finnish Commerce Federation in society.

For the companies operating in fashion commerce, news media coverage that reflects also the positive sides of the societal role of fashion commerce would be beneficial. The

positive sides of the phenomena include for example its economic and cultural effects that will be explored in this thesis.

2.1 Media and the public opinion

There are many means for pursuing visibility and positive reputation of a business sector – in the area of lobbying and public advocacy for example communications as a whole, training and happenings, marketing of the organization's services and different types of campaigns, to name a few.

This thesis focuses on having an impact via news media, which is one of the main stakeholder groups of any modern lobbying organization, also of Finnish Commerce Federation. Furthermore, the focus of this thesis is limited to the news media visibility of fashion commerce, not all Finnish commerce.

According to Lippmann (1922) the news media are a major link between the world outside and the pictures in our heads. The news media has a major impact on how phenomena and organizations are viewed by the public – on which issues are considered important at a certain time. It also has the capability to direct the public's attention to specific aspects of these issues (McCombs 2001). Media power is generally symbolic and persuasive, in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers or viewers, if not directly their actions (van Dijk 1995).

Furthermore, the power of media also involves the role of the media within the broader framework of the social, cultural, political, or economic power structures of society, which means that the power of media is not restricted to its influence on their audiences (van Dijk 1995).

According to van Dijk, the mainstream news media are not passive onlookers, quite the opposite; they are often the first to witness or describe breaking events, new developments, or local situations. It is primarily their definition of the situation that contributes to the manufacturing of public opinion (1995, 28). The spread of social media in the last decade has changed the traditional news media's role and stripped it off its monopoly as the one to break the news and shape opinions; the openness of social media platforms facilitates the potential of what Charles Leadbeater (2008) calls the 'mass-collaboration' of individuals and groups who become the source of new innovations and ideas in democratic practices (Loader and Mercea 2012, 3).

According to Paul Capriotti (2009), mass media has gradually and because of social changes, become an important part of people's daily life. Luhmann (2000, 1) pointed out that what we know about society and the world we learn through the mass media. More and more people use the media as a way of finding out what is happening around them (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1997, 197). In other words, the media contributes to establishing the social reality of the community (Wolf, 1994, 120) as well as the visibility of the social actors in the eyes of public opinion, given that a lot of the information about events and subjects arrives to the stakeholders delivered by mass media (Capriotti 2009).

Businesses play an important social role in society that goes beyond their traditional economic role, but they are basically presented as economic and not social actors in society, concludes Capriotti (2009).

Given the essential role of news media as a shaper of opinions and attitudes, a commerce sector has many reasons to be concerned about *how* its covered in news media.

2.2 Case sector: Fashion commerce

"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society."

- Mark Twain

Fashion and clothing, a phenomenon that touches – literally – each one of us, is one of the driving forces of society everywhere in the world and in all ages. It's a noticeable field of business employing people in manufacturing, marketing, trading, logistics, media & PR, culture and many other fields all over the world. From a personal point of view, clothing is an essential part of every day and situation for all.

There are undeniable negative aspects to any business field and fashion commerce is no exception. Fashion trade is challenged especially for its impact on the environment. While the negative effects obviously have to be addressed – also in news media – in an appropriate and open manner to improve practices and policies, for the public to be able to form their own understanding of a phenomena – such as a field of commerce in this case – they should receive versatile and diversified information about it via news media.

As the second most polluting industry in the world (United Nations 2019), fashion business has a lot to answer for. Additionally, it is challenged not only for the many environmentally problematic issues such as the impact of fibre and product manufacturing, the accelerating pace of logistics due to growing numbers of faster-changing collections and

the accumulating amounts of textile waste due to sped-up trend shifts, fashion business is also scrutinized for the working conditions of its mainly female personnel around the globe and criticised for twisting people's body image in unhealthy ways and thus boosting eating disorders.

Against this background it is possible that the news media visibility of fashion commerce emphasizes the negative, even though there are also positive angles to the phenomena, and those are the angles this study seeks to map.

Fashion commerce is chosen as a case-example of a commerce sector that has strong foothold in the context of specialized stores but is present in all types of retail, from discount markets to high-end department stores, and in all channels.

2.3 The commerce sector in Finland and the case organization

The research looks into case sector fashion commerce's news media visibility foremostly from the point of view of Finnish Commerce Federation – an organization whose function is to promote Finnish commerce – as one organization whose member companies' interest it would serve for fashion commerce to have diversified news media coverage. Fashion commerce is one part of the commerce sector entity.

Finnish Commerce Federation is a nationwide lobbying organization that attempts to improve the operating conditions of companies active in retail and wholesale trade, to stimulate co-operation within the sector and to enhance the commercial and employer interests of its members. Finnish Commerce Federation ensures that trade development is healthy and looks out for the interests of its approximately 2200 member companies. Furthermore, the organization has an important role in the labour market negotiating collective labour agreements resolving labour disputes and serving members in employment issues (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

One of the methods of promoting commerce, aside from the main activities of the organization, is to pursue the visibility and positive reputation of the commerce sector as an employer, an investor, a taxpayer, a general engine for economic growth that creates wellbeing, and an important service-provider in all citizens' lives in practically every village and city.

Finnish Commerce Federation represents all types of commerce. Different commerce types include wholesale companies, technical trading companies and retail companies, for

example speciality stores, department stores, convenience and grocery stores and supermarkets. All these might have different channels such as physical stores and online stores.

Among the member companies are S Group and Kesko Corporation that are Finland's biggest trading companies and among the top 4 of Finland's biggest companies measured by turnover and in the top 9 measured by number of personnel (Asiakastieto 2020).

Member companies include retailers and wholesale companies from all sectors. Finnish Commerce Federation has 19 member associations and one partner association (Finnish Commerce Federation 2020).

Commerce sector is Finland's largest industry in employee numbers, as seen in Image 2, providing work for nearly 290 000 people (Statistics Finland 2019). Employment not only improves the quality of living standard of an employed person and improve the productivity of a company; it results in overall increase in economic growth and development of a country as a whole.

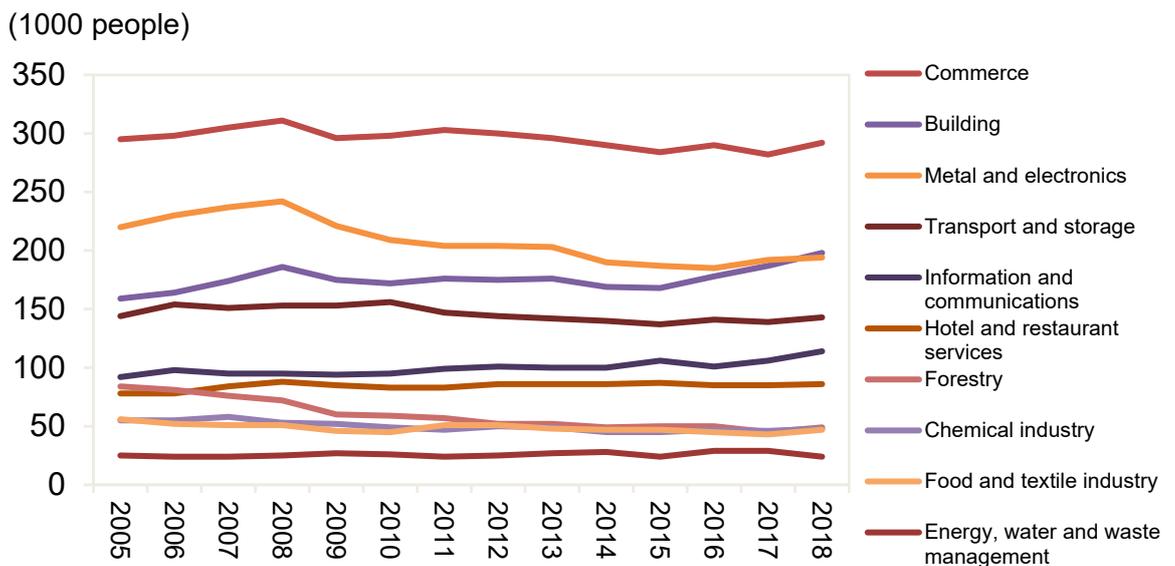


Image 2: Commerce is the biggest employer of the private business sector. (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

The commerce sector employs more under 25-year-olds than any other sector in Finland (Image 3, Finnish Commerce Federation 2019) and thus is the very first contact to working and employment for many. First jobs can have an effect on the attitudes towards work

and employing organizations for life, so the impression the young get of their employer is by no means insignificant.

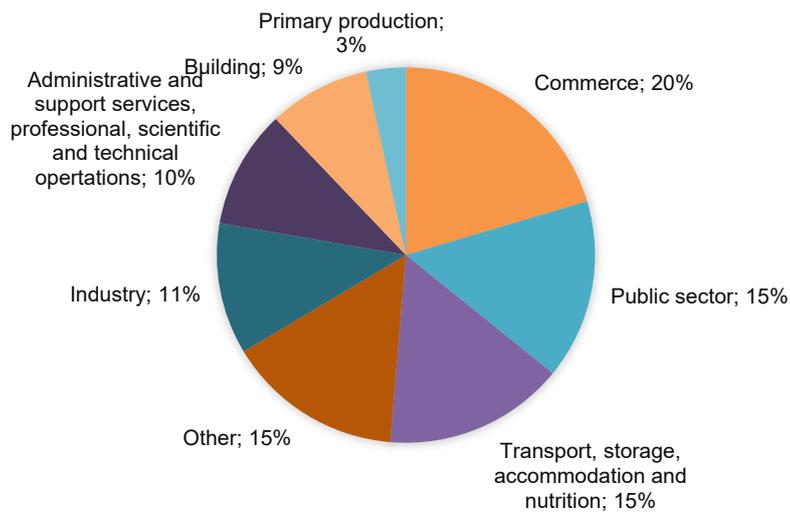


Image 3: Proportions of the employed under 25-year-olds 2018. (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2018).

Image 4 shows the turnover of the entire commerce sector without VAT in 2019: 127 billion euros and it accounts for about ten percent of the Finland's gross domestic product (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019, 2020).

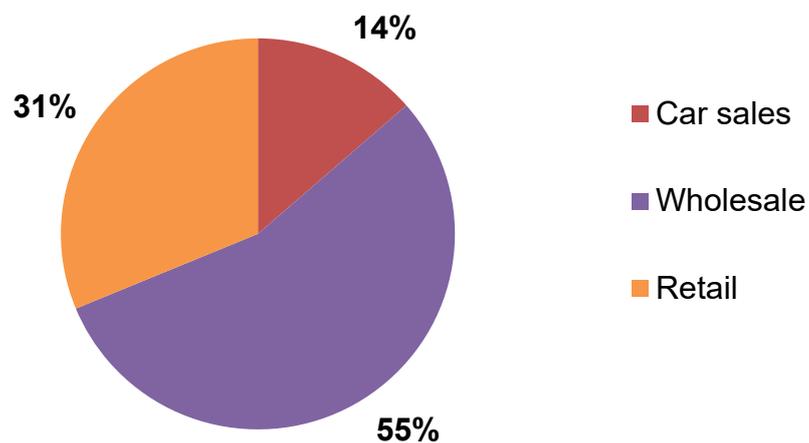


Image 4: Commerce sales trade development. Turnover 2019 total 127 billion € excl. VAT. (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2020).

Apparel and footwear is the sixth largest sectors of commerce measured by turnover (Statistics Finland 2019) but it is important to note that apparel and footwear are also sold

alongside groceries in supermarkets and hypermarkets, alongside many other product groups in companies listed as department stores, and that sports equipment commerce for some part constitutes of apparel and footwear as well, as shown on image 5.



Image 5: Retail commerce sectors by turnover. Total 39,8 billion € excl. VAT, in 2019. (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

Finnish Commerce Federation is a member of Confederation of Finnish Industries (Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto EK) and its office is located in Eteläranta 10, in central Helsinki, together with many other employee associations. The organization employs roughly 25 people, working in labour market services, industrial policy, research and economic policy, communications, administration and events and training (Finnish Commerce Federation 2020).

Finnish Commerce Federation has 13 committees focused on different subject areas such as safety; environment and energy; economic and taxation policy; and community planning. There is also a committee group centred on specialized consumer goods commerce sector, in which fashion commerce is represented.

2.4 Case organization's links to fashion commerce

Finnish Commerce Federation's biggest member companies S Group and Kesko Corporation's supermarkets are also among the nation's biggest sellers of fashion and clothing, as seen on image 6 (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

The organization has around 210 member companies that by standard industrial classification are specialized fashion or sports equipment retailers, wholesalers or other fashion commerce related businesses, and nearly 180 large supermarket or department store member companies.

It is possible that not all of the member supermarkets, department stores and sports stores sell apparel or footwear but acknowledging that all those are among the Finnish population's favourite addresses for their fashion shopping, it is likely that at least a major part of them do sell fashion, amounting to 390 member companies, or nearly 20 % of all member companies, with fashion related commerce.

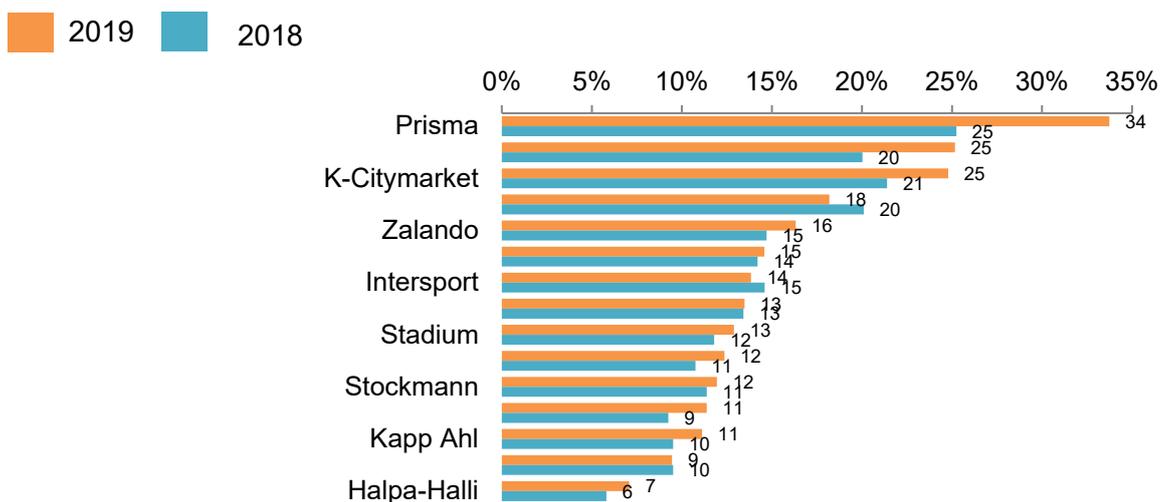


Image 6: 15 most used fashion shops in Finland, % of customers (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

Two of Finnish Commerce Federation's member associations, **Fashion Finland** (previously Fashion Commerce in Finland, Muotikaupan Liitto ry) that has nearly 170 member companies (Fashion Finland 2020) and **Fashion and Sports Commerce Association** (Muoti- ja urheilukauppa ry) that has around 100 member companies (Fashion and Sports Commerce Association 2020) operate in the field of fashion trade and commerce lobbying.

There is overlapping in memberships of Finnish Commerce Federation, Fashion Finland and Fashion and Sports Commerce Association: many companies are members of more than one of these. (Finnish Commerce Federation, Fashion and Sports Commerce Association and Fashion Finland 2020). In addition, some are also members of **Finnish Textile and Fashion**, the central organization for textile, clothing and fashion manufacturing companies in Finland (Finnish Textile and Fashion 2020).

Both Fashion Finland and Fashion and Sports Commerce Association have representation in the Finnish Commerce Federation's Committee of Specialized Consumer Goods Commerce Sector.

Fashion commerce sector is thus present in the functions of Finnish Commerce Federation both in the context of specialized (fashion) commerce and in the context of fashion goods as a product group in supermarkets and department stores.

2.5 Definitions of terms

The focus of the study is in how Finnish news media portray *fashion commerce* and *fashion consumption*. As such, the study is not limited to Finnish fashion commerce companies only, but rather to fashion commerce companies that are mentioned in Finnish news media when fashion commerce is discussed. The group of companies which come to be mentioned in the study are limited to companies that become mentioned in news media hits in which one or more of the defined search words were included in, whether the company is Finnish or not, or whether it operates in Finland or not. However, articles about fashion commerce companies operating in Finland are considered more relevant to the study than articles about fashion commerce companies that have no operations in Finland.

Not all articles covering the search words mention any company at all but might be articles about fashion consumption as such.

The study does not seek to describe the news visibility of the whole concept of *fashion business* (Image 7), which includes the whole value chain from the trend industry, fashion design, fibre production, fashion manufacturing, fashion marketing and fashion logistics, for example. However, a company operating in one of these fields might have become to be mentioned in the study if the company in question has been covered by one of the news media sources in the context of fashion commerce (and to be more precise, in an article that includes one or more of the defined search words).

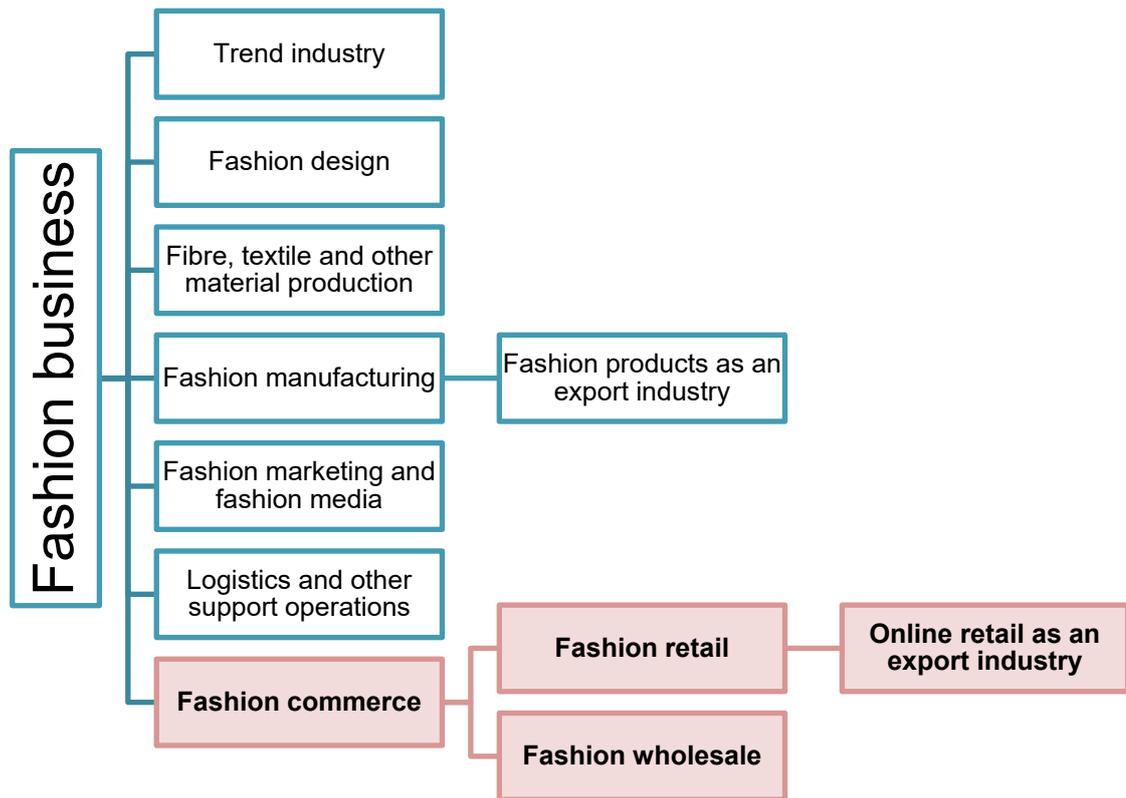


Image 7: Structure of fashion business sector.

Fashion commerce sector and its sub-sectors are most relevant to this study. Many functions overlap and for example marketing and logistics naturally are linked to all operations.

With this limitation, the study does not seek to portray the Finnish news media visibility of Finnish *fashion industry*, Finnish *fashion design*, or Finnish *fashion as an export industry*. Again, one or more of these concepts or companies operating in these areas might have come to be mentioned in the study if an article has included one or more of the defined search terms and thus has been of interest to this study. This said, it is still possible that there are articles relevant to the study that cover *online retail as an export business*, when a Finnish retail company sells and ships products beyond the borders of the country.

However, this is a phenomena separate from *fashion as an export industry*, in its traditional meaning, in which garments produced in Finland are sold to retailers abroad by manufacturers.

It is important to note that many of the companies that come to be mentioned in the study operate strongly in areas of manufacturing as well as commerce, for example vertical operators such as H&M, and major retail companies that have private labels.

The limitations are based on the Finnish Commerce Federation's scope of interest: it is a nationwide lobbying organisation whose mission is to promote Finnish commerce. As such, it is of interest to the organization how a particular commerce sector is portrayed by national news media.

The term *fashion* in this thesis refers to all dressing products, such as apparel, footwear and accessories, for all target groups and in all price ranges, sold through any channel.

3 Research setting

This chapter is dedicated to explaining the research objectives, research questions and the process of the research.

It is in the interests of Finnish Commerce Federation to spot, name and utilize opportunities that can provide subjects for its strategic themes to be covered in media, and the societal – economic and cultural – importances of fashion commerce might hold new potential for the organization to use in order to achieve its own goals of versatile news media visibility that spans from daily goods commerce to specialized commerce, from micro entrepreneurs to major trade groups.

Fashion commerce is present in all these, and a very versatile group of fashion trading members fit under the umbrella of Finnish Commerce Federation, an organization that represents the entity of Finnish commerce.

Simultaneously, it is possible, that the coverage fashion commerce gets in Finnish news media is not as positive, versatile or broad as it could be and that some societally important themes that fashion commerce is part of do not get coverage or get very little coverage.

The aim of the research and development project is to portray the current state of the visibility of fashion commerce in Finnish news media and based on the current state analysis and topical sources, identify untapped opportunities for fashion commerce to be covered in news media. The limitations of what is meant by fashion commerce or fashion business is explained in the introduction's chapter 2.5 in which terms were defined.

The results can be of interest to Finnish Commerce Federation, whose member companies constitute the majority of fashion commerce in Finland (Finnish Commerce Federation 2020), or it can be utilized by its member associations or member companies.

The outcome of the thesis project is thus a set of alternative news media agendas, in which fashion commerce is portrayed to a wider potential of reflecting its societal – economic, environmental and cultural – importance. Answering research questions 1 and 2 are essential to answer research question 3.

3.1 Research questions

There are three research questions that are further divided into sub-questions. The first two are about the current state of affairs and the third one is based on the findings from the first two.

Research Question 1:

How is fashion commerce covered in Finnish news media?

- **Who** writes about fashion commerce?
- In which **context** is fashion commerce covered?
- Who **represents** fashion commerce in news media?
- To what degree are **case organization's themes of interest** present in coverage?

Research Question 2:

How is fashion commerce societally important?

- What are the **economic effects** it has?
- What are the **environmental effects** it has?
- What are the **cultural effects** it has?
- What are its relations to the **case organization's themes of interest**?

Research Question 3:

What could be an alternative agenda to cover fashion commerce in Finnish news media?

- Do the answers to RQ1 reflect the answers to RQ2 in an appropriate manner; Does fashion commerce's news media coverage reflect its societal importance in a satisfactory way?

3.2 Research process

The research process has three parts that are further divided into sub-parts, as seen in image 8. The process started in August 2019 with defining the research objectives and proceeded to data collection and analysis of the first research part, analysis of media coverage, in November and December. In the beginning of year 2020 the analysis was finalized, and the focus of the project moved on to the second research part, portraying of

fashion commerce sector, towards the early spring. The literature review writing process continued throughout the project parallelly with conducting the research. Finally, in April and May 2020 the concluding part of the research was conducted, and the work completed in May.

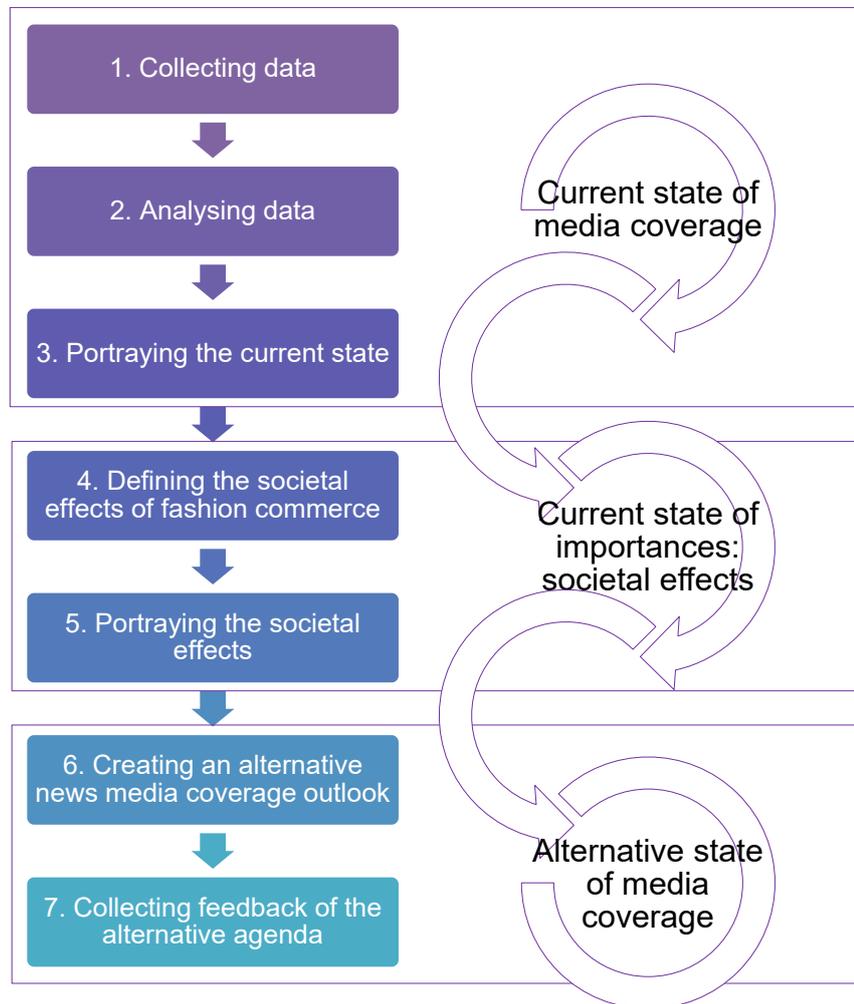


Image 8: The research process.

Research process parts regarding current state of media coverage

The first part of the process is **collecting data** about the news media visibility of fashion commerce by defining a relevant set of conditions, such as media sources, search words and timeline, downloading the news articles and then organizing them for analysing.

In the **data analysis** the news articles are read or eyed through and sorted into different categories. The analysis mixes qualitative and quantitative research methods. An example of using qualitative method is the author's consideration of what is relevant to fashion commerce; an example of the latter is counting how many fashion commerce related articles a certain media published.

The current state is then portrayed in a visual presentation, mainly by using graphs in Appendix 2: Current state of media coverage (Confidential).

Research process parts regarding current state of importances

Topical sources, such as fashion research sources and statistics about fashion commerce are used to **define the societal effects and importances of fashion commerce** economically, environmentally and culturally (Chapter 4 Fashion Commerce).

The societal effects are then made into a visual presentation of the importances of fashion commerce (Appendix 3: Current state of societal effects of fashion commerce).

Research process parts regarding alternative state of media coverage

Finally, the current state of media coverage and the current state of importances are compared to create an **alternative news media agendas** (Appendix 4: Alternative agendas for case organization, Confidential).

In the last part the **alternative news media agendas** are presented to the case organization for review and discussion, and for them to express if they recognize opportunities to use the presented ideas as a way to diversify or amplify their own voice as a societal debater; or other ways in which to utilize the outcome of the thesis.

4 Fashion commerce

This chapter is the first part of the study's literature review, focusing on fashion and fashion commerce as phenomena. Its purpose is to map the societal significance of fashion commerce and fashion business in terms of economic, environmental and cultural effects, and link them to the case organizations' themes of interest; work, growth, competitiveness, climate and lively city and town centres.

Topical statistics, news reports and classic fashion research are used as sources to define and describe the societal importances of fashion commerce. Thus, the chapter is also the data used to answering the second research question. The findings are compiled into a visual summary that attempts to answer RQ2:

How is fashion commerce societally important?

- What are the **economic effects** it has?
- What are the **environmental effects** it has?
- What are the **cultural effects** it has?
- What are its relations to the **case organization's themes of interest**?

4.1 Fashion commerce as a societal force and phenomenon

"Know, first, who you are, and then adorn yourself accordingly."

- *Epictetus*

Clothing supports us in many ways in our daily functions and the economy around it reflects its importance. While many of the environmental concerns are undeniable and the concern of the public justifiable, the role of fashion commerce in society is not solely destructive or harmful – clothing is part of our everyday lives, and while the lifecycle of garments probably often could be lengthened, new clothes still are bought, and demand is on the rise due to growing populations.

Apparel and footwear are mainly brought to us by the network of businesses operating in the fashion commerce sector offline and online. C2C online sales of fashion – social media platform markets and other online customer-to-customer platforms – are one the rise, estimated in 2018 to be 34 million euros per year in Finland. The figure does not include children's apparel, footwear or sportswear, which would make the figure significantly higher, as the children's product group totals 38 million euros and sports 20 million yearly

(Saarijärvi 2018). Despite the fast growing and impressive volume for “mere” flea market business, it is clear that even with very high-speed growth, it is just a drop in the ocean, less than one percent, of the entire fashion commerce total yearly sales of 4,7 billion euros (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

Even though more sustainable fashion consumption is discussed extensively and the availability for more ecological fashion has grown for all consumers, low price, followed by good assortment, is still the most important selection criterion for all ages and genders when choosing the shop to buy clothes at (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

However, low price does not correlate with unsustainability and it is complicated to draw congruences between price and corporate responsibility. The four companies in the categories of apparel and accessories retail or products that made it to Corporate Knights' index of the world's most sustainable corporations, 2020 Global 100, have very different pricing policies: H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB (Sweden, rank 27) and Industria de Diseno Textil SA (Inditex), mainly known for fast-fashion chain Zara (Spain, rank 94) are known for fast trends and affordable prices, while the Kering SA (France, rank 23) is home to such luxury brands as Gucci, Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen and Saint Laurent (Kering 2020); and premium sports brand Adidas AG (Germany, rank 55) known for reliable quality footwear and a prestigious brand (Corporate Knights 2020).

According to Global Fashion Agenda & The Boston Consulting Group (2017) too, the clear driver of sustainability is company size, not price positioning.

As a side note; Finnish Kesko is the only food and beverage retail company on the list, making it the most sustainable food store in the world (Corporate Knights 2020). While fashion is not part of Kesko's food retail operations as such, in this context it is still of value to note that Kesko's K-Citymarket is the nation's third, and Intersport the seventh, most popular fashion shopping destination (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019), where customers are also drawn by affordable pricing and good selections. While fashion products are not part of the food category, they are sold through the same supermarket channel in the case of K-Citymarket.

There are societal significances and influences of fashion commerce in the areas of the economic, the environmental and the cultural, which will be studied in this chapter. Businesses operating in fashion commerce not only employ – often young – people, pay corporate taxes, transmit VAT payments and thus create value, they are a part of our man-made environment, enlivening city and town centres which has effects on entire

communities. Employees working for fashion commerce businesses – in customer service as well as in assortment design and purchasing operations – support our daily lives in choosing and recommending the right products that support people's activities throughout their entire lives, every day.

4.1.1 Economic effects of fashion commerce

According to Statista (2020), the value of global apparel and footwear retail market in 2019 was expected to be 1,9 trillion US dollars and forecast to grow to 3,3 trillion USD in just ten years, by 2030, while Common Objective (2020) reports slightly smaller estimate of 1,78 trillion USD, however a figure that grew by 14 % in just one year.

The value of the global fashion manufacturing industry, as opposed to the previously mentioned fashion retail, is 3 trillion USD which equals 2 % of the world's Gross Domestic Product (Fashion United 2020) and is just a bit over the GDP of the UK, India or France, all of which are in the top 10 of the world's biggest economies. Indeed, if fashion industry were a nation, it would be the 5th biggest economy on the globe (Worldometers 2020).

Fibre2Fashion estimated in an article in 2018 that the global fashion industry employs over 300 million people across the value chain and considering the recent growth of the industry, the number of employees is very likely to have grown from this.

In Finland, according to Finnish Textile and Fashion (2020), the turnover of clothing and textile manufacturing in 2018 was 1,05 billion € and it employed 4780 people in 660 companies; and the turnover of clothing and fashion retail and wholesale was 2,29 billion €, employing 11 800 people in 2330 companies. The figure does not include footwear.

The entire textile and fashion industry in Finland – the previously mentioned together with other textile and apparel related manufacturing and textile and apparel care – altogether consists of around 3 400 companies employing 22 000 people. The yearly turnover in 2018 was 4,4 billion € (Finnish Textile and Fashion 2020).

Specialized fashion retail companies employ over 8000 people (Statistics Finland 2019) and the whole fashion and sports commerce 56 000 people in Finland (The Association of Products and Services Trade ETU 2020).

According to Finnish Commerce Federation (2019) the total yearly apparel and footwear sales in Finland in 2018 were 5,323 billion USD which equals 4,85 billion euros (Image 9).

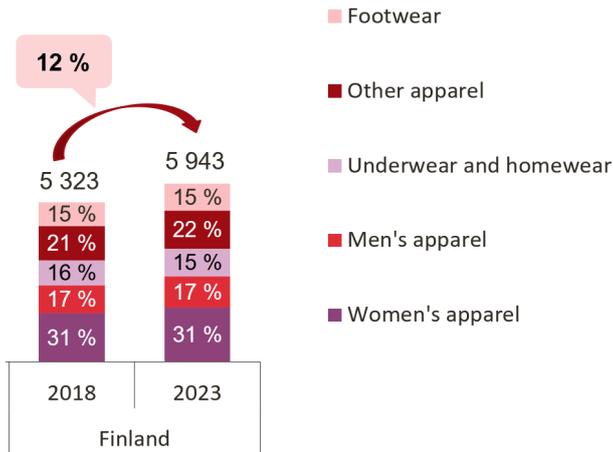


Image 9: Development of apparel and footwear buying in Finland (million USD). Estimated development 2018-2023 (Adapted from Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

Finnish consumers on average spent about 850 € (incl. VAT) on fashion per person in one year in 2018 and the yearly spending is expected to grow at an average of 2 % yearly by 2023, as seen in image 10.

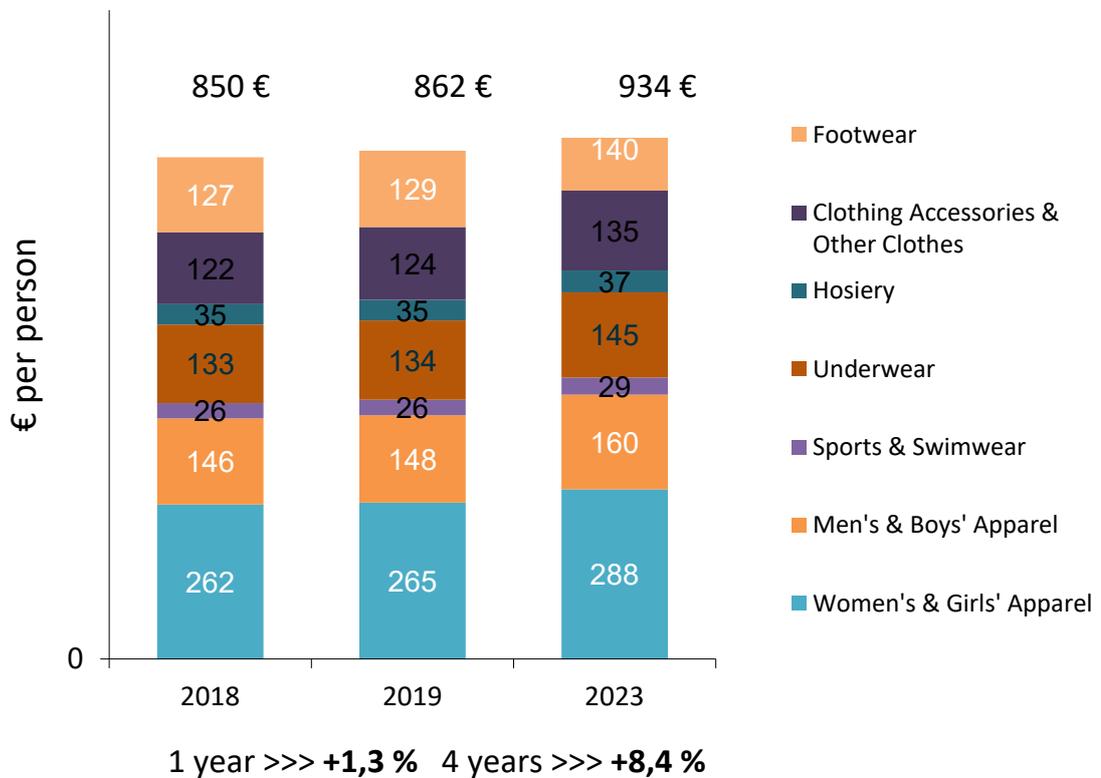


Image 10: Consumers' purchases of clothing and footwear on average per year (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019).

According to Finnish Textile and Fashion (2018) the Finnish consumer's spending on clothing and footwear amounts to about 4 % of the total yearly spending of 20 900 euros. For comparison, the spending on food of the yearly total was 12 % and on home interior and house equipment 5 %.

It is important to note that practicing fashion business is not limited to just the companies who are primarily registered as fashion companies. In Finland, the situation is quite the contrary – indeed two of the top three biggest sellers of apparel and footwear, supermarkets Prisma and K-Citymarket (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019), are part of Finnish retail's superpowers S Group and Kesko, who both are in the top 4 of Finland's largest corporations by turnover. SOK Corporation is 3rd with 6,46 billion € turnover and Kesko 4th with 5,78 billion €, left behind only by Neste and Nokia and leaving behind giants such as UPM, Finnair and Stora Enso (Asiakastieto 2020).

While neither S Group nor Kesko list fashion retail as a specific business area, the role of fashion sales clearly is significant in the supermarket business, as they have succeeded in becoming the most popular destinations for apparel and footwear shopping in Finland.

Globally, too, many of the biggest players in retail *also* sell fashion: three retail giants, Walmart, Costco and Amazon, in the top four of the globe's biggest retail corporations (Deloitte 2020) have major business selling apparel and footwear.

According to Statista (2020) in 2020, Walmart's fashion sales are estimated to rise to 22,4 billion USD; at Costco, clothes and footwear generate more than 7 billion USD a year (Washington Post 2019), and Amazon – already USA's biggest fashion retailer (Forbes 2020) is set to become even bigger of a fashion player globally: apparel, including footwear, was in 2019 the most purchased product category on Amazon, "rising from fourth place in 2017 when it trailed books, beauty and electronics", writes Forbes's Pamela N. Danziger (Forbes 2020).

In Deloitte's *Global Powers of Retailing Top 250 (2020)* ranking there are 40 primarily apparel and footwear retailing corporations, forming 16 % of all listed companies. Three companies make it to the top 50: 29th is The TJX Companies, known primarily in the USA; 35th is Inditex, the owner of Zara; and 43rd is H&M. The latter two are, however, preceded by LVMH Moët Hennessy-Louis Vuitton S.A. France ranking 32nd, known for haute couture brands such as Christian Dior, Celine, Fendi, Marc Jacobs and Louis Vuitton, but

retailing many other product groups as well wines, spirits, perfumes and cosmetics (LVMH 2020).

The big scale and financial significance of fashion business doesn't come as a surprise remembering that we all do wear clothes daily and most of us also regularly buy them. The same can't be said of almost any product group aside from groceries and the most common home equipment – clothes are worn equally by all ages, genders, nationalities and income or social groups. Fashion shops subsequently are a common sight in any shopping centre and on any high street around the globe.

4.1.2 Environmental effects of fashion commerce

As the public discussion of over-consumption of fashion and the problems regarding fast fashion, especially, is speeding up as part of the growing concern over climate change and other environmental issues, fashion business seems to be fighting for the justification of its entire existence. It is not in the *nature* of clothing as such, however, to be environmentally destructive; it's not many generations ago that people owned just one set of clothes. Respectively, in modern times, many other consumer goods' production and marketing follow the same logic as so-called over-produced fashion now.

Even though this thesis focuses on fashion commerce rather than the whole entity of fashion business or fashion manufacturing, it is not possible to oversee the environmental effect of fashion manufacturing as part of the environmental effects of fashion commerce, as each product sold through the commerce channel has been produced and is thus part of the phenomena. Also, many companies operate vertically: they are simultaneously the manufacturer and the retailer of the fashion products.

On the other hand, it is both problematic and an opportunity that fashion commerce and fashion retail bear a large part of the public's and media's scrutinizing of the sustainability issues of the whole fashion manufacturing chain, and they also often take the first blows when there are shopping strikes or indeed direct action such as vandalism or other outrage.

Global Fashion Agenda has identified areas in which fashion *retail* has the possibility to contribute to a more sustainable future. The areas can be viewed in image 11. Retail's possibilities include improving energy use, reducing waste, and engaging with consumers for better practices of care and lifecycle regarding the apparel and footwear they do buy.

Impact area	Magnitude of impact	Biggest drivers
Water	Very low	-
Energy	Medium	Energy efficiency in stores (e.g. lighting)
Chemicals	Very low	-
Waste	Medium	Waste generated through packaging, tags, hangers, bags

Image 11: Retail phase with varied environmental areas to consider (Global Fashion Agenda and The Boston Consulting Group 2017).

Environmental effects of fashion business as a whole

Fashion industry is said to be responsible for 8-10% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and 20% of industrial wastewater pollution worldwide (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion 2020).

According to Common Objective (2020) Fashion's consumption of resources - especially water and oil - is projected to double by 2030, and furthermore, this could cost 100 billion per year in lost value creation by the same year. In other words, the environmental impact is not only destructive for nature's diversity in many ways but is also bad business.

Fashion industry's effects on the environment include industry processes from cultivation of raw materials to fabric and garment manufacturing, related activities such as transport and logistics, and consumer usage from washing to discarding items. Problems must be addressed, and better practices found, even though quantifying fashion's ecological footprint in a definitive way is difficult as different data sources present different parameters (Common Objective 2020).

This study uses Common Objective's compilation as a basis for understanding the environmental effects of fashion business. The starting point for Common Objective's compilation of the environmental impacts is the Pulse Report, which was presented to the Copenhagen Fashion Summit in 2017. In addition, it uses research by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund, and academic journal publications and statistics from various sector bodies.

Water consumption

Global fashion industry currently uses 79 billion cubic metres, equivalent to 31.6 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, per year and the water consumption is expected to rise by 50 % by year 2030 (Global Fashion Agenda 2017). The fashion industry currently consumes at least 10% of all water extracted for industrial uses per year (Aquastat 2010). The problematic nature of excess water usage is bound to increase as climate change progresses, and in some fashion manufacturing countries the water shortages will affect the populations' access to water.

Oil consumption

Currently the global fashion industry uses 31 billion litres of oil, equivalent to 12,402 Olympic-sized swimming pools, per year. For each kilogram of synthetic fibre produced, 1,1 kg of oil is used. 200 % increase is forecast, based on the assumption that 98 % of the growth in fibre consumption will come from synthetic sources (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017). Oil is not only a non-renewable resource, but its production process has significant environmental impacts: carbon oxide and energy emissions, disturbance of natural ecosystems, release of toxic chemicals and risks of oil spills (Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

CO2 emissions

Fashion industry currently produces 1,75 tonnes of CO2 emissions in apparel and footwear production and about 106 tonnes in transport. Emissions from production are expected to increase by 60 % by 2030 and from transport to triple by 2040 (Global Fashion Agenda 2017). To reach the Paris Climate Agreement aspirational target of holding temperatures at 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the world has to achieve zero CO2 emissions by 2050 (United Nations 2015).

Chemical use – production of textiles and the cotton fibre

43 million tonnes of chemicals are used to produce textiles each year – about 465 g of total chemicals per kilogram of synthetic and other materials; 925 g per kilogram of cotton material. Chemical use for textile processing is expected to grow by 3,5 % per year on average in line with an expected increase in fibre production. One study identified that up to 24 % of the chemicals used and released into water effluent from textile production are known to be toxic to aquatic ecosystems and aquatic wildlife (Global Fashion Agenda

2017). This is in addition to the micro-plastics released and the impact on human health. (Common Objective 2020).

Currently cotton consumes 3,8 % of nitrogen fertilisers and phosphorous globally. The cotton industry purchased 5,7% (by value) of all pesticides sold in 2014. Cotton production is estimated to grow at 1,5% per year into the foreseeable future. Run-off from pesticide use via airborne drift or run-off into water is a known toxin for plant and animal health, leading to a number of potentially lethal effects including direct poisoning, endocrine disruption, reduced food availability (due to herbicide use) and disruption to reproductive functions (Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

Waste – effect on land and oceans

92,5 million tonnes of fashion waste goes into land-based waste streams. Between 21,778 and 40,000 kg of microfiber plastics are released into municipal sewage plants and potentially make their way as through fertiliser as land-based pollutants per day. By 2030, the waste amounts are expected to increase by 60 % to 148 million tonnes (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017). Currently fashion waste is around 7 % of all municipal solid waste generated globally by people living in urban areas. The release of microfibres into sewage and through that, into land-based ecosystems, is equivalent in volume to around 4 million to 7 million plastic bags per day (Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

Washing synthetic fabrics releases between 1,156 kg and 14,139 kg of microfibres into fresh and oceanic waterways per day per 100,000 head of population. Expected to increase in line with the increased use of synthetic materials – that is, 3,5 % per year. Microfibre release is expected to approximately double by 2030 based on the assumption that 98 % of the growth in fibre consumption will come from plastic-based synthetic sources. This volume of microfibres is the equivalent of around 240,000 to 3 million plastic bags per day (Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

Land Use

85,2 million hectares of land are converted to cotton or cellulosic production or livestock, equivalent of about 60 million football pitches. 115 million hectares of land are predicted to be converted for production of fibre for the fashion industry – an increase of 35 %. Currently, about 5 % of the world's cultivated land is dedicated to producing fibres or materials for the fashion industry. This is expected to rise to about 7 % by 2030 at a time when

the world needs to feed a growing population, and as the pressures of climate change are expected to reduce the quantity and quality of arable land (Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

The environmental effects are pictured below in image 12 the way they are presented in Appendix 3, that visualizes the societal effects of fashion commerce.

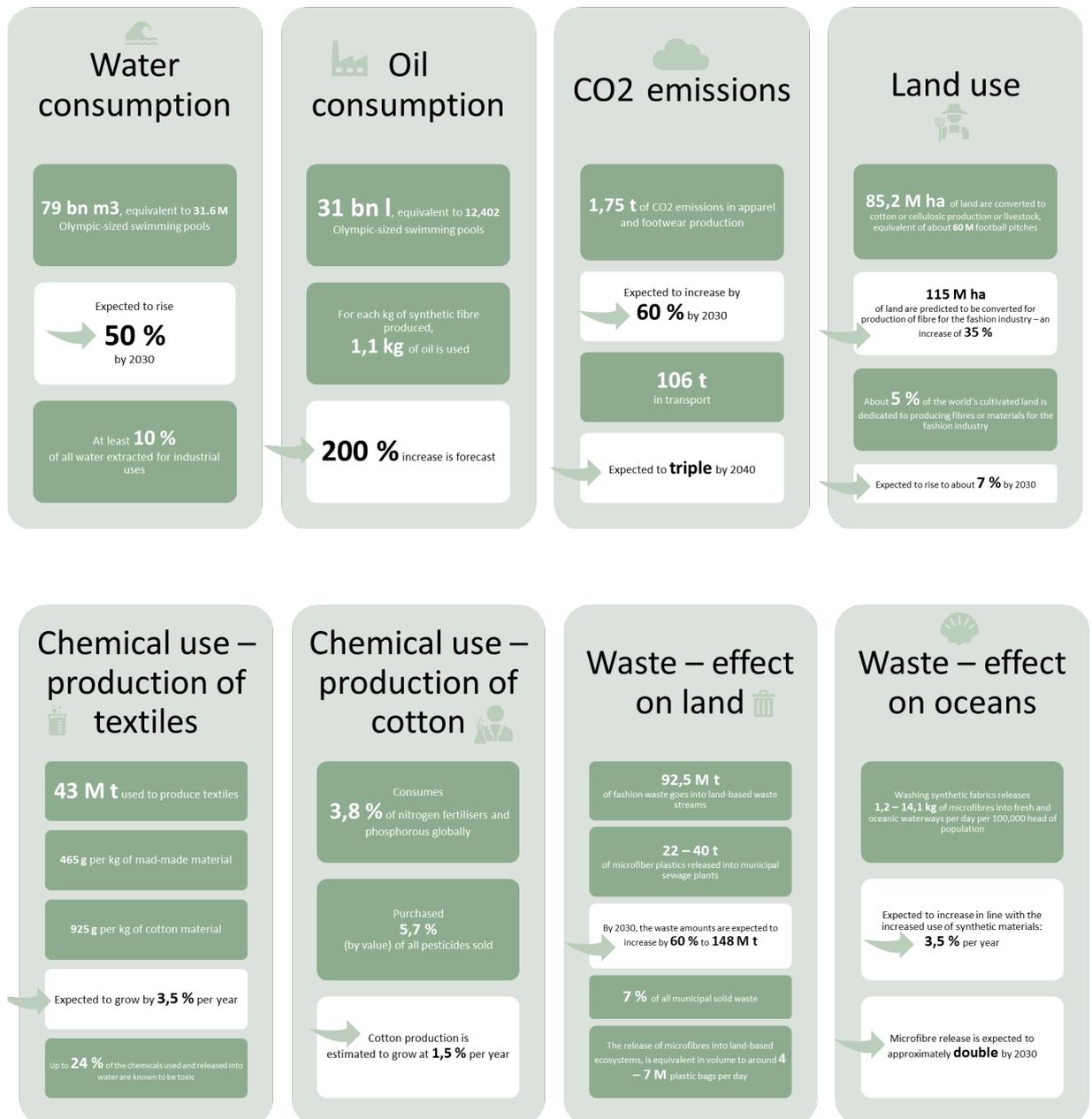


Image 12. Fashion industry's environmental effects (Adapted from Global Fashion Agenda 2017).

Fashion business sector's efforts for a more sustainable future

While there are many problematic issues to address regarding the environmental effects of fashion business, there are also solutions available.

Organizations such as the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, Copenhagen Fashion Summit, Ellen McArthur Foundation, Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Eco-Age, Fashion Revolution and many more, research, map and report ways to keep doing good fashion business while turning the environmental effects development towards a more sustainable future (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, Ordre News, Copenhagen Fashion Summit 2020).

Solution opportunities consist of a variety of methods for all stages of fashion manufacturing, including increasing circular economy in many ways, better practices regarding resource usage and reducing emissions by developing better technology.

The good news is, that as a massive business sector employing 75 million people worldwide – mostly women (United Nations 2020) – the fashion sector has the opportunity to create largescale social change for millions (Global Fashion Agenda 2017) by improving its policies and practices.

It is likely that the fashion industry and fashion commerce will face stricter regulation if it is unable to turn the development on its own terms (Global Fashion Agenda 2017). There are also economic incentives, as currently 500 USD billion of value is lost every year due to clothing underutilisation and lack of recycling (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion 2020).

4.1.3 Cultural effects of fashion commerce

"Over the years I have learned that what is important in a dress is the woman who's wearing it."

- Yves Saint Laurent

Fashion and clothing, while sometimes considered superficial or unimportant, "is a deeply human phenomenon", writes Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen in her study Introductions to the research of dressing (2012, 5).

Indeed, to deprive one of one's clothing is one of the most common methods of punishment or humiliation (Utrainen, 2006, 199-201). Restrictions to clothing – an individual's or a people's right to make the decisions about their appearance is a powerful tool of shaping society and has even been used as means of warfare or political oppression.

The Dress Act of 1746 made using of the traditional Scottish dress illegal in Scotland under the English rule. "The general intention of the Act was to destroy clan feeling by the abolition of distinctive dresses made of clan tartans", writes A.H. Millar back in 1896. The severe penalties starting at half a years' imprisonment and ending at seven years of transportation (where convicted criminals were sent to the English colonies to serve their sentence) that were given to any man or boy found in "Highland clothes", that is, the plaid, philabeg, trews, shoulder-belts, or any part whatsoever of the Highland garb, or wearing a dress composed of tartan or parti-coloured cloth", were stronger than those given for illegal bearing of arms, while it is clear that wearing of the national costume violates no moral law.

Millar (1896, 210) further on writes this difference to indicate that the intention of the English government was not so much to deprive individuals of their accustomed weapons of defence, as to destroy all national feeling amongst the Highlanders, to annihilate their clan traditions and historic associations, and to reduce them to the condition of a vanquished and servile race.

In last-century communist China, "the uniformity of the clothes [the Mao jacket] and the subdued colours represent an imagined homogeneity across the time and space of the Chinese nation from 1949 to 1976", writes Tina Mai Chen (2001, 143) – a telling example of the power of garments as a tool of shaping a nation's morale. Stripped of the possibility for expression by way of dressing, individuals have less communication channels and become an easier, faceless entity to control.

Mere fabric squares can also in modern-day Europe cause extensive and loud demand for legislative changes, rage, even violence, which is the case regarding some European women's head scarves that are worn for religious and traditional purposes (Yle news 2017, 2013 and Kaleva 2018).

The importance of clothing comes apparent also in the very ordinary; we can all relate to how disconcerting it can be to be underdressed at a party or overdressed at a job interview – both occurrences that can have a crucial effect on how events unravel – not least

because of the way the poorly chosen attire makes one feel, but also because of the signals it in fact sends to others.

Equally relatable is the experience of a teenager, who has to wear the “wrong” kind of clothes for one reason or another, for example his/her family’s level of wealth. Some will blame modern society for being too superficial for enabling the marginalizing of individuals because of what they are wearing, but most societies in most ages have put similar, some even more, weight on the appearance; comparably any parent disregarding their teenagers’ fashion desires as silly, unimportant or putting too much weight on looks, can imagine if they themselves would feel comfortable wearing, for example, the outfit of a random colleague, their own mother, or the teenager in question. Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen (2012, 5) notes that the significances of dressing become clear only when one’s usual clothing procedures are disturbed.

The visual messages that one’s appearance send are powerful because of their natural immediacy, spontaneity and irreversibility. Generally, people will form opinions, perceptions, even judgment, based on the first impression. According to Todorov et al (2005), judgments based on physical appearance are ubiquitous and consequential. In face-to-face interactions, appearance is the first piece of information available to others and it can powerfully influence perceivers’ subsequent behaviour.

As dressing is a universal, but not a biological phenomenon (Carter 2003), it is relevant to address the question of *why* people dress. This question remains somewhat unsolved, but there are varying theories about the ultimate reasons behind dressing up (Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2012, 6-7). Koskennurmi-Sivonen suggests the most extensive list to be by Penny Strom in her study *Functions of Dress – Tools of Culture and the Individual*:

Part I: Natural functions: decoration, protection, modesty

Part II: Communicational functions: communication, roles, status

Part III: Social functions: social class, economy, administration, religion

Part IV: Psychological functions: personal development, group dynamics, behaviour

(Storm 1987).

In the current discourse regarding the destructive environmental effects of fashion industry it is regularly suggested that people on average simply do not need to buy any more clothes. If we think of clothing as purely practical and non-superficial, there only to protect us from the elements and to cover ourselves for modesty reasons, this is probably true:

we could start using up the old abandoned garments at our attics and our parents' attics and surely would have enough to wear for life. When we consider all the other, in fact primary functions of clothing, the question becomes more complex. The immaterial needs of individuals to have power over their own dressing are real, even if we can't grasp them.

The research into the ultimate functions for wearing clothes agrees that protection against the elements is not one of the fundamental functions of clothing (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2012, 6-13). This is proven by many cultures in many ages around the world, for example some primitive peoples in hot climates wear almost only decorative clothing while the Bedouins in equally warm weather protect themselves from the sun with many layers of woolen fabric; and in our own culture men's and women's evening dress seems to be made for temperatures some 10 degrees apart: women's shoulders and arms are bare while men are expected to wear a combination of a long-sleeved shirt and a coat – sometimes completed with a waistcoat (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2012, 8). If a beanie's ultimate function is to keep the head warm, why was it impossible for teenagers to wear one in the 1980's even in sub-zero temperatures, and again impossible in the 1990's to take it off even while indoors?

Many of the classic fashion research theories (Westermarck 1903, Flügel 1966, Carter 2012, Roach and Eicher 1965) suggest that decoration and adornment are the ultimate reasons for clothing. One argument to support this is the notion that there are no peoples anywhere on the planet that do not wear garments or jewellery for decorative reasons, and that this is permanent state; the oldest prehistoric piece of jewellery found is 50 000 years old (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2012, 20-11). As such, the modern individual with the desire to shop for fashionable items differs in no way from their ancestors – rather the willingness to dress to look good is a manifestation of a perpetual human phenomenon.

Therefore, the problematic issues that fashion commerce now face regarding for example sustainability are not at the core of fashion *itself* as a phenomenon, but rather a sign of the times.

In addition to the deeply human meanings explained before, clothing plays an important role in the health and safety of individuals. As a consumer product closer to our skin than any other product – aside from groceries, medicine and cosmetics – and worn most of the 24 hours of the day, garments' requirements for safety are severe.

Clothing can cause serious risks for example when the chemical usage is inappropriate or faulty, if a person's temperature balance is interfered or if straps pose a choking risk,

especially in children's clothes. For example clothes that are too tight or the wrong size can lead to many problems such as a poor walking position or pains in different parts of the body, as clothing can limit joint mobility and natural trajectories of the body, according to physiotherapist and D.H.Sc. Marjo Rinne (Helsingin Sanomat 2020). There are numerous less or more significant ways in which the right or wrong kind of garments can either support a person's being or disturb it; maintain a person's health or slowly undermine it.

Appropriate product design, manufacturing and purchase design, as well as good customer service or artificial intelligence application that assists in choosing the right products is brought to us by a network of companies operating in the fashion commerce sector.

4.1.4 Fashion commerce as part of man-made environments

"Stockmann is the heart of Helsinki, and if it stops beating, the centre of Helsinki will cease to exist."

- *anonymous, according to Helsingin Sanomat (2020)*

According to Finnish Textile and Fashion (2017), there are 1500 companies in Finland operating in the sectors of textile and fashion retail and to Fashion and Sports Commerce Association (2020), a total of 3000 separate apparel, footwear and sportswear shops in the 310 municipalities of Finland, in shopping centres and in the traditional brick-and-mortar setting, on shopping streets and main roads of villages.

Lively city and town centres enliven the towns in many ways, and on the other hand can benefit from other development efforts in the area, such as investments in public transport or attracting other services, as portrayed in image 13 based on the strategy of 2015-2020 of Lively city centres association.

The growth of online commerce in the product group of fashion (Finnish Commerce Federation 2020) has decreased the importance of each town's own apparel and footwear shops as a caterer for citizens' garment needs, which shows in the pace at which offline stores are closing down. Up to 40 % of commerce companies might disappear by 2030 if the development stays on its current track (Finnish Commerce Federation 2019). This will have an effect on city centres' vitality as well.



Image 13: Lively City Centres Association's vision of centres' possible and desirable development according to their strategy 2015-2020 (Adapted from Elävät kaupunkikeskustatry / Lively city centres association 2015).

4.1.5 Fashion as a pastime

Fashion has some other dimensions that are not profoundly looked into in the scope of this study. Such include fashion as entertainment, as a hobby and as an art form. Even though these topics are not researched in this thesis it is of interest to note the extent in which fashion-related activities are part of people's lives. Image 14 is constructed by the author and is based on the author's view on fashion as pastime.

Fashion can be considered art in the context of haute couture or underground or avant-garde fashion designers, whose creations focus on expression similar to fine artists and that are not focused on wearability. (Fashion as a pastime, in this context, refers to the audience enjoying these artworks – not the artists or designers creating them, of course, as for them in this context fashion is a profession). Art Brut and some primitive forms of traditional crafts that materialize as garments or other textiles are also often closer to art than any other concept. Also, fashion magazines at their most extravagant can be considered visual art due to the expressive photography, styling and layout of the publications.

Fashion has the capacity to entertain in many ways – from fashion magazines to reality TV shows in search of the next top model or Project Runway winner. Fashion shopping, especially in the lower price range fast-fashion stores, can also be considered entertainment. Social media profiles and blogs presenting outfit of the day is entertainment for many these days – for the content producers as well the readers swiping through the images and styles. Fashion can also be a creative hobby in terms of drawing or sewing.

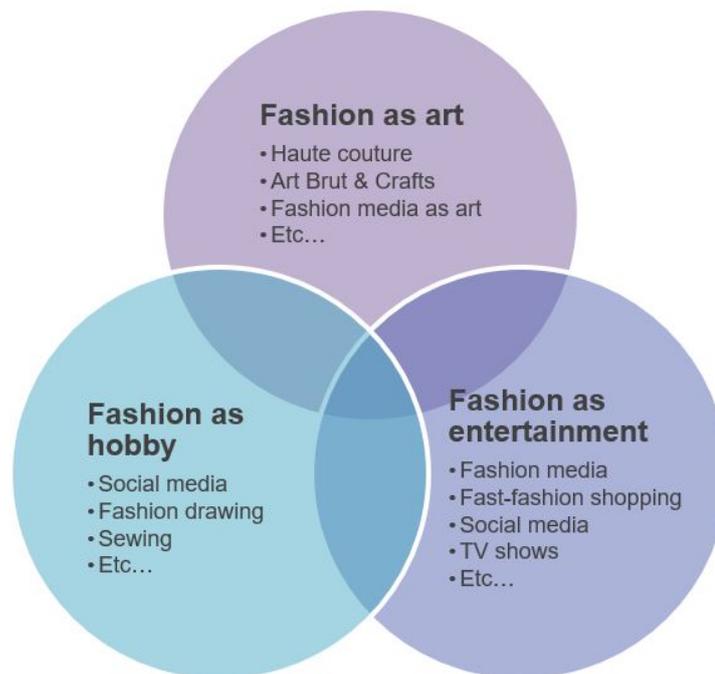


Image 14. Fashion as a pastime.

4.2 Case organization and the societal effects of fashion commerce

Finnish Commerce Federation’s four top themes of interest in public advocacy are **work, growth, competitiveness** and **climate**. Of these, the first three are essentially linked to the economic effects of commerce, and in the scope of this study, fashion commerce. The fourth, climate, has a direct link to the environmental effects of commerce and in this case fashion commerce (Finnish Commerce Federation 2020).

In addition to these societal themes, the study pays attention to the phenomenon of **lively city and town centres**, which is an important objective identified by the Committee of Specialized Consumer Goods Commerce Sector of the case organization (Finnish Commerce federation 2019).

The themes of interest and areas of societal importance naturally overlap just as phenomena overlap in the real world: Climate issues are strongly linked also to the economy, just as the vitality of town centres is, etc. The main connections that are relevant to this study are however presented in image 15 constructed by the author.

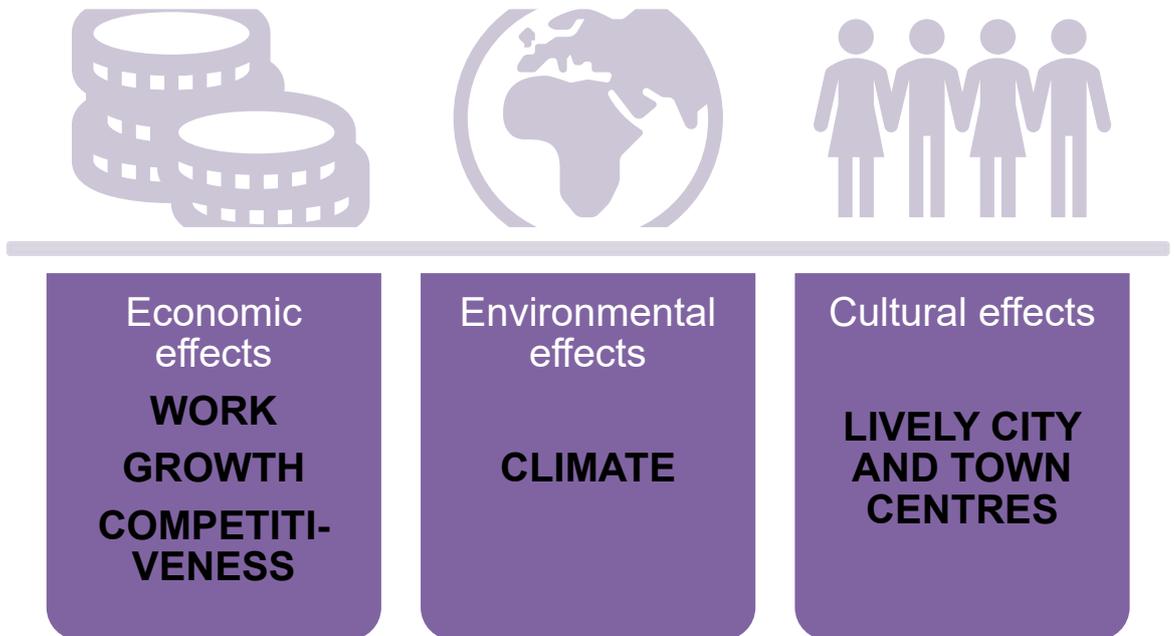


Image 15: Case organization's themes of interest and their connections to the societal effects of fashion commerce.

As mentioned before, around 20 % of Finnish Commerce Federation's member companies are estimated to practice commerce related to fashion products. These include supermarkets and specialized stores, department stores and wholesale companies, online and offline, in all sizes ranging from micro-entrepreneurs to Finland's largest trade groups. Not all fashion retailing businesses are specialized stores, and not all specialized stores are SME's.

5 Public relations

In this chapter the theoretical concepts relevant to this study are explained. The context of the project is public relations and stakeholder relations, namely media as a stakeholder, as part of public relations. Furthermore, lobbying and agenda setting theory are looked into. The author summarizes the theoretical approach in image 16.

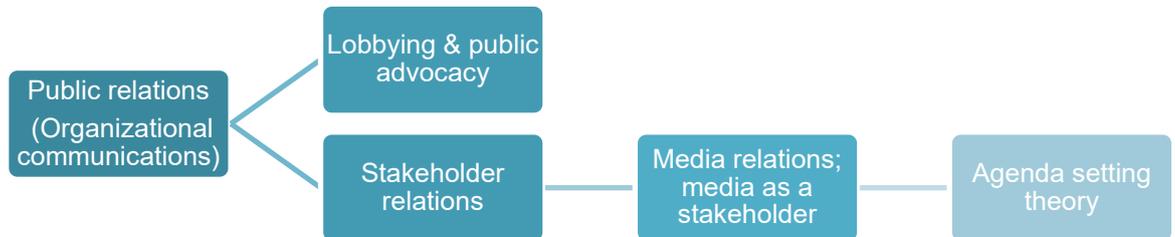


Image 16: Hierarchy of concepts relevant to the study.

Public relations, or organizational communications, are an integral function of any major interest organization or advocacy group today. The main purpose of public relations according to Lerbinger are informing and persuading, and the most recognized function influencing public opinion – the opinions of individuals as well as the general public (2018, 55). Organizational communications is by definition concerned with how organisations communicate to members of the organisation and its stakeholders (Berger 2000, 15) or more precisely, as a communication function that helps an organization to achieve its organisational goals (Hazelton and Long, 1987).

5.1 Lobbying

Public advocacy or lobbying is the activity of an individual or group to influence or support a cause or policy. This thesis deals with the activities of an organization whose goals involve improving and maintaining the operational conditions of commerce in Finland, of which fashion commerce is one part, as explained before.

De Figueiredo and Richter describe the right of individuals, by themselves or in groups, to petition elected officials and the government as one of the central tenets of representative democracy. The petitions can take many forms and methods, including campaign contributions, endorsements, grassroots campaigns, media campaigns, and lobbying, and their goal is to influence the opinions, policies, and votes of legislators and other government officials (2013, 1-2).

Even though sometimes “even identified with corruption or semi-legal intervening in the decision-making process”, lobbying is increasingly becoming an intrinsic part of democratic decision-making processes at all levels, according to Jugo et al (2015, 19).

Lobbying can be defined as de Figueiredo et al (2013) do – as “the transfer of information in private meetings and venues between interest groups and politicians, their staffs, and agents” but the term is also used as a hypernym for a wider scope of influencing activities. The study concludes that lobbying is a specialized field of public relations directed to decisionmakers, albeit it is on its way to become an independent profession.

In the instance of the case organization, it is firmly rooted in a long and sturdy tradition of lobbying as a member of the Confederation of Finnish Industries, the established voice of corporations in Finland. However, lobbying has become more open in recent years and the case organization, among many others, has voluntarily joined the European Commission’s Transparency register, which ensures citizens’ rights to learn about the public advocacy actions that special interest groups take part in (European Commission 2020).

Lobbying and media relations have many connections and a close relationship, as described by Grunig (1984) in image 17.

LOBBYING	MEDIA RELATIONS
Establishing coalitions	Joint media appearances
Research and preparation	Research and preparation
Contacts with influential people	Contacts with influential journalist
Preparation of witnesses & speakers	Preparation of media appearances
Focusing debates	Managing topics

Image 17: Relationship between lobbying and media relations (Adapted from Grunig, 1984).

Jugo et al (2015) conclude lobbying to be a specialized field of public relations as it involves activities and tools similar to other types and segments of public relations and is directed at communications with a specific audience: the decision-makers. The conclusion is based on the theoretical framework, comparison of definitions, tools and techniques of

lobbying and public relations and the research conducted among prominent representatives of the professions of lobbying and public relations.

The relevance of lobbying to this study is connected to the nature of the case organization, whose operations include lobbying. While the societal significances of fashion commerce are not relevant to lobbying as such, and the study does not suggest attempting to communicate them to political decision-makers as they are, the public's general support of, or favourable attitude towards a cause, in this case the success of a commerce sector, can have a positive effect on lobbying goals, that in turn will advance the success further. Maintaining and improving the commerce sectors' reputation is one of case organization's functions, and media visibility has a close connection to reputation.

5.2 Stakeholder relations

Stakeholder communication's goal is to strengthen the organization's relationships with its stakeholders (Lerbinger 2019, 7). Allison and Kaye define stakeholders as anyone who have any kind of investment, "a stake" in the success of the mission of the organization (2015,34). Stakeholder identification and defining the type of interest they have in the organization define also the type of information they need to get from the organization (Cornelissen 2014, 46).

The case organization's stakeholders include for example member companies, political decision-makers nationally and on EU level, the employer association community, and media. Different channels and contents of communication to different stakeholder groups have been defined.

5.2.1 News media as a stakeholder

Media relations as part of stakeholder relations is a part of public relations, or organizational communications, as opposed to marketing communications. Influencing public opinion – the opinions of individuals as well as the general public – is the most recognized function of public relations (Lerbinger 2018). It is a PR function that can enhance organisational reputation, change attitudes, increase market share, influence policy and improve stakeholder relations as a whole (Theaker 2011, 148).

Some examples of media relations as PR activities are press releases, video news releases, off-the-record briefings and press events. These actions are by definition communicating with journalists, specialists and editors from local, national, international and

trade media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and web-based communication (Theaker 2011, 11).

An organization is said to engage in proactive media relations when it goes beyond responding to media inquiries and seizes the initiative to convey its message to the public. Instead of reacting to news inquiries, it develops relationships with media outlets and suggests and supplies possible subjects and themes for articles. The goal of this high-profile strategy is to seize opportunities to promote information and stories beneficial to the organization in question. For individual companies and industries, the concern with public opinion is largely about attitudes toward themselves and toward current issues and crises (Lerbinger 2018, 63). The case organization has very active media communications functions and has chosen this kind of high-profile approach.

The study of public opinion is rooted in the psychology of perception and attitude change. All recognize reputation as a valuable intangible asset (Lerbinger 2018, 70), and also for a commerce sector a favourable reputation is important. An advocacy organization can help build and maintain reputation that boosts and protects an entire sector, which is something individual companies cannot so easily do, as their main purpose is to make profitable business and also stand out from their competitors.

Public relations is strongly identified with public opinion and publicity. Companies use public relations as a tool to shape public perceptions which are connected to their reputation. They want to use public relations not only to influence public opinion toward them but also toward issues of importance to them. The mass media have traditionally been the main instrument to influence public opinion, and account for the importance of the publicity activities of public relations. Social media have diminished the importance of the mass media, but the latter remain a major instrument to reach the general public (Lerbinger 2018, 65-70).

Media coverage not only increases the public's awareness of a certain topic, it also boosts the credibility of the point of view. As Edward Downes (2013) points out, media can be seen as an important "third party", who adds credibility to an organization's claims, which after having appeared in media have survived the tests of time as generally reliable sources of information. Therefore, communicating via one's owned media channels is not as efficient in shaping public opinion as getting your "earned" messages through to the public.

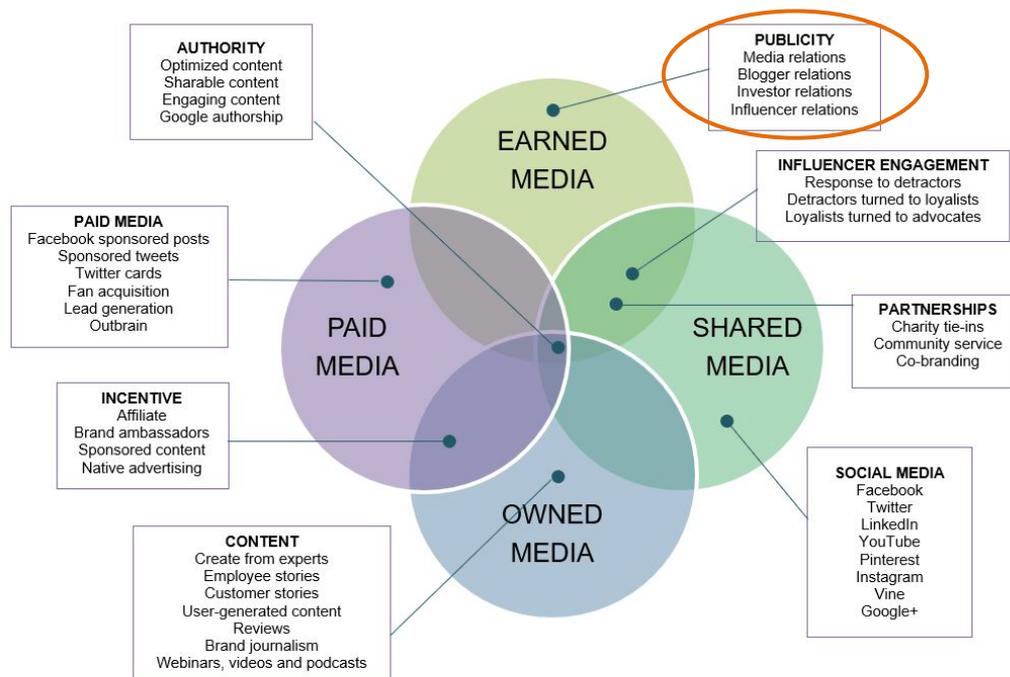


Image 18: the PESO model (Adapted from Dietrich, 2014).

The PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) model for public relations shows the role of earned media in a mix of different types of media in image 18.

For an interest organization the area of earned media is of heightened importance compared to other types of media because its benefits include elements that can be considered especially well-suited to support advocacy efforts: earned media is authoritative – the organization is vouched for by a third-party authority; it is cost-effective – the publicity gets the leverage the size and trust of an established audience; and finally its benefits are long-term, as past press mentions or placements can be referenced to create long-term search engine optimization benefits (Interactive Marketing 2019).

Extensive earned media is indication, even evidence, that an advocacy group is trustworthy and is welcomed to join societal discussion, and therefore has more weight than paid or owned media. Cost-effectiveness is crucial to most interest groups, as they usually are non-profit organizations that do not have separate budgets for marketing actions, or functions that directly aim to create cashflow. And finally, the publicity's long-life span suits advocacy organizations' needs, as their goals rarely are short-term.

Considering these aspects, appropriate news media coverage for fashion commerce would benefit the sector in a way that is not possible to achieve via owned, paid or earned

media, as the credibility and unconditional reliability is key to being able to participate in societal discussion.

5.2.2 Agenda setting theory

Agenda-setting theory describes the ability (of the news media) to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda, as shown on image 19.

The theory of agenda setting can be traced back to McCombs and Shaw (1972) who attempted to explain how and why people think about different social issues. The researchers found a significant correlation between the amount of media coverage generated and the rankings of importance by media consumers. The conclusion is that the salience of different issues is greatly influenced by the news media (Roberts et al 2002, 452-465).

In other words, the public agenda is the main focus or prime issue which the members of the society or public concern about. This theory elaborates the connection in term of relationships between the emphasis that the mass media put as an issue and the media audiences or the public's reaction or attributes to such issue (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009).

Subsequently, the theory has inspired and developed hundreds of later explorations on how the mass media primes and frames issues for their audiences. The discussion also covers topics about how a certain event is coloured for the media audiences (Matsaganis and Payne 2005).

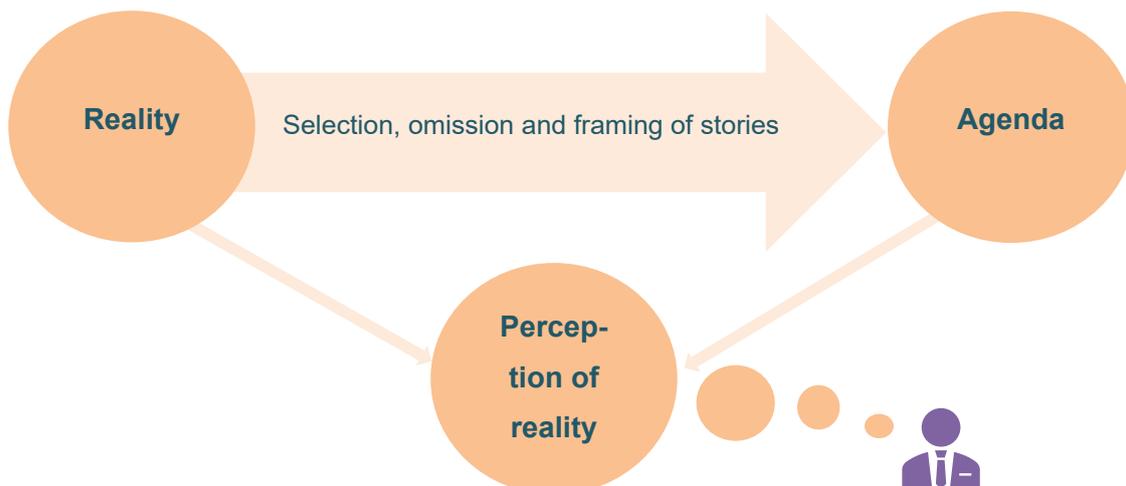


Image 19: Agenda setting theory. If a piece of information is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue more important (Adapted from McCombs and Shaw).

Agenda setting is considerably more than the classical assertion that the news tells us what to think about. The news also tells us how to think about it. Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles. Central to the news agenda and its daily set of objects-issues, personalities, events, etc. are the perspectives that journalists and, subsequently, members of the public employ to think about each object (McCombs, 1992). These perspectives direct attention toward certain attributes and away from others. The generic name for these journalistic perspectives is newsworthiness. But newsworthy objects are framed in a wide variety of ways (McCombs and Shaw 1993).

However, the mass media has a particular access in contributing to or influencing the audiences' perceptions, values, focus and priorities. With such influence from the mass media, the media audiences tend to form their own opinion or focus on those issues that are considered as worthy of inclusion on their mental agendas (Littlejohn and Foss 2009).

This is very relevant to the study, as it attempts to look into what news media coverage of fashion commerce is like and how the societal effects and importances are reflected.

6 Conducting the research

This chapter explains the research process: the methodology, data collection, analysis and presentation. The main findings for both research parts – the current state analysis of news media coverage of fashion commerce; and the current state portraying of fashion commerce’s cultural importances – are presented. Finally, the creation of new alternative media agendas is explained.

The study as an entity is a mixed-method constructive research consisting of a content analysis, whose purpose is to answer QR1 and a literature review as research method, whose purpose is to answer RQ2. The practical outcome of the thesis is finally constructed in phase 3, which is the creation of alternative media agendas for fashion commerce. Mixed method is used – the content analysis is done using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Literature review is a qualitative method.

Image 20 includes more detailed phases of conducting the research project. The three phases are further explained in the following chapters each dedicated to one part of the research, explaining the used method, data collection, data analysis and findings.

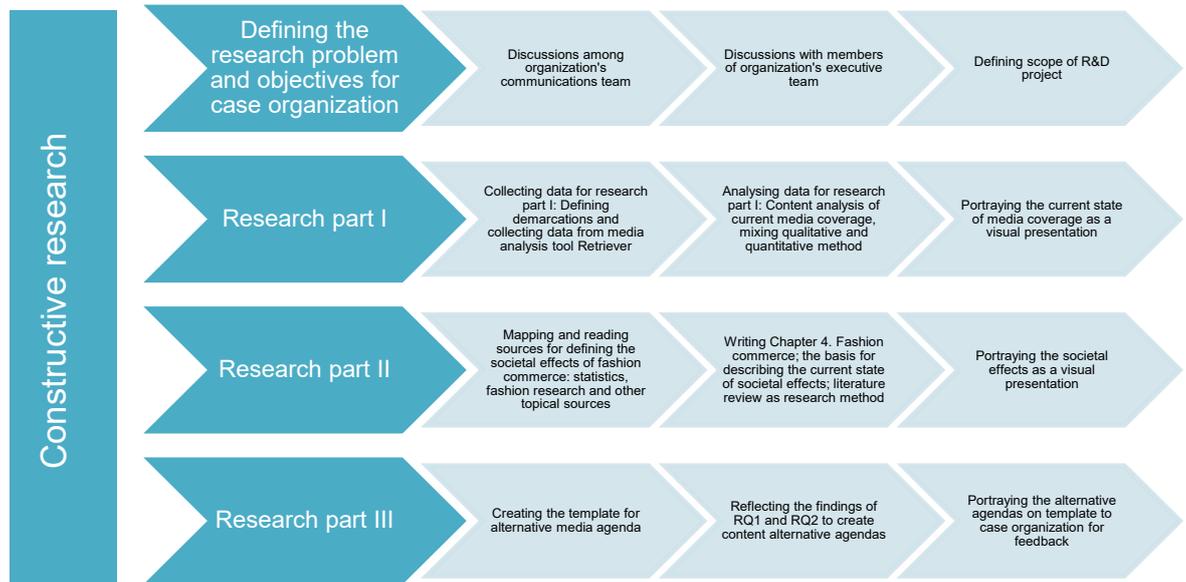


Image 20. Conducting the different parts of the research & development project.

6.1 Research method: Constructive research

Constructive research method was chosen because of its pragmatic nature. According to Oyegoke, the constructive research question can be phenomenon-driven or theory-driven

or a combination of the two, and the objective is to identify and solve real practical problems (2011).

Constructive research as a methodology begins with strong grounding in identifying a practical problem from practice complemented by related literature (Oyegoke 2011). In the case of this study, the practical problem to issue is the possible gaps in news media coverage of fashion commerce that could be filled with better understanding its societal effects, and on the other hand the case organization's possibilities in becoming a more versatile voice in society by way of using themes connected to fashion commerce.

The identified research problems are used to propose research questions that address the problem. The questions are solved by developing or constructing a solution which will be operationalised to determine its workability and appropriateness (Oyegoke, 2011). In this study, practical alternative news media agendas are created.

The constructive research approach is related to rationalist (quantitative) and naturalistic paradigms. It assumes that reason and experience rather than the non-rational are the fundamental criteria in the solution of problems. In naturalistic context, constructive research assumes that there are multiple interpretations of reality and the need to understand how individuals construct their own reality within their social context (Oyegoke, 2011).

The core features of the constructive research approach, according to Lukka require that it

- focuses on real-world problems felt relevant to be solved in practice,
- produces an innovative construction meant to solve the initial real-world problem,
- includes an attempt for implementing the developed construction and thereby a test for its practical applicability,
- implies a very close involvement and co-operation between the researcher and practitioners in a team-like manner, in which experiential learning is expected to take place,
- is explicitly linked to prior theoretical knowledge, and
- pays particular attention to reflecting the empirical findings back to theory

(Lukka 2000)

The scope of this thesis doesn't allow for a real-life testing of the outcome, the alternative news media agendas, or measuring the effect of them, as this would take too long in the timeline of one thesis project. It is likely, however, that the author will implement the

suggested agendas after the termination of the thesis project itself, thus fulfilling all the features of constructive research.

The thesis process has followed Lukka's description (2003) of the typical process of building a constructive research, as seen in image 21.

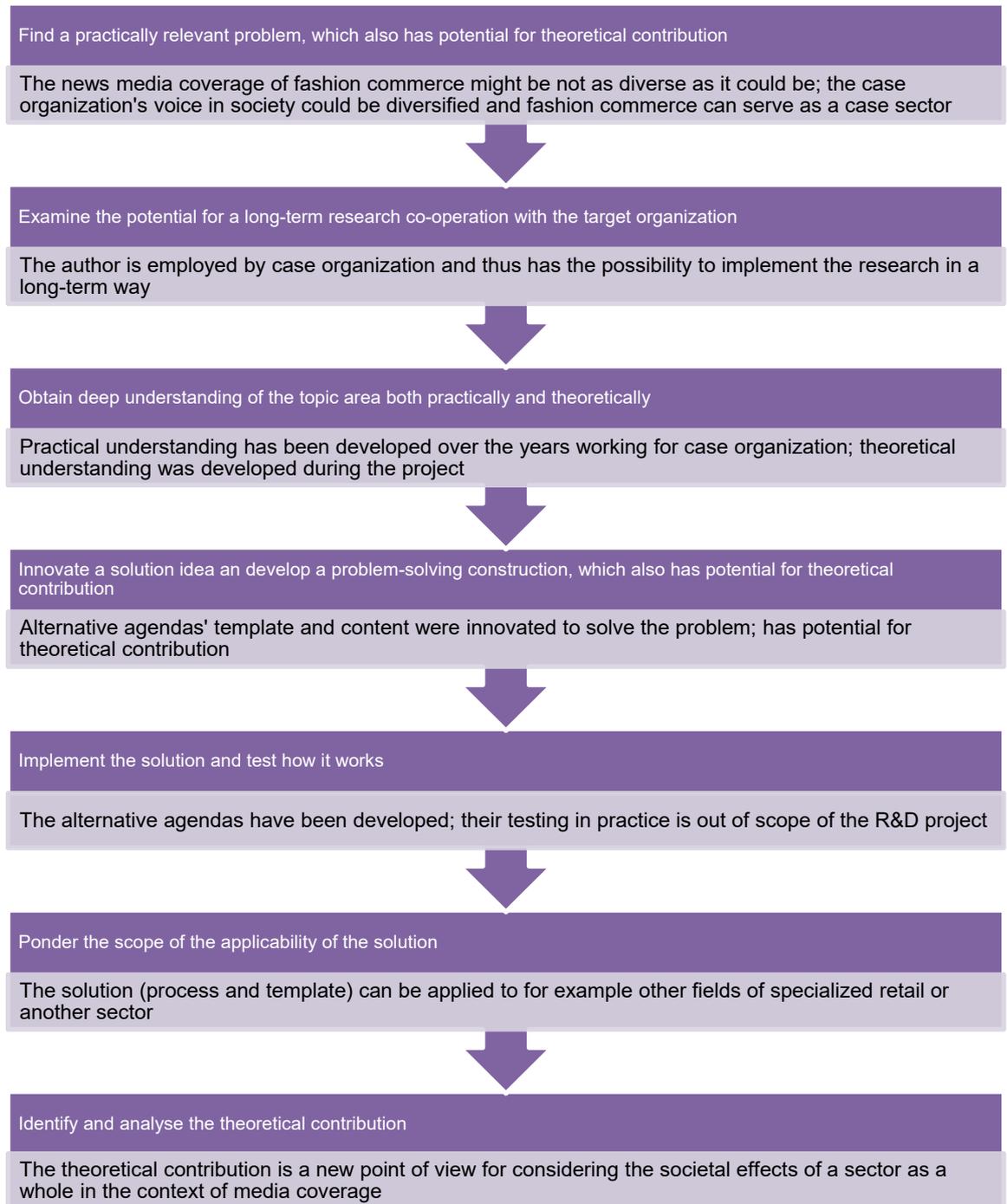


Image 21. Typical process of building a constructive research with the steps taken in the case of this study. Basis adapted from Lukka, 2003.

Mixed method

According to Saunders et al (2019) the first methodological choice is whether to follow a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research design. Each of these options is likely to call for a different mix of elements to achieve coherence in the research. In this case mixed methods were chosen to answer the set of research questions.

Saunders et al (2019, 174) point out distinguishing between numeric data and non-numeric data to be one way of differentiating quantitative research from qualitative research. In this way, 'quantitative' is often used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as a questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates or uses numerical data. In contrast, 'qualitative' is often used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as an interview) or data analysis procedure (such as categorising data) that generates or uses non-numerical data. In this study both types of data are analysed and therefore both types of methods are used.

The division to numerical and non-numerical is an important way to differentiate the methodological choice; however, this distinction is both problematic and narrow. It is problematic because, in reality, many business and management research designs are likely to combine quantitative and qualitative elements. The two different methods can be viewed as two ends of a continuum, which in practice are often mixed. A research design may therefore mix methods in a number of ways (Saunders et al 2019, 175), which is done in this research project. For example, in the current analysis of media coverage some of the attributes had first to be categorized by qualitative evaluation, and then portrayed in quantitative ways, mainly using numbers and graphs.

6.1.1 Conducting part I: Current state analysis of media coverage

The first part of the constructive study was a content analysis that was conducted to produce the answer to research question 1 and its four sub-questions:

How is fashion commerce covered in Finnish news media?

- **Who** writes about fashion commerce?
- In which **context** is fashion commerce covered?
- Who **represents** fashion commerce in news media?
- To what degree are **case organization's themes of interest** present in coverage?

Chosen method for describing the current state is content analysis. Rose et al (2015) define content analysis as a family of procedures for the systematic, replicable analysis of text. "In essence it involves the classification of parts of a text through the application of a structured, systematic coding scheme from which conclusions can be drawn about the message content. By clearly specifying the coding and other procedures content analysis is replicable in the sense that other researchers could reproduce the study. Content analysis can be carried out quantitatively but also qualitatively" (Rose et al 2015).

The data used in the content analysis was drawn from the databank of Retriever, media insights and analysis service provider who monitors, measures and analyses the media landscape in Finland, among other countries. The data bank contains online and printed editorial material from all the major daily newspapers, regional newspapers and hundreds of magazines, journals and periodicals, dating back several years (Retriever 2019).

To get relevant data in an extent that fits this specific research and development project, the search words and other search criteria were limited and carefully constructed by way of testing and the researcher's own insight into the research area and research problem.

Collecting data

As fashion is a popular theme in media in general, it was not possible nor appropriate to analyse all fashion commerce related media hits such as fashion editorials or any mentions of fashion brands. The study is limited to media hits in the most relevant news media channels: Yle (Yleisradio the Finnish Broadcasting Company), Finland's number one newspaper Helsingin Sanomat (HS), Kauppalehti, a media focusing on economic phenomena and the money market and Taloussanomat, a major business online daily newspaper. Both print and online hits were included. Yle News and Taloussanomat are published exclusively online while HS and Kauppalehti are issued both in print and online. All chosen channels publish daily news.

The demarcation of the chosen news media channels to analyse is based on the relevance and trustworthiness of the media channels. According to Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2018, the most trusted media sources in Finland are Yle News, Kauppalehti, HS, Suomen Kuvalehti and Taloussanomat.fi. Of these Suomen Kuvalehti was excluded because it's a periodical and the study focuses on news media.

The chosen media also reach a very extensive audience and are therefore major societal actors and commentators who have the power to shape the opinion and attitude

landscape of Finland. HS is the nation's most read newspaper with a total weekly reach of over 1,7 million people and Kauppalehti of 0,8 million people. (National Media Research, 2018).

The time period was set to be one calendar year: from 1st November 2018 until 31st October 2019.

The search words were tested several times to come up with a set that would be best suited to catching all, and nothing but, relevant hits. The final set of search words including words about fashion, apparel and footwear connected to fashion commerce can be seen in Appendix 1. For best possible results, in addition to the obvious search words such as "fashion", "clothing" and "shoes", the search word set was reinforced with different synonyms for shops and other closely related concepts. For example, a very relevant content regarding a fashion shop could be written without mentioning the concept of fashion shop as such, but some other related issue, such as "consuming of fashion" or "fashion chain".

It is acknowledged that a similarly relevant article might have been written without mentioning any of the reach words – such as using a term like "fashion giant" or only the shop's own name in the article. However, listing all hundreds or even dozens of shop or chain names would not have fit the extent of this study. Also, it would have been problematic to define which shops or companies to include in the list, as the study does not seek to explore a certain company's or a certain type of companies' news media presence, except for the very broad concept of "fashion commerce". In the case of such subject being used instead of the listed search words, it is likely that some other terms have been used in the same article and that it thus has appeared in the search. However, it is possible that the list is not 100 % inclusive.

As for types of retail the terms "fashion online shop" and "fashion chain" were added because they turned out to retrieve hits that otherwise would not have come up. Search words concerning some other types of retail – for example "peer-to-peer commerce of fashion" ("muodin vertaiskauppa") or "brick-and-mortar fashion shop" ("muodin kivijalkakauppa") did not have the same effect; in other words articles including these terms also included the main search terms and were thus not added as additional search terms.

Concepts such as fashion business in general, fashion design, fashion industry, fashion manufacturing and fashion wholesale were left out in order to get a concise set of media

hits involving fashion commerce as it is demarcated in this study specifically (see image 7 on page 13 – Definitions of terms).

The final definition of search terms found 427 media hits that was an appropriate amount for the study. Had the number of articles been noticeably smaller, it would have been possible to increase the article amounts by adding news sources or extending the time period; respectively had there been too many hits the time period of news channel list could have been reduced.

The media hits were downloaded into a document including all the articles and their content – either a link to the online article or a facsimile of the print article. This data is confidential, as Retriever does not allow sharing content outside of the client organization.

The media hits were drawn to an Excel sheet in chronological order from oldest to the most recent. At this time there were 427 rows. After this the double rows of online and print article were combined – many of which had different headlines but nearly the same content – after which there were 327 rows.

The data collected for RQ1 from Retriever can be considered primary data, as it doesn't exist as an entity limited and defined in the same way anywhere else and is deliberately and carefully demarcated by the researcher to be used as data for this specific study.

Analysing data

The articles were then read or eyed through by the researcher. Retriever enables highlighted text where a search word appears, making the reading process faster. The articles were then analysed one at a time and put in the categories seen in chart 1.

The data was analysed with a method mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, as many of the categorizations first required the researcher's qualitative consideration and were afterwards presented in quantitative ways. Some classification is, however, possible to make between the two. Qualitative analysing method was used in the following attributes: Relevancy; Topic; Good news / bad news / neutral news; Work / Growth / Competitiveness / Climate / Lively city and town centres. Quantitative analysing method was used in the following attributes: Media; Journalist / News agency; News department or key word; Context Fashion, design and style or industry / Context Commerce; Company / Organization mentioned or topic of article; Spokesperson and role of spokesperson; Spokes-organization; Print / online; Word count.

RQ 1	How is fashion commerce covered in Finnish news media?
Basic information about coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance • Topic • Good news / bad news / neutral news
Other data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headline • Publishing date • Print / online • Word count
Who writes about fashion commerce?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Journalist / News agency
In which context is fashion commerce covered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News department or key word • Context Fashion, design and style or industry / Context Commerce
Who represents fashion commerce in news media?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company / Organization mentioned or topic of article • Spokesperson and role of spokesperson • Spokes-organization • Type of commerce: none, industry / Specialized / Shopping Centre / Supermarket / Department Store / Outlet • Type of commerce: Physical / Online
To what degree are case organization's themes of interest present in coverage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work • Growth • Competitiveness • Climate • Lively city and town centres

Chart 1: Research question 1 and its sub-questions with data

Relevancy of article

Of the 327 articles, 79 were considered highly relevant and 121 relevant to fashion commerce news coverage. 127 were considered bare mentions of fashion commerce. The relevant and highly relevant articles were more closely analysed according to chart 1. The mentions were not analysed. Research question 1 is thus answered by the findings that came up in the analysis of relevant and highly relevant media hits.

Articles labelled **Mention** included the search term in the right meaning of the search term, but the actual topic of the article was something else, and fashion commerce was barely mentioned, not commented or analysed in any way. This category included for example the mentioning of H&M launching its own theme collection for the Indian market exclusively for the season of Diwali in an article that firstly and foremostly describes the

phenomenon of Diwali in a versatile way; and an article about accessibility for the visually impaired, that included a mention of the difference between shopping at a small brick-and-mortar shop and online store.

There were no fully irrelevant hits such as misunderstandings of the search words. However, the hits labelled “**mention**” are irrelevant to the study – for example a review of a movie or a TV programme schedule including a word that can be found in the search terms. Other hits considered “mention” range from an interviewee having previously worked at a clothes shop to a news event happening at a clothes shop – for example a shooting in the USA – or the mentioning of a person, who is interviewed in a completely different context, shopping for a pair of shoes. Thus, the “mentions” do deal with fashion commerce but in no such way that could be considered relevant for the analysis of news media coverage of fashion commerce. Even though they do carry some amount of weight as an expression of the ordinariness of fashion commerce in people’s lives, their analysis is not included in this study.

Relevant articles were ones in which fashion commerce is mentioned but the focus of the article is rather in some other issue, for example shopping centres in general, of which fashion commerce is a part of, or regarding for example fashion industry or fashion design, and the selling of products is a side-note. Relevant hits include also ones in which the article is in fact about something else, such as politics or sustainability, but a lot of space has been given to fashion commerce.

Also in the category of relevant hits are articles that handled fashion commerce directly but, in another country, or another time in history, for example 1950’s Helsinki or a Chinese village today; or in the case of articles about entrepreneurs, in which a fashion commerce entrepreneur is one case among others; as well as the very several articles about Stockmann – a department store with a strong focus on fashion but that has many other product groups and services as well, and the same applies to Outlet Village Tzar, which mostly, but not exclusively, consists of fashion stores. Finally, a “relevant” article might have been about a foremostly fashion commerce company, such as Zalando, but if its focus has been for example on fibre production of a certain collection, the media hit has been labelled only relevant instead of highly relevant.

Articles labelled **Highly relevant** are those, in which fashion commerce is the centre focus of the article; the article is *about* fashion commerce.

Basic information, topic and tone

Research question 1 had four sub-questions which all had individual attributes that were analysed. In addition to the actual research questions, some additional information was gathered at the same time, that can be considered basic information or information that might have been used in the analysis but eventually was not. For example, word count was listed but not used in the eventual analysis.

The first section of chart 1: *Basic information about coverage* includes the relevancy evaluation that finally affected the number of articles included in the analysis, as those articles considered “mentions” were not part of the final current state analysis. In addition, the *topic* of the article was written down in a few words, as the headline doesn’t always reflect the content very well.

The articles were also categorized in sections of positive toned, negative toned and neutral toned news. As there naturally often are multiple points of view in quality journalism, which the chosen media all represent, the proper, in-depth categorizing according to tone would have required more time and deeper digging in terms of qualitative content analysis than the thesis timespan allows.

There were, however, many clear cases of “good news”, such as business developing very well, optimistic news about more sustainable practices, or an entrepreneur’s success story. Respectively, there were clearly “bad news” such as shops closing down, fast fashion being too unsustainable as a phenomenon to fix, or companies not being prepared for international online competition.

Because the categorizing to positive and negative tones came to be a bit unreliable due to limited resources, the traditional media monitoring terms of positive and negative tone were also dropped and the more colloquial form – good and bad news – adopted also for reporting. The clear cases were categorized and are briefly reported on in the one-page overviews of how the case organization’s themes of interest are present in the coverage. An example of this can be seen in the findings in image 26 portraying the news media coverage on climate-related fashion commerce news.

It of course depends on the point of view of the receiver is news is good or bad. For example, someone might find the news of shops closing down good news, for example from the point of view of shops making room for cafés and restaurants, or from the point of view of slowing down a fast-fashion-addict’s shopping behaviour. The consideration of good or

bad news is based on the author's consideration of what is good news from the fashion commerce business sector's point of view.

RQ1 sub-question 1: Who writes about fashion commerce?

This question was answered by quantitatively analysing the amounts of relevant and highly relevant news in the four different media, after the articles had been qualitatively categorized, as explained in the chapter about relevancy above. A calculation on how many articles a certain journalist has written was used to find out if there are journalists dedicated to fashion commerce in the news media or if certain journalists seem to focus on the topic.

RQ1 sub-question 2: In which context is fashion commerce covered?

All articles are placed under a certain news section in the media, in online media sometimes keywords are used. The articles' placements in different news sections were analysed by grouping the news sections into bigger entities and then the portions of articles under certain sections quantitatively presented.

The following sections were created from a few dozen different news sections:

Culture: Culture, Fashion, Sustainability, Technology, Travel

- Culture is here seen in its wide meaning as in the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society

Economy & Business: Commerce, Companies, Consumption, Economy, Entrepreneurship, Industry, Investing, Marketing, Retail

- Including all economy and business -related topics

Feature & Point-of-view: Feature, Leader, Opinion, People, Periodical, Permanent column, Personal & Everyday

- Including the varying, individual points of view

News: International News, Local News, National News, News

- News in their traditional meaning as noteworthy and recent events

The purpose of this was to find out in which context articles about fashion commerce are placed, how they are framed, and which phenomena they are thought to be part of.

In addition, a different way of analysing the context was used: the categorizing of articles by their topic. In this categorizing the researcher evaluated if the article is about *fashion commerce* or about some other aspect of fashion business such as industry, personal

style, or design. The definition of what is meant by fashion commerce in this study is explained in image 7, chapter 2.5.

RQ1 sub-question 3: Who represents fashion commerce in news media?

The analysis of who uses their voice when fashion commerce is discussed in news media was conducted using quantitative methods. This was observed from the points of view of which companies or other organizations are either topics of the article or commentators in the article and which persons are interviewed or written about.

The mentioned companies were listed not only by the name of the company, but sorted by different types of companies, such as department stores or specialized retail, and by the country of origin of the company.

Spokespersons and the organizations they represent were also listed and counted.

Spokesperson and spokes-organization are mentioned in case there are persons commenting in fact on the fashion retail related issue – for example a relevant hit regarding a shopping centre with commentary on restaurants of the shopping centre are not listed or mentioned as spokespersons. Also, the relevancy of mentioning the spokespersons was evaluated by the researcher – for example interviewed consumers' names or individual shop keepers' names in other countries were not listed. If an article was based completely on the data and press release provided by a certain organization, the organization in question was listed, even if there had not been a separate interview or actual comment form the organization for this article in particular.

In the initial categorizing of the data a different categorizing was also used but eventually not applied in the analysis. This concerned evaluating type of commerce covered in the article and categorizing articles by mentioning of type of commerce in the following categories: none, industry / Specialized / Shopping Centre / Supermarket / Department Store / Outlet and type of commerce: Physical / Online. This however turned out to be a too time-consuming work-phase to carry out reliably in the scope of this project. As the author is not aware of each mentioned company's online presence, this would have required looking into each company separately. Also, it was often unclear to which category the article should be placed in this regard – for example is online fashion commerce is not discussed as such, but the company has prominent and self-evident online presence, it was not possible to say to which category the article should belong in, or would have required more thorough argumentation regarding the categorization.

RQ1 sub-question 4: To what degree are case organization's themes of interest present in coverage?

Finally, research question 1 seeks to find out how the case organization's themes of interest are present in the news media coverage of fashion commerce – how often do the themes of work, growth, competitiveness, climate and lively city and town centres appear in news articles handling fashion commerce? The articles were categorized accordingly.

Work, Growth & Competitiveness were eventually grouped as themes and phenomena that regard the societal effects from the economic point of view. Those included articles that handled for example employment, employer issues and employees' issues in the case of theme Work, business and stocks in the theme Growth, and retail as export and international competition in theme Competitiveness.

Articles categorized as handling theme **Climate** included all the media hits writing about sustainability, the environment and recycling.

And finally, the articles categorized as dealing with the theme of **Lively city and town centres** were about brick-and-mortars and shopping centres as part of physical environment, but also about shops as important parts of communities and their meaning to people.

Findings of research part 1: Current state analysis of media coverage

The findings were combined into a visual 26-page presentation that describes the current state and is confidential to be seen by case organization only, as it includes detailed insight into the current state. Some key findings are listed here. However, the biggest contribution of the current state analysis is the visual presentation's ability to create an overall picture of what the current state is, not certain single details.

Kauppalehti is the most active reporter of fashion commerce, which could be expected. Its share of relevant and highly relevant news on fashion commerce is 39 %. Helsingin Sanomat is also active in the field with a share of 30 %. However, HS had only 18 highly relevant hits during the whole year, which is rather low amount for the nation's biggest newspaper. Yle produces a fifth of all relevant and highly relevant news on the subject, equaling 40 articles, or one every 9th day on average. Taloussanomat had the smallest share of 11 % of hits equaling just 21 news articles on fashion commerce in a year.

There are no journalists in Finland that are profiled as focused on fashion commerce. This is not a surprising finding, as media's resources have declined resulting in also lesser numbers of staff. Current observation shows that most journalists have to be able to tackle subjects of a very versatile and wide field, and few have the luxury of being able to fully focus on a certain business sector, so it could be expected that there is no journalist with a fashion commerce focus. It is still an important finding in terms of developing media relations with certain media or their staff.

There was some variation in the amounts of monthly fashion commerce news. Quarterly business reports in February and again in April show in the amounts of media hits. Also, the case organization's seminar with a research publication on fashion consumption, the difficulties of Stockmann and the opening of REDI caused clear peaks in the monthly amounts of news.

As far as placement under a certain news section headline goes, fashion commerce was most often discussed in the context of economy and business, as seen in image 22, and within that section most often in the context of investing (image 23). The closest concepts to the focus of the study, commerce ("kauppa") and retail ("vähittäiskauppa") amounting to 18 articles comprise just 15 % of the articles within the economy and business news sections, and just 9 % of all relevant and highly relevant news articles.

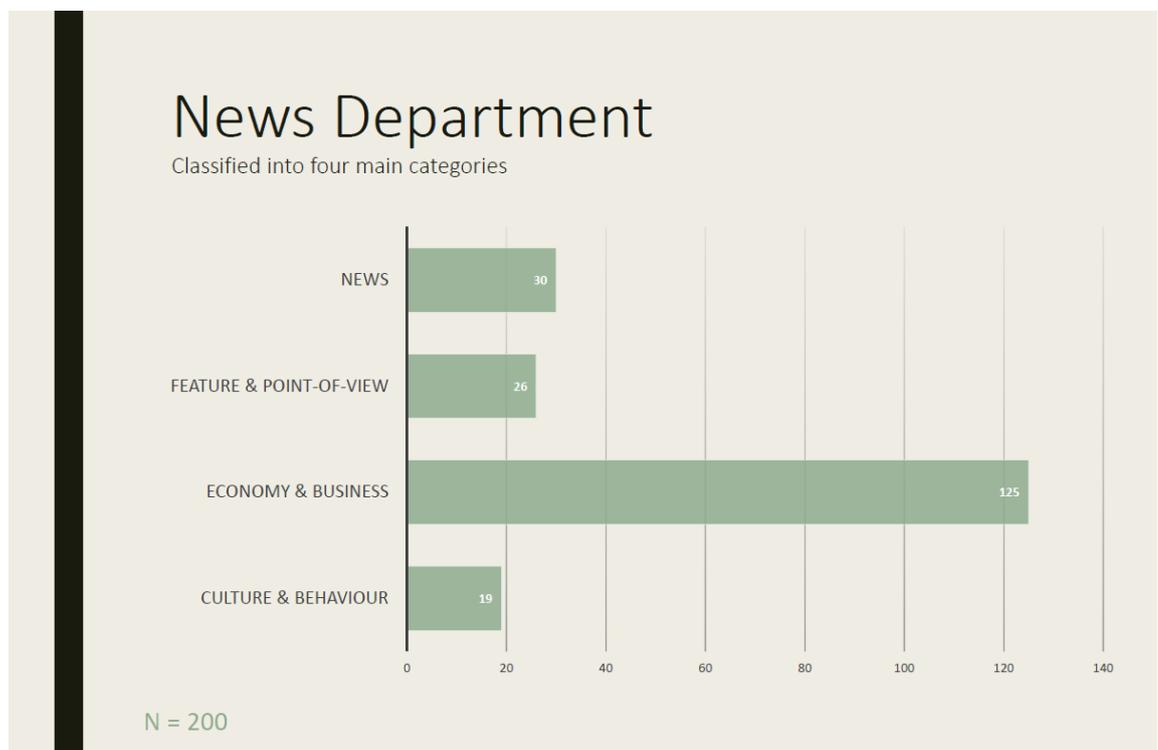


Image 22. The news department in which articles are placed; share of articles.

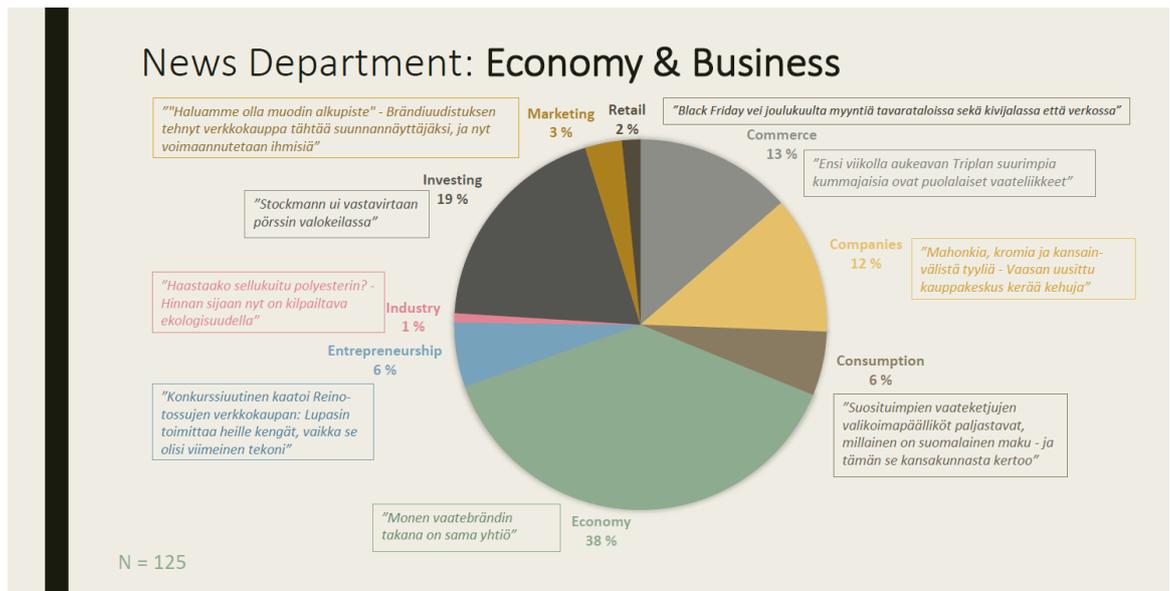


Image 23. News departments' shares under the headline of economy and business.

Among other notable findings is the low amount of fashion commerce news under the news section of sustainability – only 5 articles, even though nearly a fifth of the articles handle fashion commerce and some aspect of sustainability.

Most of the relevant and highly relevant articles about fashion commerce are on the actual topic of *fashion commerce*, and only 5 % of the articles are more focused on the close concepts – fashion industry, style or design.

There were a total of 111 companies and brands mentioned in the 200 media hits, so there was quite a lot of dispersion in the mentioned companies. Just four hits were enough to make it to the top 10 of most mentioned companies and brands, which consists of big corporations, department stores and shopping centres: Stockmann, H&M, Zalando, Lindex, REDI, Tripla, Prisma, Sokos and XXL. Most articles, total 45, mentioned no certain company or brand, but were about fashion commerce or consumption in general.

Specialized fashion store (70 articles), fast fashion (55) and department stores (37) were the most mentioned concept types of fashion commerce. Supermarkets as a concept were mentioned in just 12 articles, even though they make up most of fashion sales in Finland. Almost half of the companies or brands discussed in the media hits were dedicated fashion or sports companies, and 35 % were of general nature – such as a department stores, which retails many other product groups as well.

Domestic companies were clearly more often mentioned than foreign ones (image 24) when one company represents one unit. In Nordic comparison, Finnish companies were the topic of article in three times out of four.

This is explained by some of the articles dealing with also small Finnish companies mentioned in for example local news, which naturally is not the case regarding for example Swedish companies, that mostly in Finnish media are fashion giants known to many, such as H&M, Monki or COS. Those kind of companies might have gotten mentions in several articles, which makes the relative share on mentions larger. Still, also measured by all the mentions of a certain company or brand, domestic companies were most often discussed.

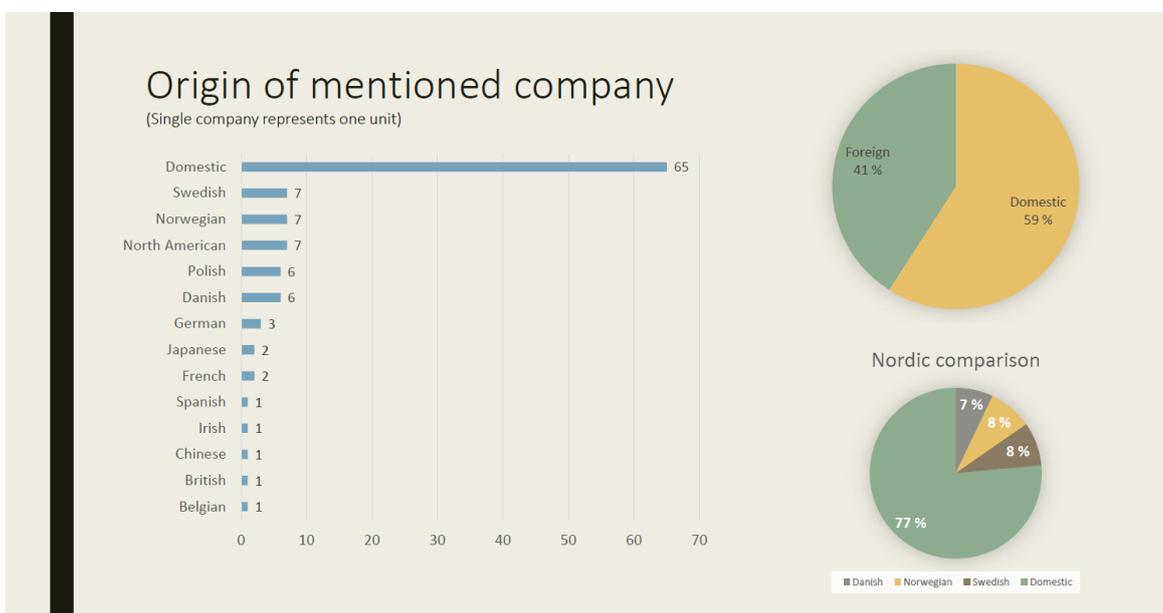


Image 24. Origin of company or brand discussed in media hits on fashion commerce.

Most often heard spokespersons came from a variety of organizations including both large and small companies, universities, and also the case organization. The most heard organization is Stockmann, and companies in general are the most heard voice with a share of nearly half of the articles analysed (image 25).

Of lobbying organizations, the case organization has clearly the strongest voice as a spokesorganization for fashion commerce, and of the 15 most heard spokesorganizations, three are its member companies, while many others on the list are universities and shopping centres.

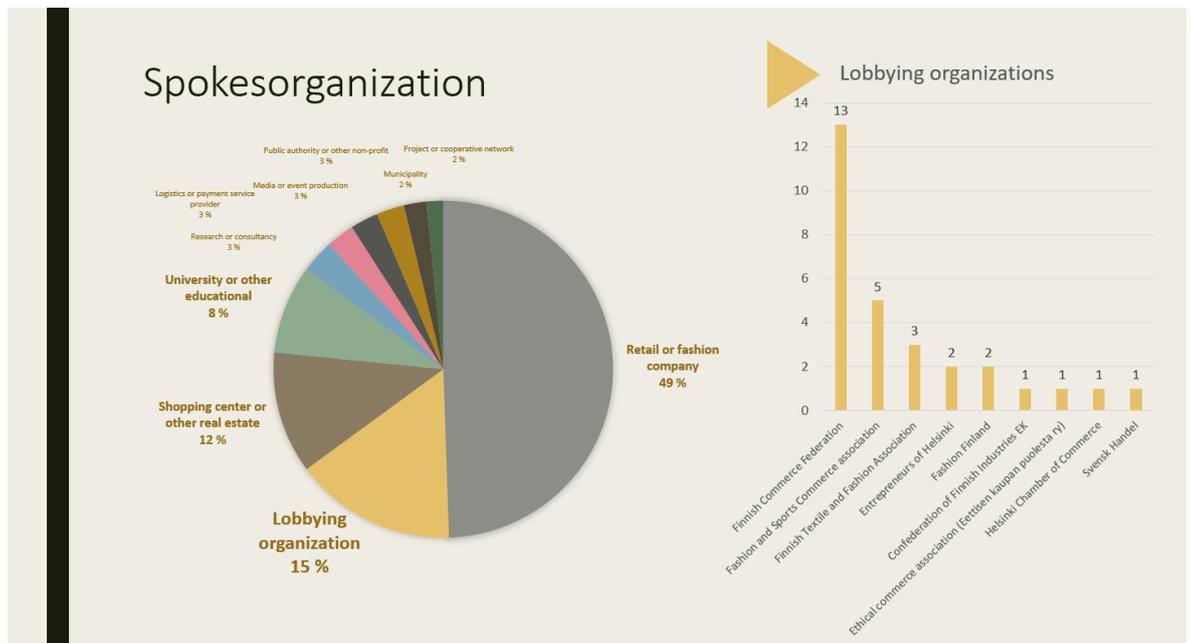


Image 25. Spokesorganizations for fashion commerce in news media.

Finally, the presence of case organization's themes of interest in fashion commerce news articles were studied. The themes that are topical and for the most part can be considered rather universally interesting, have a strong presence in the news reporting about fashion commerce. An example of findings is image 26, that is the compilation about fashion commerce and climate in Finnish news media. It shows that nearly a fourth (47/200) of the articles analysed in this study had something to do with sustainability issues.

Yle and Helsingin Sanomat were the most active to report about such issues. 44 % of the news in this category were considered "bad news" by the author, examples of which can be seen in the compilation: topics such as "Fashion industry is one of the most destructive for environment"; "Fashion pollutes more than air and sea traffic combined"; "Fast fashion can be addictive and is destructive"; "Fast fashion is too unsustainable"; and finally, "Fast fashion will die" were easy to consider bad news from the commerce sector's point of view.

The larger part, however, were good news – a total of 30 articles, or one approximately every 12 days, on topics such as "Sustainable fashion is possible and happening"; "There are global benefits from recycled fashion"; "There are new, more sustainable ways"; "There are plenty of good used clothes out there"; and "There are ways to have an influence".

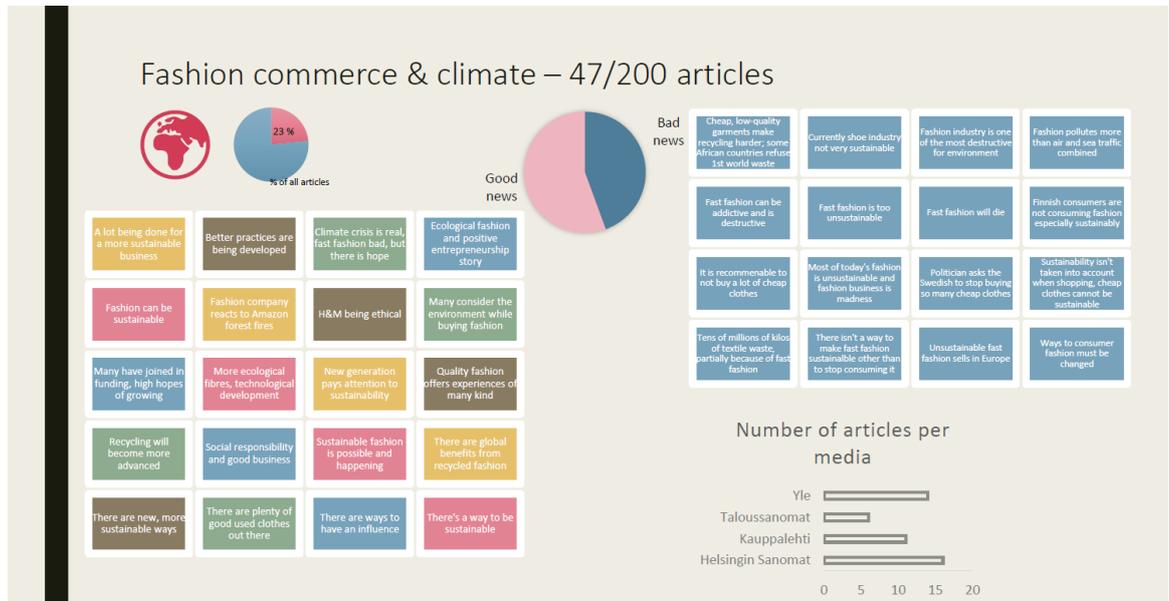


Image 26. Case organization's theme of interest, climate, and fashion commerce in news media.

6.1.2 Conducting part II: Current state analysis of societal effects

The second part of the research was conducted using a literature review as research method and its purpose was to answer research question 2:

How is fashion commerce societally important?

- What are the **economic effects** it has?
- What are the **environmental effects** it has?
- What are the **cultural effects** it has?
- What are its relations to the **case organization's themes of interest**?

This part of the research was made by using literature sources and the author's experience of working closely with fashion commerce for nearly two decades.

Hannah Snyder's (2019) paper discussing literature review as a methodology for conducting research and offering an overview of different types of reviews concludes that not only do literature reviews play an important role as a foundation for all types of research, they can serve as a basis for knowledge development, create guidelines for policy and practice, provide evidence of an effect, and, if well conducted, have the capacity to engender new ideas and directions for a particular field. As such, they serve as the grounds for future research and theory. In this study, a literature review regarding the societal effects of fashion commerce was written to be able to validate the idea that fashion commerce's news media coverage could possibly be more versatile.

According to Snyder (2019), an effective and well-conducted review as a research method creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development. By integrating findings and perspectives from many empirical findings, a literature review can address research questions with a power that no single study has.

Collecting and analysing data

According to Onwuegbuzie (2016), as a data collection tool, the literature review involves activities such as identifying, recording, understanding, meaning making, and transmitting information, and that the literature review process is actualized through data collection. In its optimal form, the literature review represents a formal data collection process wherein information is gathered in a comprehensive way (Onwuegbuzie 2016, 49-50).

In the case of this study, topical statistics, news reports and classic fashion research were used as sources to define and describe the societal importances of fashion commerce, the current state of which is described in chapter 4, the first part of the study's literature review.

The timespan of this thesis project didn't allow for a literature review of the societal effects of fashion commerce in an extent that would fully and comprehensively be able to describe the many aspects of how fashion commerce effects our lives. Such a study would have required a much longer time period and possibility to examine an infinite number of sources, as fashion plays a part in every culture and age around the globe throughout the history of mankind. The scope allowed by this particular research and development project was considered in the attempt to portray some of the most relevant issues in this context, and especially in the context of the case organization's themes of interest.

Snyder (2019) describes this as a semi-systematic or narrative review approach, that is designed for topics that have been conceptualized differently and studied by various groups of researchers within diverse disciplines and that hinder a full systematic review process. That is, to review every single article that could be relevant to the topic is simply not possible, so a different strategy must be developed (Snyder 2019).

The economic, environmental and cultural effects of fashion commerce were chosen as aspects to explore by the author's evaluation. Some aspects regarding the cultural were demarcated and only touched upon, such as fashion as art or fashion as a hobby.

Sources to examine and to include in the study were chosen by the author and are based on reliability and relevance to this study. They include for example research and statistics from the case organization, Statistics Finland, Corporate Knights and Finnish Fashion and Textile association, to name a few; reports from the UN, Common Objective and Copenhagen Fashion Summit among others; news articles from global sources; and finally, fashion research from for example from Carter, Strom and Koskennurmi-Sivonen. The complete list of sources can be referred to in the bibliography.

After the sources were decided on, the literature review was conducted. Snyder writes (2019) that is important to consider how the articles will be used to conduct an appropriate analysis; after selecting a final sample, a standardized means of abstracting appropriate information from each article should be used. "Data abstracted can be in the form of descriptive information, such as authors, years published, topic, or type of study, or in the form of effects and findings. It can also take the form of conceptualizations of a certain idea or theoretical perspective" (Snyder 2019).

Findings of research part 2: Current state analysis of societal effects

The findings are compiled into a 15-page visual summary (Appendix 3: Current state of societal effects of fashion commerce). The visualization portrays a large business sector, both globally (image 27) and nationally, that has a major economic influence. It also shows that fashion commerce is not strictly definable as a sector of its own, but has a significant role in the success of companies that are not primarily known for fashion, for example three out of world's biggest retail companies have major fashion commerce businesses, as do two of Finland's four biggest companies, meaning that fashion commerce is an important driver for business in general. Fashion is a major employer and globally employs mostly women.

The environmental effects of fashion business are massive (Image 28), but the sector itself is working in many ways to improve policies and practices. The larger the company, the more likely it is to be able to move towards more climate-friendly ways. Four fashion companies of many different pricing policies make it to the top 100 list of world's most sustainable corporations. At least to some extent, the sector itself has woken to the reality of having to change its own ways before it is done by governmental regulation.



Image 27. Global economic effects of fashion business.

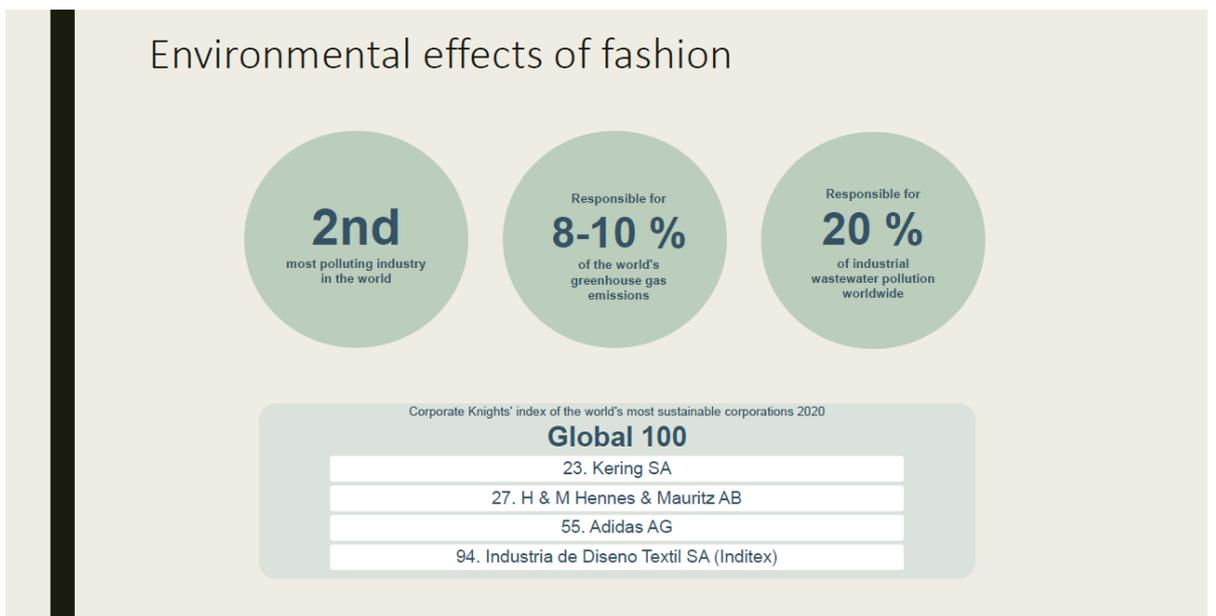


Image 28: The environmental effects of fashion.

Clothing carries many functions, which are not as superficial as one might think – or put in other words, the superficial is not unimportant, as shown by many examples of how dressing affects our everyday lives and how its primary functions are not in fact the kind that can be reasoned in a practical or “rational” way, such as protecting one from the cold. Often, the significances of dressing become clear only when one’s usual clothing procedures are disturbed.

Finland has 3 000 brick-and-mortar fashion commerce companies in its 300 municipalities, making them a common service with an important role in city and town centres, enlivening the areas by attracting other services such as better mobility (image 29).



Image 29: Fashion commerce as part of man-made environment.

Furthermore, the safety, health and wellbeing aspects of fashion have the capacity to either undermine or advance people's quality of life. Finally, fashion as a pastime extends its influence on many areas of life, from art forms to entertainment in the form of reality TV shows.

6.1.3 Conducting part III: Creating alternative agendas

Part 3 of the research was the final phase of the constructive research. It consists of reflecting parts 1 and 2, and its purpose is to answer research question 3: **What could be an alternative agenda to cover fashion commerce in Finnish news media?**

- Do the answers to RQ1 reflect the answers to RQ2 in an appropriate manner; Does fashion commerce's news media coverage reflect its societal importance in a satisfactory way?

Based on the portraying of the current states of both media coverage and societal effects of fashion, it can be concluded that a more versatile news coverage could be possible. There could be room for new points of view for covering fashion commerce related topics in the news media in Finland. Thus, new, alternative media agendas were proposed. A template was created to ideate and portray the possible new agendas.

The template (image 30) consists of the following:

- Suggestions what to bring out, highlight or emphasize in terms of communicating to, or providing information for, news media
- Reasons for this suggestion based on the study and on external reasons
- Description of the ability of the case organization to adopt the suggested agenda in terms of immaterial resources, answering questions such as “Do we have the needed expertise to attempt to communicate this agenda?” or “Do we have a committee whose purpose is to promote the themes of this agenda?”

Example Agenda

- Suggestion what to bring out, highlight or emphasize in terms of communicating to, or providing information for, news media
- Reasons for this suggestion are listed below left in section **Why?** – which is based on findings in the study and reflected with topical external reasons.
- Below right the section **How?** describes the ability of the case organization to adopt the suggested agenda in terms of immaterial resources, answering questions such as “Do we have the needed expertise to attempt to communicate this agenda?” or “Do we have a committee whose purpose is to promote the themes of this agenda?”

Why?

Based on study

- Finding A
- Finding B
- Finding C

External reasons

- Topical observation 1
- Topical observation 2
- Topical observation 3

How? In the case of Finnish commerce Federation

- Statistics and research ✓
- Cases
- Expertise ✓
- Network or committee ✓

Image 30. The template for an alternative agenda.

The template was used in ideating the new media coverage agendas. Total of seven alternative agendas were created and proposed to the case organization. The suggestions are confidential only to be seen and evaluated by case organization, but one example (the Green Agenda, Image 31) is presented and in addition some main points about creating the other agendas are reflected on in the following.

Quite many gaps between the current media coverage and societal effects emerged, for example the frequency of news about fashion commerce in different media and in different news sections were to an extent very few, considering the size of the sector and its overall effect on economy in Finland. There are, for example, possibilities to bring to media’s attention the essential role of certain types of companies, and also the positive effects on society, of certain types of companies.

The role of fashion as a product group for companies that are not primarily fashion commerce companies is also a point of view that media might find interesting from an angle that has not yet been reported on.



The image shows a presentation slide titled "Green Agenda" with a tree icon in the top right corner. The slide is divided into several sections:

- Green Agenda**
 - Fashion retailing companies' own efforts for more sustainable practices and policies
 - Big companies as leading solver of sustainability issues
- Why?**
 - Based on study**
 - Currently fashion commerce content is not very often a case in the context of sustainability; only 5 hits in the news department of "sustainability" despite nearly a quarter of all media hits handling sustainability
 - Driver of sustainability is company size, not price positioning
 - Chance to change lives for millions globally
 - Fast fashion's destructiveness a hot topic among media
 - Proactively offering solutions and improving policies will prevent stricter regulations – but not if no one has heard of them
 - External reasons**
 - Before the coronavirus pandemic, climate issues were dominating news – it is one of the most talked-about subjects of our age and will very probably stay that way
 - Coronavirus pandemic, the supreme news subject of today, is closely linked to climate issues at least in terms of globalization, the economy, and biodiversity
- How?** In the case of Finnish commerce Federation
 - Statistics and research ✓
 - Cases ✓
 - Expertise ✓
 - Network or committee ✓

Image 31. The Green Agenda.

As for the environmental, negative effects of fashion commerce, the study found new points of view that have not been covered in news media in Finland in the researched time period. There are also reasons based on statistics that support the testing of a certain agenda; such as portions of certain types of companies in fashion commerce.

The notion of fashion being an everyday affair for all – that is very prominent in this study – opens up new opportunities that traditionally have not much been taken advantage of in this country – Finland is rather the ultimate democratic bastion, in which according to an old Finnish proverb, “it is the ugly who parade in pretty clothes”, and where standing out for one’s benefit can be frowned upon. Whether trendy or so-last-season, cheap or expensive, domestic or foreign, outrageous or blending in with the wallpaper – we all still do wear clothes, and on average find them equally important. This can be empirically tested by giving a person with “complete disregard of fashion” a set of clothes to wear that they did not themselves pick.

The case organization’s clear leading position as the spokesorganization for fashion commerce also inspired a new agenda that could both benefit the fashion commerce sector and diversify the case organization’s role as a societal voice.

There's a variety of external reasons that support the suggested agendas, such as media's will to report on issues that concern large groups of people, the acuteness of environmentally sustainable solutions, and global trends that include for example the shift in people's attitudes towards ownership; health and wellbeing as a lifestyle; and certain feminist echoes such as #Metoo-movement and the appraisal of female government-run countries suggested to have handled the coronavirus pandemic better than others, to point out a few.

The immaterial resources and expertise of the case organization are at very good level regarding the possibilities to utilize the suggested new agendas. This means statistics and research the organization itself produces; possible case suggestions of individual companies, their deeds or professionals of commerce that are in the scope of its membership; expertise of certain fields that could be commented on for the media – such as specialists of for instance chemical and product safety affairs, community planning, environmental affairs including producer responsibilities, eco-labelling and energy efficiency, economic policy, taxation and the labour market, to name some.

Finally, the many committees and networks that the case organization either operates or participates in, offer unrivalled insight, vision and knowledge that could be harnessed to advancing fashion commerce's foothold as a societally important and interesting sector, commentator and provider of information. This would eventually benefit not only fashion commerce sector but the entire commerce sector.

7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis project by looking into if research questions were answered and describing and evaluating the research journey. It explains the relevance and significance of the research project on a larger scale societally, to the case sector, the commissioning organization, as well as to the researcher. Finally, it includes some suggestions for future actions regarding the study and the data collected.

The objective of this study project was to unearth and name new possible media agendas for the benefit of the fashion commerce sector, while diversifying the case organization's voice as a societal commentator and provider of information.

There were three main research questions with sub-questions sought to find the answers to describing the current state of news media coverage of fashion commerce in Finland and to portray the societal – economic, environmental and cultural – importances and effects of fashion commerce, and finally compare these two to explore if there are untapped opportunities in terms of how fashion commerce could in the future be covered in news media. As it is the news media's task to make the significant seem interesting for citizens to receive – and want to receive – essential information, against the background of the societal effects of fashion commerce the news media coverage could be more diverse.

The study explains how media affects people's attitudes and why it is important for a lobbying organization to help maintain a favourable reputation of a sector they represent. While the case organization is not the exclusive advocate for *fashion* commerce in Finland – but rather the representative for all commerce sectors – its member companies constitute the majority of fashion trade in this country.

The project was a constructive research in which media coverage of fashion commerce was described by way of conducting a content analysis mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, and in which the societal importances of fashion commerce were researched by way of a literature review. The constructive study was finalized by comparing the two beforementioned in order to create new alternative media agendas for fashion commerce.

Research questions were answered during the study project. **Research question 1., The current state of news media coverage in Finland of fashion commerce** was analysed and portrayed in a way that brings new information usable to case organization, fashion commerce sector as well as representatives of news media. With limited amount of media

sources selected and limited resources to analyse the relevant and highly relevant articles in an in-depth way, it is possible that some of the interpretations would be different, if the same type of research was conducted for a larger number of different media, or if each of the 200 articles were carefully analysed for their tones and aspects. In the case of this study, the resources were purposefully used to include the used amount of media and the one-year timespan, even if each article couldn't be thoroughly analysed. Therefore, it was a conscious choice to be able to go through this kind of amount of news articles to be able to present the current state in quantitative ways.

Answering research question 2 about the societal effects of fashion commerce was likewise resource-bound, and the literature review or scope of aspects to include could have been much wider, had there been more time to conduct the research. In this research setting, it can be considered that research question 2 was also answered adequately, as the results and portrayal of them communicate of a sector that has significant and complex meanings both globally and nationally, and for many different groups or people, if not all. Answers to RQ2 can also be utilized by case organization and the fashion commerce sector – including also students of the field – as well as representatives of news media.

Finally, **research question 3** was answered, as untapped opportunities were found and presented to Finnish Commerce Federation. Even though it is problematic to make a statement about the current media coverage in terms of if it's "good", "bad" or "sufficient" – as it isn't compared to for example another sector's media coverage, or that of the same sector the year before – the current state analysis does show that fashion commerce has unused potential that could be of interest to the media.

The project produced alternative media agendas that can realistically be taken to use in terms of immaterial resources in case organization. It can benefit from the study by taking into use the new suggested agendas, which would diversify their role as a societal voice.

Fashion commerce, and also the wider community of fashion business, can use the study to diversify their own understanding of the extent of the effects of the sector, and in seeking viewpoints that news media might find interesting that the fashion commerce sector can provide. This applies to individual companies as well.

The outcome of the thesis, if put in practice, can be of some wider societal importance, as fashion commerce's success can advance employment, tax revenue and other value

creation nationally, if not on its own, at least as part of, and in terms of advancing, commerce – Finland’s biggest employer and taxpayer – as a whole.

The data collected for research question 1 can further be used for new studies or analysis, such as portraying a certain media’s coverage on fashion commerce on a deeper level, a certain company’s media visibility in news media, or for example a more in-depth analysis of sustainability and fashion commerce in news media. In this sense, the data collected to answer research question 1 has a lot of potential that has not been used in this study, as the goal was to produce an overall view of the state. The literature review conducted to answer research question 2 can also be utilized as a base for further descriptions of fashion commerce as a societal force. The structure of the study can serve as a way to repeat the same kind of study into another commerce sector, another type of media, etc. Also, the template for alternative agendas can be used for this.

In addition to answering the research questions, the first part of the study (current state analysis of news media coverage) also exposed new information about the how the different media cover the studied issues that can be used in supporting the practical communications process of the case organization, its member organizations or member companies. Certain strengths that could support the new suggested agendas possibilities to be covered in news media were identified, and those can further be reinforced.

Feedback from the case organization was collected in an online workshop, that was attended by the communications team and members of the management board relevant to this study. The case organization found the proposals to be interesting, well crystallized and valuable, with potential benefits to both communications and advocacy. It was evaluated that there indeed is untapped potential, from the point of view of the case organization and regarding media as a stakeholder. The case organization’s representatives found the presentation of current state of societal effects to be proof that the sector is of great importance.

The theme of clothing as an everyday affair for all was well-received as a potential area to make the role of commerce more visible, as a contributor to everyday lives in the area of clothing as well. It was pointed out, that the everyday aspects of fashion’s importances might get plenty of coverage in other type of media, and that it is only natural for the economic and business aspect to arise when this set of (news) media is studied – but simultaneously noted, that the everyday carries great potential in getting people’s attention – also in terms of political or economic news.

The case organization agreed that the suggested alternative media agendas have the potential to be utilized in a variety of ways by member associations or member companies, regardless of how the case organization chooses to use the suggestions. The practical ways in which the study will be utilized will be discussed, weighing resources and strategic choices.

For the researcher, the study journey has been very rewarding with many new learnings and ideas for possibilities regarding stakeholder and media relations, the power and possibilities of media, and the depths of the trade of the superficial, fashion commerce.

"Dress shabbily and they remember the dress; dress impeccably and they remember the woman."

– Coco Chanel

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Search words

Search terms in English:

Fashion trade; Trade of fashion; Fashion retail;
Clothing Trade; Trade of clothing; Clothing retail;
Shoe trade; Trade of shoes; Shoe retail;
Fashion shop; Clothes shop; Shoe shop;
Fashion chain; Clothing chain; Shoe chain;
Fashion online shop, Clothes' online shop, Shoes' online shop
Fashion consuming; Consuming of fashion;
Clothing consuming; Consuming of clothes;
Shoe Consuming; Consuming of shoes

Search terms in Finnish:

Muotikauppa; muodin kauppa; muodin vähittäiskauppa;
Vaatekauppa; vaatteiden kauppa; vaatteiden vähittäiskauppa;
Kenkäkauppa; kenkien kauppa; kenkien vähittäiskauppa;
Muotiliike; vaateliike; kenkäliike;
Muotiketju; vaateketju; kenkäketju;
Muodin verkkokauppa, vaatteiden verkkokauppa, kenkien verkkokauppa
Muodin kulutus; muodin kuluttaminen;
Vaatteiden kulutus; vaatteiden kuluttaminen;
Kenkien kulutus; kenkien kuluttaminen

Finnish grammatical cases were considered to ensure sufficient coverage. The actual search terms were the following:

(muotikaup* OR "muodin kaup*" OR "muodin vähittäiskaup*" OR vaatekaup* OR "vaatteiden kaup*" OR "vaatteiden vähittäiskaup*" OR kenkäkaup* OR "kenkien kaup*" OR "kenkien vähittäiskaup*" OR muotiliik* OR vaateliik* OR kenkäliik* OR muotiketju OR vaateketju OR kenkäketju OR "muodin kulutu*" OR "muodin kulutt*" OR "vaatteiden kulutu*" OR "vaatteiden kulutt*" OR "kenkien kulutu*" OR "kenkien kulutt*" OR "muodin verkkokaup*" OR "vaatteiden verkkokaup*" OR "kenkien verkkokaup*")

Appendix 2: Current state of media coverage (Confidential)

RQ2: How is fashion commerce societally important?



What are the **economic effects** it has?



What are the **environmental effects** it has?



What are the **cultural effects** it has?



What are its relations to the case **organization's themes of interest**?

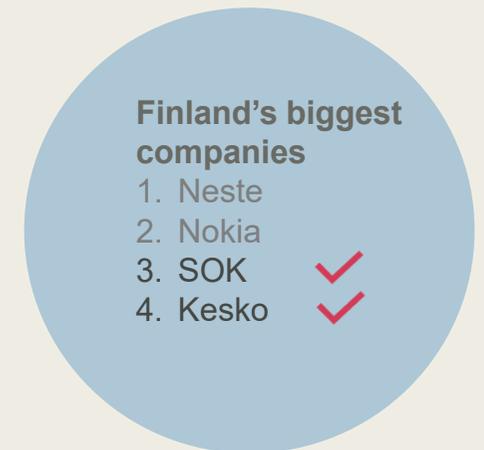


What are the **economic effects** it has?

Economic effects of fashion: Globally



Economic effects of fashion: Finland





What are the **environmental effects** it has?

Environmental effects of fashion

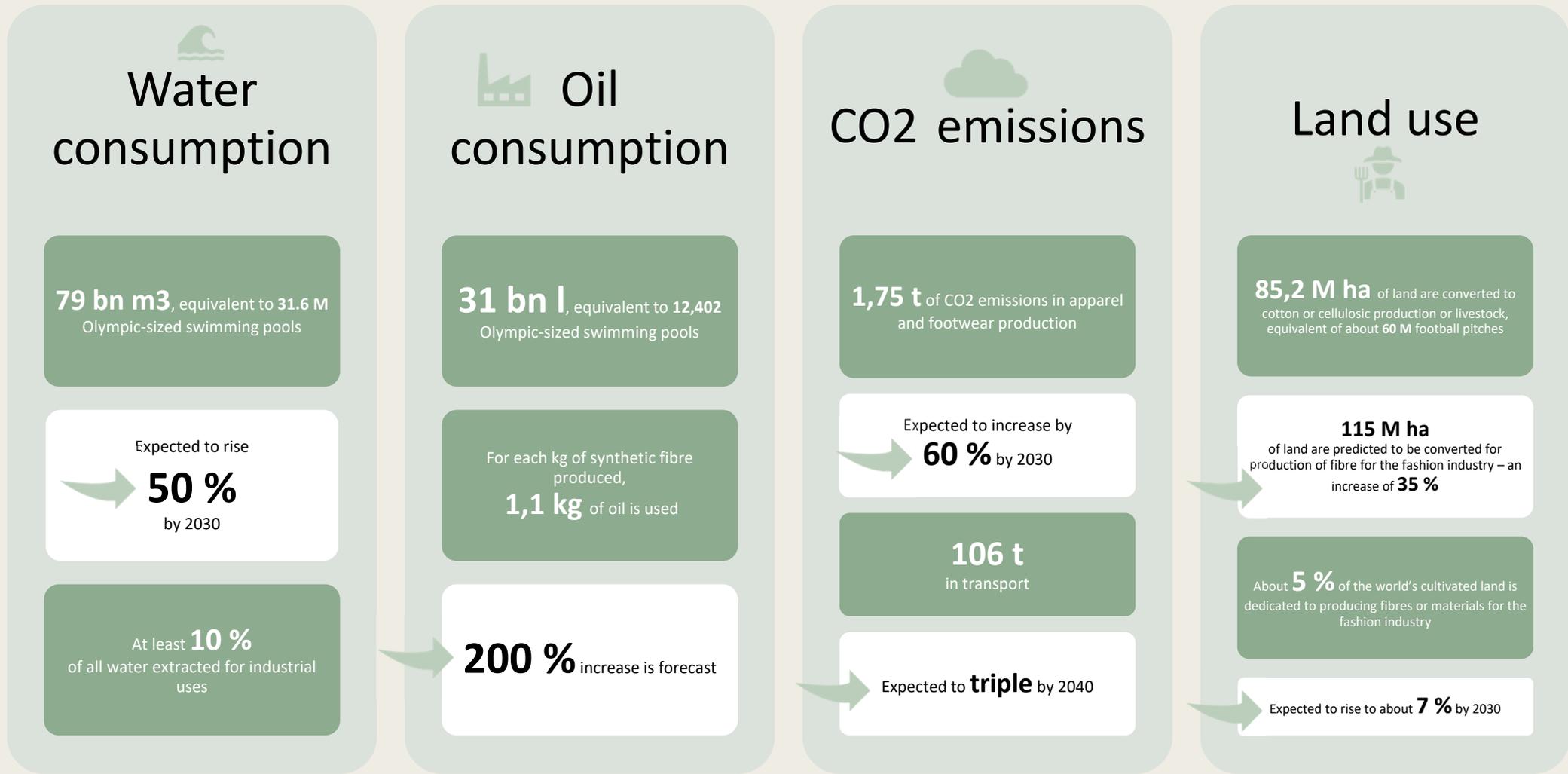


Corporate Knights' index of the world's most sustainable corporations 2020

Global 100

23. Kering SA
27. H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB
55. Adidas AG
94. Industria de Diseno Textil SA (Inditex)

Environmental effects of fashion industry per year 1/2



Environmental effects of fashion industry per year 2/2

Chemical use – production of textiles

43 M t used to produce textiles

465 g per kg of mad-made material

925 g per kg of cotton material

Expected to grow by **3,5 %** per year

Up to **24 %** of the chemicals used and released into water are known to be toxic

Chemical use – production of cotton

Consumes **3,8 %** of nitrogen fertilisers and phosphorous globally

Purchased **5,7 %** (by value) of all pesticides sold

Cotton production is estimated to grow at **1,5 %** per year

Waste – effect on land

92,5 M t of fashion waste goes into land-based waste streams

22 – 40 t of microfiber plastics released into municipal sewage plants

By 2030, the waste amounts are expected to increase by **60 %** to **148 M t**

7 % of all municipal solid waste

The release of microfibres into land-based ecosystems, is equivalent in volume to around **4 – 7 M** plastic bags per day

Waste – effect on oceans

Washing synthetic fabrics releases **1,2 – 14,1 kg** of microfibres into fresh and oceanic waterways per day per 100,000 head of population

Expected to increase in line with the increased use of synthetic materials: **3,5 %** per year

Microfibre release is expected to approximately **double** by 2030



What are the **cultural effects** it has?

Cultural effects of fashion: functions of dressing

Natural functions

decoration

protection

modesty

Communicational functions

communication

roles

status

Social functions

social class

economy

administration

religion

Psychological functions

personal development

group dynamics

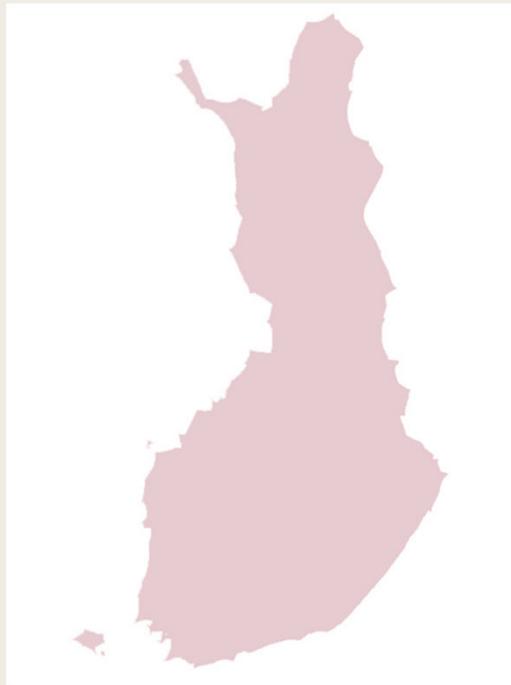
behaviour

“Significances of dressing become clear only when one’s usual clothing procedures are disturbed.”

Cultural effects of fashion: fashion as a pastime



Cultural effects of fashion: man-made environment



3000

apparel shops,
footwear shops &
sportswear shops

in the **310** municipalities of Finland

in the country's **99** shopping centres,
in the traditional brick-and-mortar setting
on shopping streets &
on main roads of villages





What are its relations to the **case organization's themes of interest?**

What are its relations to the case organization's themes of interest?



Economic effects

**WORK
GROWTH
COMPETITIVENESS**

Environmental effects

CLIMATE

Cultural effects

**LIVELY CITY AND
TOWN CENTRES**

Appendix 4: Alternative agendas for case organization (Confidential)