



Promoting Sustainability Without Greenwashing: Building Customer Trust at Silverjungle

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis was commissioned by Silverjungle, a small Finnish ethical and ecological fashion brand. The purpose of the study was to support the sustainability communication of the company by identifying consumer attitudes and expectations and offering development suggestions. The goal of this study was to initiate concrete development suggestions to strengthen Silverjungle's brand communication and customer trust.

The theoretical framework focused on sustainability, responsible business practices, and sustainability communication, emphasising themes such as transparency, authenticity, and the value of consistent messaging across different platforms. Consumer expectations regarding sustainable brands were also explored.

The empirical research was implemented as a quantitative study. A consumer survey was distributed online and the questionnaire gathered 102 responses. The results suggested that consumers value clear, honest, and transparent communication about sustainability. Consumers expect concrete examples and accessible information and content. The most preferred communication channels were social media and product packaging and labels.

Based on the findings on the theoretical framework and survey, the thesis offers practical recommendations to Silverjungle. The recommendations included making sustainability communication more visible and consistent across the brand's platforms, sharing behind-the-scenes content, and sharing clear information about the brand's sustainability actions across the supply chain. Implementing the suggestions of this thesis, Silverjungle could increase customer engagement and trust as well as strengthen the company's brand image.

Key words: greenwashing, sustainable fashion, brand communication, sustainability messaging

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainability sells and it is a growing buzzword in various industries, including the fashion industry. Consumers are increasingly aware of their choices and are looking for brands that align with their values. (Martins, 2024). However, as consumers have become more concerned with sustainability, many clothing brands make far-fetched claims of environmental responsibility in order to appeal to customers. Companies are resorting to greenwashing when they make eco-claims without actual evidence and continue their unsustainable actions behind the scenes. (Abelvik-Lawson, 2023). The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines greenwashing as actions that makes consumers believe a company is doing more to protect the environment than it actually is.

This thesis focuses on the role of sustainability and how to transparently communicate it to customers in the fashion industry without resorting to greenwashing. This thesis is written for Silverjungle, a small Finnish ethical and ecological clothing company, to help them find out how customer trust can be strengthened through transparent sustainability communication. Customers' expectations are evolving and therefore it is important to find effective and credible ways to communicate about sustainability.

1.1 Objective and motivation

The objective of this thesis is to assess how Silverjungle can communicate their sustainability efforts to their customers effectively without greenwashing and while building and maintaining customer trust. The aim is to assess Silverjungle's current communication and content as well as to find out what is working and what kind of content customers would like to see. Silverjungle is a small Finnish clothing company that aims to operate as ecologically and ethically as possible.

This thesis will explore communication strategies that can be used by companies like Silverjungle that include clear sustainability claims, honest storytelling, and alignment between actions and communication.

As consumers have become more conscious of environmental and social issues, they also expect brands to transparently communicate about their sustainability efforts (Martins, 2024). Therefore, the motivation for this thesis comes from the growing demand for responsible business practices and the increased awareness of greenwashing and false corporate sustainability claims.

1.2 Research frame

This thesis is positioned within the themes of corporate sustainability communication, customer trust, and ethical branding. This thesis assesses how Silverjungle can communicate their commitment to sustainability while strengthening customer trust. The thesis will focus on Silverjungle's current main communication channels, which are Facebook, Instagram, and their website.

The research problem in this thesis is how Silverjungle can promote their environmental and ethical efforts in a way that is transparent and credible to its' customers. By analysing Silverjungle's current communication and customer perceptions, this thesis aims to provide understanding into effective sustainability communication.

1.3 Research questions

This thesis aims to assess Silverjungle's current sustainability messaging, evaluate its' effectiveness, and identify best practices for transparent communication. The research questions of this thesis are as follows:

1. How does Silverjungle currently communicate its sustainability actions to customers?
2. How can Silverjungle improve communication to increase transparency and credibility?
3. What are the key elements of effective brand communication for fashion brands?

1.4 The commissioner

Since 2011, Silverjungle has been offering ecologically and ethically made clothing. Their main target market is women and children, but they also offer some items for men. Their design and production are based on high quality, aesthetics, functionality, versatility, and comfort. The core of Silverjungle's operations is built on ecological production, socially and environmentally responsible choices throughout the supply chain, and keeping the products reasonably priced. Silverjungle ensures by using auditing and certification systems that none of their factories use child labour and that all their factories provide good working conditions. (Silverjungle, n.d.)

All Silverjungle's products meet the Global Organic Textile Standards and/or are Ökotex-certified. The designing of the products takes place in Finland. The majority of manufacturing happens in Portugal, with additional production facilities in Sri Lanka and China. Silverjungle has a small physical store in Riihimäki, Finland. Most of the sales happen in their online store. (Silverjungle, n.d.)

2 THEORY

2.1 Corporate communication

Corporate communication has an essential role in shaping a company's public image, maintaining customer and stakeholder relationships, and ensuring that there is consistent messaging across different platforms. The term corporate communication refers to the strategies and practices corporations use to communicate their identity, values, and messages to external and internal audiences. It includes various types of communication, including public relations, media relations, internal communication, and corporate social responsibility messaging. (Krzyzanowski et al., 2024).

The main goals of corporate communication are:

1. Brand positioning so that there is a clear corporate identity and reputation.
2. Stakeholder engagement, which means having good relationships with employees, customers, investors, and other stakeholders.
3. Reputation management, which involves responding to challenges, public feedback, and possible crises.
4. Transparently communicating about the company's business operations, values, and sustainability actions. (Krzyzanowski, 2024).

2.1.1 Corporate communication and sustainability messaging

Effective sustainability messaging is an essential part of corporate communication as it affects the company's reputation. However, sustainability messaging can be challenging as environmental, social, and governance issues are complex. A company can deliver its sustainability communication through different channels, like corporate websites, social media, sustainability reports, advertising campaigns, and direct stakeholder engagement. Clear, consistent, and authentic messages are effective in corporate communication. (Genc, 2017).

In the fashion industry, sustainability messaging has become an important aspect of corporate communication as there are growing concerns about the industry's environmental impact, ethical labour practices, and circular economy principles.

There are different purposes behind corporate communication in the fashion industry, one of them being educating customers about sustainable fashion choices including ethical sourcing, material production, and circular fashion which are connected to customer engagement, and in fashion it is about making sustainability a shared responsibility. Corporate communication also has the role of defining brand reputation through sustainability actions and having accurate reporting of sustainability progress. (Vassalo et al., 2024).

According to Vassalo et al. (2024) in the fashion industry, sustainability messaging is mainly communicated through corporate websites, social media, product packaging, influencer collaborations and posts, sustainability reports, and advertising.

Transparency is a main factor in sustainability communication. Therefore, it is beneficial for fashion brands to openly disclose their supply chains, material sourcing, and even some sustainability challenges. (Jestratijevic et al., 2021). For example, Patagonia is a widely known sustainable fashion brand. However, Patagonia acknowledges their imperfections which reinforces the brand's credibility as they show commitment to continuously improve within their sustainability actions. (Patoy, 2024).

According to Jestratijevic et al. (2021), sustainability messaging is more effective when it connects with consumers on an emotional level because storytelling helps to underline real-world impact which makes sustainability messaging more relatable.

2.2 Brand communication

The American Marketing Association AMA (n.d.) defines a brand as the identity and perception of a company which is shaped by the name, logo, design, messaging, and overall customer experience that identifies goods or services. Brand communication is involved in shaping customer perceptions, building trust, and strengthening relationships between customers and companies. It includes messages and experiences delivered to customers by a brand through advertising, social media, and customer service. Effective brand communication is important

for the brand's identity in the market as it includes the company's values and mission. Brand communication consists of verbal and non-verbal elements. Verbal communication includes messaging through websites, social media, advertisement, and product descriptions whereas non-verbal communication incorporates visuals, packaging, and brand experience. (Wijaya, 2013).

The main purpose of brand communication is to create and sustain a positive brand image, strengthen customer loyalty, and to differentiate the brand from competitors. Brand messaging means how values, purpose, and selling points are communicated to consumers while highlighting the brand's personality. It includes taglines, mission statements, and tone and style of communication. (Sela, 2024).

Another aspect of effective brand communication is brand positioning, which is a strategic process that defines how a company is perceived by consumers in comparison to competitors. Brand positioning is about how a brand differentiates itself and communicates its value. A strong brand position makes it possible for the brand to stand out and appeal to the right market in addition to providing clarity on who the brand serves. The way a brand positions itself shapes their communication strategy which influences how a brand communicates and builds relationships with consumers. (Forbes, 2022).

In fashion industry, like many other industries, competition is quite intense, and expectations are constantly evolving. Therefore, having strong and transparent brand communication is important. Today's consumers are becoming more aware of their consumption and choices and are seeking for brands that align with their values. Authentic and transparent communication creates credibility and trust, which affect customer decision making, loyalty, and engagement. (Forbes, 2022).

2.2.1 Brand communication in the fashion industry

Fashion as an industry has gone through some major changes and it keeps changing. In the past fashion was mainly a privilege for the wealthy and elite whereas nowadays fashion is more accessible. Big fashion brands are trying to

include a large and more diverse audience. Clothing has changed from custom-made to mass production. Therefore, brands have to find ways to connect with everyday consumers. (LLCA, 2024).

Fashion communication is built around storytelling, and it uses various tools like photography, writing, designs, and social media to share different styles, trends, and ideas. Fashion communication also includes appreciating the cultural significance of fashion. Engaging content plays an important role in how consumers understand and connect with fashion brands and trends. (LLCA, 2024).

Visual aspects, storytelling, and ecological and ethical actions are important components in the fashion industry and therefore brand communication has a major role in building trust and maintaining competitive advantage. Credibility and brand identity can be built by having consistent and clear brand communication. In addition to visibility, customer engagement is an essential aspect of effective brand communication. For instance, publicly responding to customers' questions or feedback, sharing tips and facts, and having public discussion makes customers feel involved. (LLCA, 2024).

The importance of brand communication has grown as consumer expectations have changed. Consumers are still interested in product design and quality, but they are also interested in the values and ethics behind a brand. Therefore, a brand's communication should be able to adapt to the consumer wants and needs. As consumers are more aware of sustainability, they also expect brands to communicate their environmental and social responsibility transparently. (Schivinski, 2015).

2.2.2 Brand communication strategy

Creating a brand communication strategy is a part of effective fashion communication as it is a roadmap for how the brand tells its story. Instead of only telling what the brand is, a resonating narrative helps to connect with customers and shape their perception of the brand. To begin with, it is important to know the target audience of the brand, which includes knowing about demographics, buying habits, motivations, and preferred communication channels. It can also be

helpful to set communication goals for brand communication. Consistency in communication creates authenticity. It is easier for customers to connect with an authentic brand. Identifying suitable communication channels, evaluating strategies, and being open to development are all part of creating a communication strategy. (LLCA, 2024). A well-constructed brand communication strategy aids in creating an impactful brand narrative which affects perceptions and encourages desired consumer actions (Sela, 2024).

2.3 Social media and brand communication

With social media, brand communication has become more dynamic, interactive, and fast-paced. The way brands engage with customers has been reshaped due to different social media platforms, influencer collaborations, and online communities. Traditional communication channels like TV, radio, and newspapers offer one-way communication and they do not allow for a lot of customer interaction. (Chowdhury et al., 2024).

Different social media platforms have different users and audiences. Main communication channels for brands include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and X, previously known as Twitter. (Digital Marketing Institute, 2024).

Social media can be a helpful tool in communicating about sustainability actions. For example, Instagram allows to share visual context like videos and photos as well as text-based posts and stories. Instagram is especially popular among young adults, and it is often used as an interactive platform where discussions and negotiations about different topics and ideas happen. Instagram allows consumers to share posts and make meaning with brands in real-time. (Bulmer et al., 2024).

2.4 Sustainable and responsible communication

Sustainable communication refers to the practice of including environmental and ethical brand messaging into a communication strategy. It provides information about a brand's sustainability objectives and practices in a transparent, credible,

and responsible way. In the context of corporate social responsibility and sustainability, brands must be especially mindful of how they communicate their values and actions. (Bulmer et al., 2024).

Brand identities that are built around sustainability must deliver their promises and ensure that they are authentic as consumers are often suspicious about sustainability claims that companies make. Being an authentic brand requires consistently aligning brand behavior with core values, being genuine and honest, and clearly representing what the brand stands for. Consumers want honest and transparent brand communication especially with the increase of social media and online reviews. Sharing feedback and opinions is easier nowadays, which makes brand transparency even more crucial and misleading claims can result in consumer skepticism and losing trust. (Bulmer et al., 2024).

Brand authenticity is built on four key dimensions which are continuity (consistency over time), credibility (trustworthiness and reliability), integrity (strong values and sincerity), and symbolism (what the brand stands for, including style and identity). The key dimensions shape consumer perceptions of a brand's authenticity which influences trust and customer engagement. (Bulmer et al., 2024).

In the fashion industry, the most common sustainability communication strategies are third-party verified labels and free-form marketing claims. However, these strategies are not enough as consumers are looking for clear, comprehensive, and actionable information. The issue with third-party certifications is that they often focus on narrow aspects of sustainability and small companies can have financial barriers to acquire some certifications. Non-standardized sustainability messaging can resort to emotional appeal instead of facts. Using claims like "eco-friendly" or "conscious collection" can attract customers, but they can also lead to greenwashing concerns. (Turunen & Halme, 2021).

An important aspect of brand communication is transparency, and it has become even more important as information is more accessible now than before. Therefore, consumers have become more critical of brands and their claims. Communicating transparently, especially about sustainability, includes providing clear and

evidence-based information. In the fashion industry, this includes providing transparent information about sustainability, supply chains, materials, and production processes. Some ways to make communication more transparent are third-party certifications, reporting, and open and honest dialogue with customers. (Yang & Battocchio, 2020).

As sustainability has become an important selling point in the fashion industry, brands want to emphasize their environmental and ethical efforts, it is challenging to do so in an effective and credible way. Customers are becoming more unconvinced of sustainability claims and are seeking for tangible proof before trusting a brand. For fashion brands, using buzzwords and hollow sustainability claims is not enough when it comes to brand communication. Fashion companies should be able to provide concrete information and details on materials, production processes, supply chains, and certifications. (Wren, 2022).

According to Wren (2022) another aspect that makes responsible communication more difficult for fashion brands is complex supply chains as it is common in the fashion industry to work with suppliers and manufacturers in different countries which makes it difficult to maintain full transparency. Shafie et al. (2021) mention that for fashion brands, sustainable communication is particularly important because of the industry's environmental impact, like textile waste, carbon emissions, and ethical concerns in supply chains and labor practices.

2.4.1 Transparency

A transparent company communicates openly and honestly about its practices, and it includes sustainability actions. In the current age of digital media and instant access to information, hiding or manipulating facts can have a lot of damage to a company's image and reputation. Transparency is increasingly important in industries such as the fashion industry, as consumers are expecting brands to disclose information about their practises. Being a transparent company means more than just providing information, it requires honesty, accessibility, and clarity. Therefore, companies should ensure that their messaging is not only truthful but

also understandable to their audience. Transparency can be viewed as a competitive advantage, as transparent brands can build stronger connections with consumers. (Sansome et al., 2024).

2.4.2 Credibility

Credibility can be defined as a component of corporate communication that affects how trustworthy and reliable a company is to its stakeholders. Consistent actions, honest messaging, and alignment between a company's words and actions are major parts in building credibility. Credibility is an essential part of corporate communication, as it has an effect on customer engagement. In the corporate world, credibility is established through transparency, ethical practices, and delivering promises that have been made. (Belasen & Belasen, 2019).

According to Belasen & Belasen (2019), openly sharing company values, admitting challenges, and providing confirmable information are important actions in terms of gaining consumer trust. In the contrary, misleading claims, exaggerated marketing messages, and inconsistent brand behaviour can be damaging to credibility. In the fashion industry, misleading communication can be perceived as greenwashing. (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022).

In addition to communication, credibility is about the actions of a company. When it comes to credibility, taking accountability of mistakes, participating in meaningful sustainability actions, and prioritising sustainable business practices over short-term profits are all important. (Singh, 2024).

2.5 Brand image

According to Qualtrics (n.d.), brand image refers to the perception that consumers have about a brand. It is formed through experiences, associations, and brand communication. Brand image is the result of how a brand presents itself and how it is interpreted by consumers. A strong brand image can create emotional connections, influence purchase decisions, and differentiate the company from its competitors. (Qualtrics, n.d.).

Brand image is not created by the company alone, it is also created in the minds of consumers through different touchpoints like brand communication, marketing, and product experiences. Also, visual elements like logo, designs, and packaging, tone of voice, and brand values contribute to the brand image perceived by consumers. (Qualtrics, n.d.).

In the context of sustainable fashion, brand image plays a key role. A brand claiming to be ecological and ethical should align its identity, messaging, and actions with these values in order to build credibility and trust among consumers. Inconsistency between a brand's messaging and actions can be harmful to brand image and make consumers suspicious. This is especially relevant in the fashion industry where greenwashing is a concern and transparency is increasingly expected. (Schiaroli et al., 2024). Therefore, brand image is an important aspect when it comes to strengthening consumer trust and customer loyalty.

2.6 Sustainability in fashion industry

The change towards a more sustainable future has been rather slow in the fashion industry. Fast fashion, where trends come and go quickly, and clothes are sold at a low price point is unfortunately still plays a big role in the clothing industry. The current rate of production and consumption is not viable to the planet and the people. (Hardy, 2024). Sustainable fashion is a complex issue as it includes many objects such as information transparency, sourcing materials, fabric treatment, production methods, and social responsibility (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2013). Sustainability as a term is complex but it has three main aspects which are environmental, social, and economic. From an organizational perspective, sustainability actions include the entire process from production to consumption, including how sustainability is communicated to stakeholders, including consumers. (Bulmer et al., 2024).

Sustainable consumption, especially in the fashion industry, remains difficult to achieve. Although awareness and information about sustainability are increasing, consumers still struggle to turn their knowledge into concrete purchasing behaviors. This phenomenon is known as the attitude-behavior gap, which results from

several factors, including the complexity and feeling of inaccessibility of sustainability communication. (Turunen & Halme, 2021)

2.7 Greenwashing

The fashion industry has struggled with environmental issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, wastewater, lack of recycling, and microplastics. Other issues in the fashion industry include ethical problems such as human rights violations like hunger wages and poor working conditions. Due to these kinds of challenges, there is pressure to address these issues and therefore some brands are resorting to greenwashing. This means that some brands falsely promote their environmental efforts, and they spend more resources to the promotion than they do to actually engaging in environmentally friendly actions. (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022).

Another way to describe greenwashing is that it highlights the good practices of a company or a small part of its activity while concealing practices that have a negative impact on the environment in order to make the company seem more sustainable than it is. Some key words used in greenwashing are eco-, organic, no chemicals, and sustainable. These words cause false marketing messages when the company is not actually operating in an eco-friendly matter. Greenwashing claims can be described as misleading and vague. (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022).

2.8 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a vast and evolving concept that refers to a company's responsibility to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. Businesses are not only focusing on profit maximization, but they have a broader perspective that considers the impact of corporate activities on stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the environment. CSR is not seen as an optional part of doing business as it has become an essential aspect of corporate strategy. CSR influences the company's reputation, competitiveness, and financial performance. Sustainability is also a part of CSR. (Weber & Wasieleski, 2018). Therefore, CSR should be considered by brands in the fashion industry.

Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR is the most widely recognized model of CSR.

The pyramid categorises CSR into four layers which are:

1. Economic responsibility, which means that businesses are expected to be profitable and provide value to its shareholders.
2. Legal responsibility, which means that companies have to follow laws and regulations.
3. Ethical responsibility, which means that companies should operate in a fair, just, and morally acceptable way.
4. Philanthropic responsibility refers to the encouragement to contribute to society through voluntary actions.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the objective of the thesis, a study was conducted to help understand consumer attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability communication of fashion brands and especially the commissioning company, Silverjungle. The survey was open for one week of time, from 1.4.2025 to 8.4.2025, and it was published on two of Silverjungle's main social media platforms which are Facebook and Instagram. To reach a wider audience, the survey was also published on the author's social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook). The survey was conducted because this thesis study required real-life data from consumers. The chosen research method was quantitative, as the questions were multiple choice. There were two optional open-ended questions at the end of the survey in case a respondent wanted to leave additional comments or ideas.

3.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is a structured research approach that involves collecting and analysing numerical data to acquire results. The purpose of quantitative research is to produce knowledge and increase understanding of the social world. By doing quantitative research, it is possible to study and learn about a specific group of people called a sample population. Quantitative research relies on data that is observed or measured from the sample population. (Burrell & Gross, 2017).

The aim of quantitative research is to identify and explain factors influencing a specific population, measure the extent of phenomena, and generalise findings from a sample of a population. It aims to discover objective truths about the social world through systematic and statistical analysis. (Burrell & Gross, 2017).

Quantitative research focuses on a generally narrow problem that has an impact on the sample population and data is collected in a way that is quantifiable. Four main data collection methods are used which are surveys, experiments, field research, and public data with open access. (Burrell & Gross, 2017). In this thesis, a survey was chosen as the data collection method as answers related to the research problem were wanted from consumers. Other reasons for choosing a

survey were that a survey can be published in the commissioner's platforms and participating in the survey is relatively quick and easy.

3.2 Survey as a research method

When conducting research by making a survey, both open-ended and closed-ended questions can be used. Multiple-choice questions are one of the most used types for closed-ended questions. In multiple choice questions, the respondents are provided with a number of response options as their answers. (Chatham-Carpenter, 2017). In this study, the survey consisted of mainly multiple-choice questions and two optional open-ended questions. In addition, there was one open-ended question about the place of residence of the respondent, which was placed to gather background information. Also, the commissioner asked for this background question to be included as the information could be useful to them. According to Chatham-Carpenter (2017) multiple-choice questions can be helpful in gathering information on behaviours, attitudes, and demographic characteristics.

The survey consisted mainly of closed-ended questions because require less time and effort from the participants to answer and therefore it is easier to find participants. Also, closed-ended questions are relatively quick to analyse as response options are limited and therefore it was a suitable method for this thesis study. With open-ended question comes the challenge of providing structure to analysis and the possibility for misunderstandings and irrelevant answers. However, open-ended questions can provide richer data and ideas than just closed-ended questions, which is why two optional open-ended questions were included in the survey. (Albudaiwi, 2017A).

Open-ended questions do not provide participants with answer choices as closed-ended questions do so participants can deliver responses using their own words. Therefore, open-ended questions are often used in qualitative research methods since the answers cannot be quantified. (Albudaiwi, 2017B). As this thesis uses quantitative research, the survey was built around multiple-choice questions. However, the commissioner wished that there would be an option to leave comments or ideas related to the research issue, two open ended questions were

added at the end of the survey. These open-ended questions were not mandatory for the participants. According to Albudaiwi (2017B) open-ended questions allow respondents to give more opinions which would not be possible when providing only multiple-choice questions.

For this thesis, a survey was chosen as the method to collect data because of its versatile nature. By using surveys, many different types of data such as beliefs, opinions, behaviours, and attitudes can be obtained and therefore a survey was deemed as fitting for this particular thesis study. Additionally, survey is a suitable method for various topics and themes, and it is easy to distribute online and on social media. Another benefit is that surveys are anonymous, which can help participants to be more accurate and honest. (Albudaiwi, 2017A).

Surveys, like any other research method, have their disadvantages too. The main disadvantage is that there is a possibility for misunderstanding the questions and no possibility to clarify when it comes to online surveys. Therefore, some answers might be inaccurate if the question has not been understood correctly. There is also the risk, that some participants can give random answers, which can produce wrong findings when the data is being analysed. (Albudaiwi, 2017A). Despite these risks and disadvantages, conducting a survey was chosen as the most suitable research method for this specific study.

3.3 Reliability and validity

In any quantitative research, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study is crucial for generating trustworthy and meaningful results. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement over time. (Andersson et al., 2024). In the context of this thesis, the survey was designed to be clear, concise, and neutral to ensure that the participants would interpret the questions in a similar way, regardless of when or where they took the survey.

Validity refers to how accurately the research measures what it is intended to measure (Andersson et al., 2024). In this thesis, content validity was addressed by designing the survey questions based on relevant literature and previously defined research questions. For instance, the questions about how clear and

credible respondents find sustainability communication were linked to the main objective of analysing how Silverjungle communicates its sustainability actions. Also, the survey combined scaled questions, multiple choice questions, and optional open-ended questions to acquire detailed insights which strengthened the overall validity of the study.

To reduce potential bias, the survey was shared on both Silverjungle's and the author's social media channels, in order to reach a varied group of respondents. However, because the survey was voluntary and used convenience sampling, the results cannot fully be generalized to all fashion consumers. Convenience sampling can be defined as a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to take part in the study, rather than being randomly chosen from the entire population. So, posting a survey on social media and inviting whoever sees it to respond falls under convenience sampling. It is a convenient way to collect data but can create bias as the sample may not fully represent the broader population. (Golzar et al., 2022). However, the responses offer useful insights into the views and attitudes of Silverjungle's current and potential customers, making the findings relevant and applicable in practice.

3.4 Challenges

One of the main challenges encountered during the research process was gaining sufficient visibility for the survey. Since there was no budget allocated for paid promotion, the survey had to rely on organic reach through Silverjungle's social media platforms. This limited the potential exposure and reach of the survey, which may have affected the number and diversity of respondents. Additionally, motivating people to participate in the survey proved to have some challenges, as people can be overwhelmed by diverse content and the amount of surveys online. To address this challenge, a small incentive (a gift card raffle) was implemented to encourage participation. Despite these efforts, getting a high response rate was still a challenge, which shows the difficulty of getting engagement in voluntary research, especially when there are many surveys online competing for attention.

4 SURVEY ANALYSIS

4.1 Objective for the quantitative study

The primary objective of this quantitative study was to examine how Silverjungle's customers and other consumers perceive the brand's sustainability communication and to possibly identify opportunities for improving transparency and credibility. The aim of the survey was to gather measurable insights into consumer attitudes and expectations concerning sustainability messaging within the fashion industry, with a focus on Silverjungle as a brand. By analysing the responses, the goal was to assess the clarity, trustworthiness, and visibility of the brand's sustainability communication actions. Additionally, the study was aiming to explore what kind of content consumers find the most effective when it comes to sustainability communication. The findings of this study will support the developing recommendations to boost Silverjungle's sustainability communication in alignment with consumer expectations and best practices in brand communication.

4.2 Survey contents and background

The survey consisted of 13 questions of which 11 were mandatory to answer. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. First the questionnaire collected basic demographic data like the respondent's age, gender, and place of residence. The following questions aimed to evaluate the importance of sustainability in clothing purchases, how clearly and credibly fashion brands communicate sustainability topics, and how familiar respondents are with Silverjungle's sustainability messaging. Respondents were also asked where they usually seek information about sustainability and what kind of sustainability-related content they would like to see from brands, including Silverjungle. Additional and voluntary open-ended questions asked for suggestions on how Silverjungle could improve its sustainability communication and what would make its messaging more trustworthy.

The survey was created using Google Forms and shared in Silverjungle's Facebook and Instagram as well as the author's personal accounts. The survey was open for responses for a week. The aim was to research Silverjungle's customer

base as well as a broader audience interested in sustainability and fashion. In total, the survey gathered responses from a diverse group of participants, mainly located in Finland. Although the thesis is in English, the survey was conducted in Finnish because Silverjungle’s customers and followers are mainly from Finland.

4.3 Survey results

A total of 102 respondents answered the survey. As seen in Table 1, majority of the respondents fell into the age category of 26-35 (30,4%) and 15-25 (28,4%). The next largest age groups among the respondents were 36-45 (15,7%) and 46-55 (15,7%). 8,8% of the respondents belonged to age group 56-65 and only 0,98% to 66-75. None of the respondents were over 76 years old.

TABLE 1. Respondents’ age

Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
15-25	29	28,4%
26-35	31	30,4%
36-45	16	15,7%
46-55	16	15,7%
56-65	9	8,8%
66-75	1	0,98%
Over 76	0	0%

As seen in Figure 1, majority of the respondents (87,3%) were female and 12,7% were male. None of the respondents chose the answer option “other” or “I prefer not to say”.

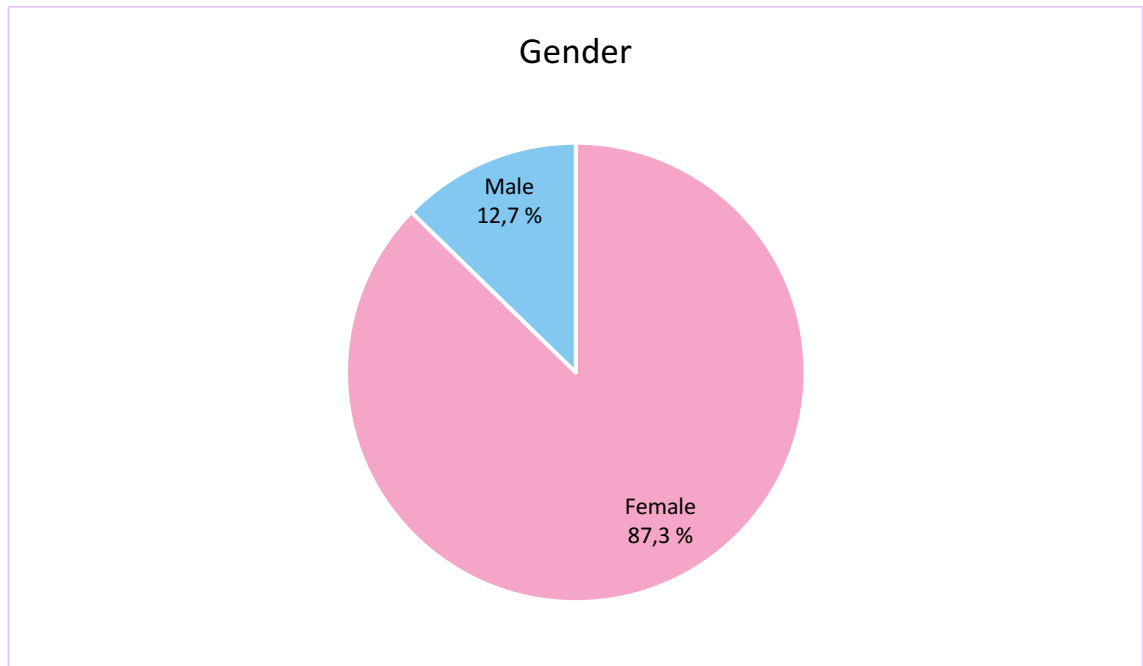


FIGURE 1. Respondent's gender

Question 3 can be found in Appendix 1, asked about the place of residence of the participants. Majority of the participants were from Finland. This question was included as the commissioner wanted to know this information about the respondents.

In the fourth question, the respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important) how important responsibility (e.g. sustainability, eco-friendliness, and ethical production) are for them when they purchase clothing. As seen in Figure 2, half (50%) of the respondents chose 4 as their answer, which means that responsibility is quite important to them in their fashion purchase decisions. 28,4% chose 3 and 16,7% said that responsibility is extremely important to them. Minority of the respondents gave a score of 1 or 2.

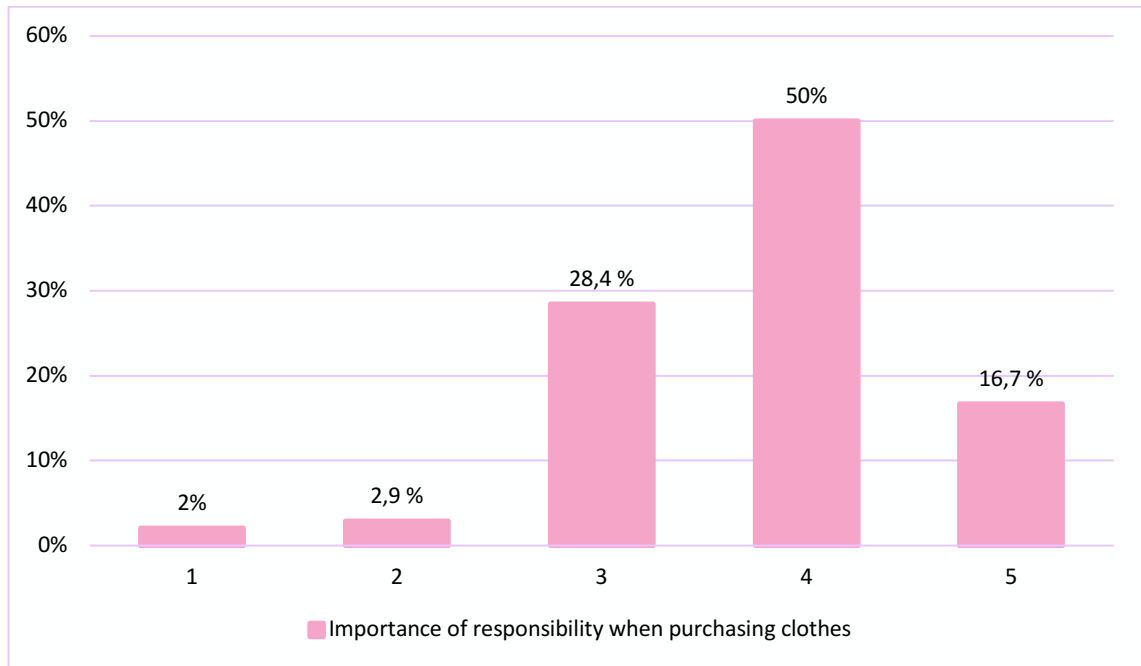


Figure 2. Importance of responsibility when purchasing clothes

The fifth question of the survey asked about how clear and trustworthy the participants find fashion brands' sustainability communication. As indicated in Figure 3, a majority of the respondents chose 2 (45,1%) and 3 (37,3%). 5,9% of the respondents gave a score of 1 and 9,8% selected 4. Only 2% gave the highest score of 5.

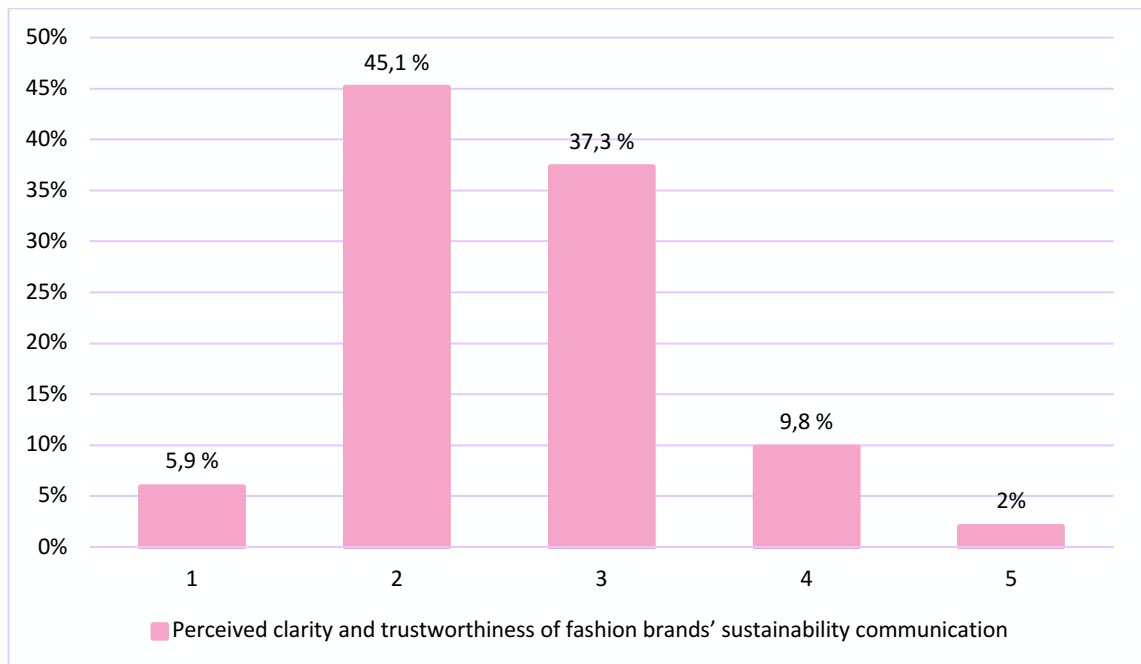


FIGURE 3. Perceived clarity and trustworthiness of fashion brands' sustainability communication

The next question on the survey explored the sources that consumers use to seek for information about responsibility (e.g. sustainability, eco-friendliness, and ethical production) on brands and products. On this question, the respondents were able to choose multiple options. As illustrated in Figure 4, information provided on product labels and packaging was the most popular choice as 71,6% of respondents chose it. Following responses are brands social media (58,8%) and third-party certificates (45,1%). 40,2% of the respondents seek for information on brands' websites and 38,2% look for other media and influencer communication. The least popular choice was brand's own sustainability labels, such as "conscious collection". Only 5,9% of the respondents said that they do not look for sustainability information.

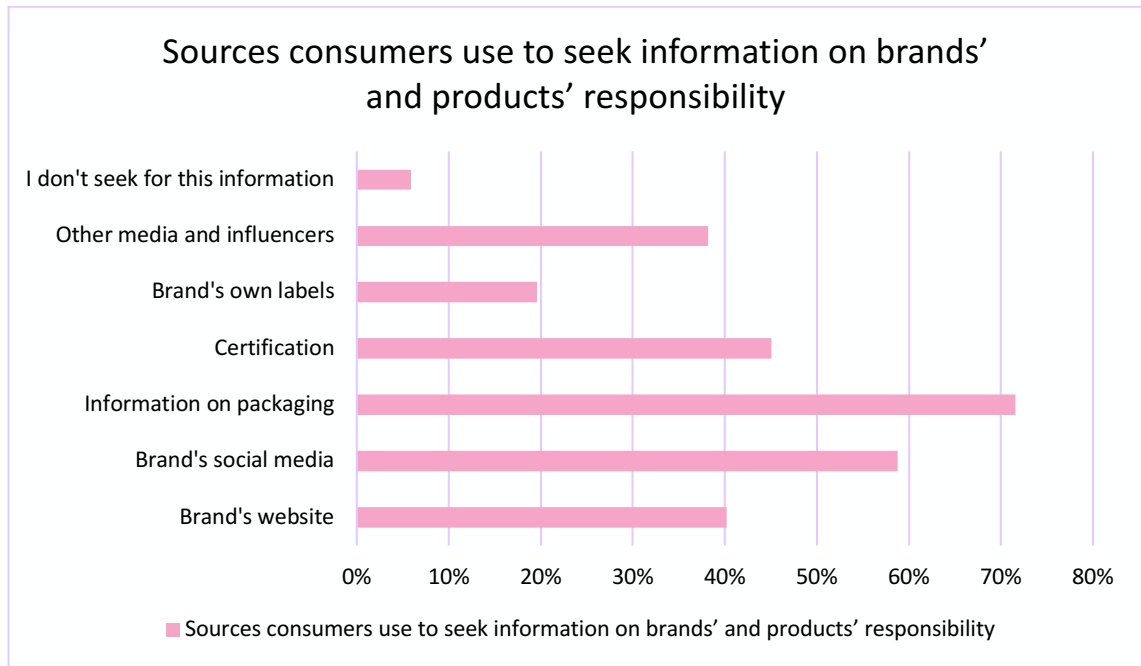


FIGURE 4. Sources consumers use to seek information on brands' and products' responsibility

Although published in Silverjungle's social media platforms, 24,5% of the respondents were not familiar with the brand. The reason behind this could be, that in social media anyone can see posts and the raffle among respondents could motivate to answer the survey even if the brand is unfamiliar. However, a majority (59,8%) of the respondents said to be familiar with the brand and 15,7% knew of the brand but hadn't purchased its' products as seen on Figure 5.

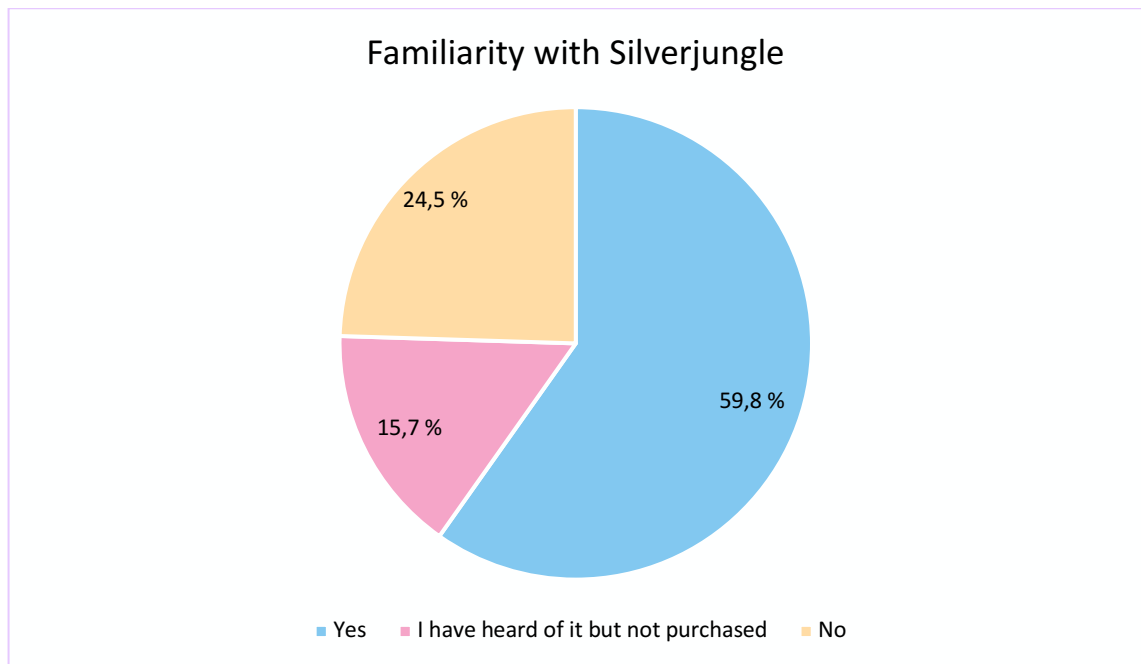


FIGURE 5. Familiarity with Silverjungle

As seen on Figure 6, a majority (53,95%) of the respondents have seen Silverjungle's sustainability communication. 14,7% of the respondents said they are not sure and 13,7% claimed they haven't seen the brand's sustainability communication. 17,6% said they are not familiar with the brand and therefore don't have an answer.

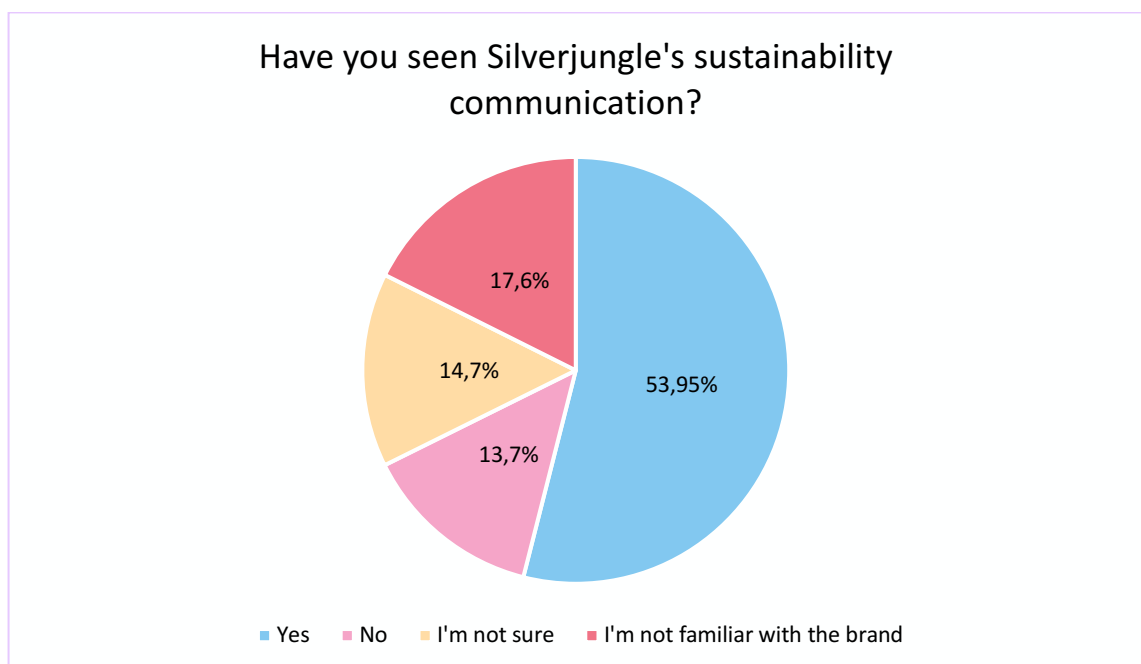


FIGURE 6. Familiarity with Silverjungle's sustainability communication

In this question, the participants were again able to choose multiple answers. As seen in Table 2, 52,9% said that they have seen Silverjungle’s sustainability messaging on Facebook, making it the most important platform among respondents. The following platform is Instagram, with 41,2% of respondents saying they have seen sustainability communication there. Following are labels and information on products (36,3%) and website (16,7%). 24,5% said they are not familiar with the brand and 15,7% said they have not seen sustainability communication from Silverjungle.

TABLE 2. Platforms of Silverjungle’s sustainability communication

Where have you seen Silverjungle’s sustainability communication?	
Facebook	52,9%
Instagram	41,2%
Website	16,7%
Labels and information on products	36,3%
I haven’t seen it	15,7%
I’m not familiar with the brand	24,5%

The next question asked how trustworthy and clear Silverjungle’s communication regarding sustainability and responsibility is using the same scale from 1-5 as earlier in the survey. This question was not mandatory to answer, as some respondents may not be familiar with the brand and would therefore produce false data. 58% of respondents gave a score of 4, 21% gave a score of 3, and 17,3% chose 5. Only 2,5% chose 1 and 1,2% chose 2 on the spectrum as seen on Figure 7.

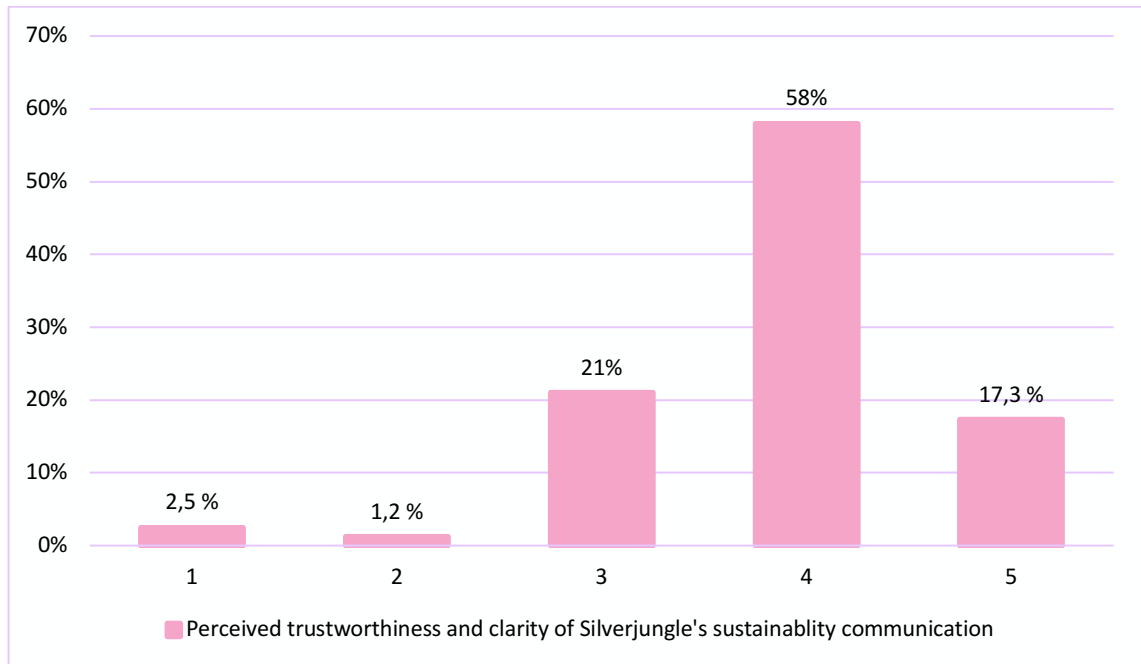


FIGURE 7. Perceived trustworthiness and clarity of Silverjungle's sustainability communication

The next question again allowed the respondents to choose multiple answer options. As seen on Table 3, 72,5% said that they would be interested in seeing behind the scenes material of for example the designing and production process of the products. 41,2% would like to see informative content about the challenges revolving around the clothing industry and 33,3% would like to see information about sustainability. 32,4% said they would like to see content about detailed information on materials used in Silverjungle's clothes and 21,6% would like to see information about third-party certificates. Only 2,9% of the respondents were not interested in seeing content about sustainability.

TABLE 3. Interest in Silverjungle's sustainability communication

What kind of content would you like to see from Silverjungle regarding sustainability and responsibility?	
Behind the scenes material	72,5%
Detailed information on materials	32,4%
Information about certificates	21,6%
Information about sustainability	33,3%
Content about the challenges of the clothing industry	41,2%
I'm not interested in this kind of content	2,9%

At the end of the survey there were two optional open-ended questions, and their aim was to find out if any of the respondents have additional ideas or thoughts they would like to share. The first question was about what would make Silverjungle's sustainability communication more trustworthy. One of the respondents suggested that Silverjungle's website could be improved as they find seeking for information a bit difficult. They also hoped that sustainability information would be clearly presented in each product so that even consumers who are not actively seeking for that kind of information would see it. Another answer worth mentioning is that sustainability labels and certificates can also create distrust as some fast fashion brands like H&M have these kinds of labels in their products.

The other open-ended question was about what kind of content would consumers like to see from Silverjungle. One respondent hoped for introduction of the clothes and how to style them or combine Silverjungle's products. Personal and unique behind the scenes content was hoped for as well as content of the production process of the clothes. Men's fashion content was also mentioned.

4.4 Survey findings

The survey revealed important insights that help to better understand how consumers perceive sustainability communication in the fashion industry and especially with a small brand like Silverjungle.

4.4.1 Responsibility and purchasing decisions

The survey results indicate that responsibility, including themes like sustainability, ethical production, and eco-friendliness, is an important factor for most respondents when they make purchasing decisions about clothes. The majority of participants rated it as fairly or very important. This suggests that Silverjungle's focus on sustainability aligns with consumer values and supports the importance of clear and honest communication on topics surrounding responsibility.

4.4.2 Scepticism towards sustainability communication

Many respondents expressed distrust, confusion, and uncertainty regarding sustainability communication in the fashion industry in general. Most rated sustainability communication only somewhat clear and trustworthy. This indicates that consumers can find it challenging to assess the reliability of sustainability messaging, emphasising the need for fashion brands to communicate their sustainability actions with clarity, consistency, and credibility.

4.4.3 Sources of sustainability information

Survey participants reported using a variety of sources to seek information about fashion brands' responsibility. Product labels, social media, and third-party certifications were the most popular choices among respondents. Notably, only a small portion of participants relied exclusively on brand websites, which suggests that consumers form their perceptions of a brand's sustainability actions through a variety of channels, especially social media, which appears to play a significant role in shaping consumer views.

4.4.4 Silverjungle's sustainability messaging

Although majority of respondents indicated that they were familiar with Silverjungle, some respondents had not encountered the brand prior to participating in the survey. Over half of the respondents had seen the brand's sustainability related communication, with Facebook and Instagram being the most commonly chosen channels. The results suggest that while Silverjungle's current communication actions are successfully reaching a part of its audience, there is still room for improvement.

Among those familiar with the brand, perceptions of its sustainability messaging were mainly positive. Many respondents found Silverjungle's sustainability communication trustworthy and clear, especially in comparison to fashion industry in general. This indicated that the brand is perceived as more credible, which is an advantage in fashion industry, where distrust is relatively common.

The respondents expressed a preference for more authentic, transparent, and detailed content. Behind-the-scenes material was by far the most requested type of content, followed by interest in educational content about materials, challenges in the fashion-industry, and content about sustainability practices in general. These findings suggest expectations for more open and personal communication, which Silverjungle can use to strengthen its brand identity and customer loyalty.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SILVERJUNGLE'S SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION

Based on the survey findings and existing literature and theory on sustainability communication, this chapter introduces some recommendations for Silverjungle to improve and strengthen its sustainability communication. The aim of these recommendations is to increase the brand's credibility, transparency, and overall engagement with consumers, while avoiding greenwashing.

5.1 Transparency and specificity

As seen in both the literature and survey results, transparency is one of the most important aspects of sustainability communication. Consumers increasingly expect brands to share truthful information on their production processes, materials, and supply chains. Many survey respondents expressed that sustainability communication in the fashion industry often lacks clarity.

To address these challenges, Silverjungle could share specific and concrete information about materials, production process and location, supply chains, and sustainability challenges. Sharing this content in picture or video format in platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok could be beneficial. Using Facebook's and Instagram's story option could help create more authentic content as stories are usually posted in real time and are only visible for 24 hours.

Creating easily understandable and clear content could also be beneficial when sharing informative content. When explaining Silverjungle's sustainability actions, it should be done in a visually clear format. As content about sustainability challenges was hoped for in the survey, Silverjungle could share updates and real time progress towards sustainability goals. For example, Silverjungle could post annual recaps of sustainability highlights and challenges.

By making content visible, accessible, and understandable to consumers, Silverjungle can build trust and credibility among consumers. This is especially important for smaller fashion brands like Silverjungle.

5.2 Storytelling

According to the theory, storytelling can be a useful tool in sustainability messaging as it can help to humanise sustainability actions and connect with consumers on an emotional level. Personal and emotionally engaging content can increase relatability and make sustainability feel more meaningful and authentic to consumers. The survey showed that consumers are interested in the “why” behind the brand’s actions and values.

Therefore, Silverjungle could share stories about the people and values behind the brand. They could highlight more customer stories, for example the longevity and lifecycle of their clothes. Related to this, tips on product care could be a part of the content as well. As hoped for in the survey, Silverjungle could start posting behind-the-scenes content on social media to show the real work and effort that goes behind sustainable practices.

5.3 Social media as a communication channel

The survey revealed that social media, with the main channels being Instagram and Facebook, are a key source of sustainability information for consumers. This aligns with literature findings that highlight social media as an important tool for brand communication. A well-planned social media strategy can increase visibility and consumer engagement.

For Silverjungle, it could be beneficial to use Facebook, Instagram, and possibly other social media platforms to consistently communicate sustainability updates. Incorporating Instagram and Facebook stories and reels videos for sharing tips on sustainable fashion care, transparency content, and interactive Q&As could be beneficial. Additionally, Silverjungle could consider collaborating with ethically aligned content creators to expand reach among different audiences.

According to the theory, interactive communication and content builds engagement and trust. Therefore, Silverjungle could have open discussion posts, where

consumers can openly ask questions. Silverjungle could also encourage customers to share their own tips and experiences on sustainable fashion. These efforts can help create community around the brand.

5.4 Avoiding vague sustainability claims

The theoretical framework stresses that vague terms such as “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” without concrete proof can raise concerns about greenwashing. The survey results also indicated that many respondents are suspicious of sustainability claims that are too vague or lack concrete evidence. By communicating in an honest and consistent way, Silverjungle can support its image as a transparent and trustworthy brand.

To build credibility and avoid greenwashing, Silverjungle should use clear language supported by credible data or third-party certifications where applicable. Being honest about what the brand is doing and where there is still improvement could be beneficial. Another important action is to address the complexity of sustainability by acknowledging both achievements and challenges.

5.5 Educating consumers

As mentioned in the theory, sustainability communication is not only about promoting products but also about educating consumers. This was supported by the survey results as many respondents said they would like to learn more about sustainability in the fashion industry and how to make more responsible choices.

To meet these expectations, Silverjungle could create content that educates consumers on topics like clothing care, responsible consumption, and how to recognise greenwashing. It could also be helpful to include sustainability tips on product pages or labels (e.g. “Did you know?” facts or care instructions that extend garment life).

6 CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to explore how Silverjungle, a small Finnish ethical and ecological clothing company, can improve its sustainability communication in a way that aligns with consumer expectations and strengthens the credibility of its brand. As sustainability has become a key theme in the fashion industry, the way companies communicate their values and practices is more important than ever. This thesis combined theoretical framework and empirical data to provide a practical perspective on what responsible and effective sustainability communication can look like for a small Finnish fashion brand.

The theory of this thesis focused on key concepts such as corporate communication, brand identity, and the role of social media in brand communication. The literature review accentuated the importance of transparent, authentic, and consistent messaging. Sustainability communication was shown to require both credible facts and values which means that companies should be able to demonstrate their sustainability efforts through concrete actions. The theory also emphasised the risks of greenwashing and the challenges that come with vague sustainability claims, which can have a damaging effect on brand credibility even if the brand's intentions are good.

The research focused on identifying what customers value in sustainability communication and what kind of content they hope to see from brands like Silverjungle. The implemented survey supported the theoretical findings. Respondents were generally supportive of Silverjungle and viewed the brand as responsible but there is also room for improvement in the form of more detailed communication. The general distrust in sustainability in the fashion industry means that consumers want to better understand how and where products are made, what materials are used, and what sustainability means in practice. Vague claims without evidence can lead to distrust, suggesting that consumers are increasingly critical of sustainability messaging. This indicates that offering consumers more verifiable and concrete information can help in building trust,

The survey indicated that social media is the main source of information for customers regarding the brand and its sustainability work. While Silverjungle already

implements social media in its communication, the results suggest that there is potential to increase both the quality and consistency of the content. Additionally, Silverjungle could benefit from a more in-depth website. These findings point to the advantage of having a more strategic and customer-focused approach to brand communication, which meets the expectations of a conscious audience and helps consumers make informed purchasing decisions.

Based on both the theory and survey results, a set of practical recommendations was developed. These include increasing transparency about materials and supply chains, using storytelling, emphasising everyday actions, and allowing open discussion with consumers. Silverjungle has already built a strong foundation through its values and mission, but with more intentional communication, it has the potential to further strengthen its brand image and create stronger customer trust.

The research questions defined at the beginning of the study were answered. Consumers perceive sustainability communication as important, but they expect more transparency, evidence, and detail. The most valued channels for sustainability communication were found to be social media and labels and packaging.

In conclusion, as consumer awareness continues to grow, the ability to communicate in a clear, honest, and meaningful way will become an increasingly important part of a company's success. For a company like Silverjungle, whose identity is closely tied to ethical and ecological principles, communication is essential in differentiating the brand and creating customer commitment. This thesis has shown that consumers appreciate transparency, authenticity, and honest communication that reflects real action. By responding to these expectations, Silverjungle can strengthen its credibility and contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey

Silverjunglen vastuullisuusviestintä

24.4.2025, 20.07

Silverjunglen vastuullisuusviestintä

Kyselytutkimus liittyy Silverjunglen vastuullisuusviestintään. Tuloksia käytetään opinnäytetyöhön. Kysely on auki 8.4.2025 asti. Vastaaajien kesken arvotaan 20€ S-ryhmän lahjakortti.

* Pakollinen kysymys

1. Ikä *

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- 15-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- Yli 76

2. Sukupuoli *

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Nainen
- Mies
- Muu
- En halua kertoa

3. Asuinpaikka *

4. Kuinka tärkeää vastuullisuus (esim. kestävä kehitys, ympäristöystävällisyys ja eettinen tuotanto) on sinulle vaatteita ostaessasi?

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

Ei ol Erittäin tärkeää

5. Kuinka selkeää ja luotettavaa vaatetusalan brändien viestintä mielestäsi on liittyen kestävään kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen?

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

Ei ol Erittäin selkeää ja luotettavaa

6. Mistä yleensä etsit tietoa brändien ja tuotteiden vastuullisuudesta (esim. kestävä kehitys, ympäristöystävällisyys ja eettinen tuotanto)?

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- Brändin nettisivut
- Brändin sosiaalinen media
- Tuotteista ja pakkauksista löytyvät tiedot
- Sertifikaattitiedot (esim. Ökotex ja Joutsen-merkki)
- Brändin omat tuotteista löytyvät merkinnät (esim. Conscious collection tai Good collection)
- Muu media ja vaikuttajaviestintä
- En kiinnitä huomiota brändien vastuullisuuteen

7. Onko Silverjungle sinulle tuttu brändi? *

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Kyllä
- Olen kuullut brändistä, mutta minulla ei ole kokemuksia sen tuotteista
- Ei

8. Oletko nähnyt Silverjunglen viestintää kestävään kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen liittyen? (esim. kestävä kehitys, ympäristöystävällisyys ja eettinen tuotanto)?

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Kyllä
- En
- En ole varma
- En tunne brändiä

9. Missä olet nähnyt Silverjunglen viestintää kestävään kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen liittyen

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Nettisivut
- Tuotteista löytyvät merkinnät ja tiedot
- En ole nähnyt Silverjunglen viestintää liittyen kestävään kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen
- En tunne brändiä
- Muu: _____

10. Kuinka luotettavana ja selkeänä pidät Silverjunglen viestintää kestäväan kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen liittyen?

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

Ei ol Erittäin luotettavaa

11. Minkälaisista sisältöistä haluaisit nähdä enemmän Silverjunglelta liittyen kestäväan kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen?

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- "Behind the scenes" materiaalia (esim. tuotannosta ja suunnittelusta)
 Yksityiskohtaista tietoa vaatteiden materiaaleista
 Tietoa sertifikaateista (esim. Ökotex)
 Tietoa kestävästä kehityksestä
 Tietoa vaatetusalan vastuullisuuteen liittyvistä haasteista
 En ole kiinnostunut sisällöstä, joka liittyy kestäväan kehitykseen ja vastuullisuuteen
 Muu: _____

12. Mikä tekisi mielestäsi Silverjunglen viestinnästä luotettavampaa? (Ei pakollinen)

13. Minkälaista sisältöä toivoisit näkeväsi enemmän Silverjunglelta? (Ei pakollinen)

14. Sähköpostiosoitteesi (jos haluat osallistua arvontaan)

Google ei ole luonut tai hyväksynyt tätä sisältöä.

Google Forms