
Institutional Pressures

Institutional CSR Pressures on the Dutch Denim Industry

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what the sources of institutional pressures on the Dutch fashion companies there are, influencing them to act more socially and environmentally sustainable. Different types and sources of pressures are examined, as well as the companies' responses to these pressures in terms of collaboration with institutions and suppliers. Special focus is placed on the denim industry in the Netherlands which is more closely studied through a multiple case study, consisting of four denim brands.

Amongst the theories applied, are DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) three sources of isomorphic pressures, coercive, mimetic, and normative, proposing to cause corporations to become more alike one another, in terms of structure, operations, and outputs. I used this theory to categorize and analyze the institutional pressures the denim brands in the case study are confronted with. Furthermore, I considered the Triple Bottom Line concept, to assess how companies process pressures differently depending on their CSR attitude.

For this thesis, quantitative data was gathered. Informants from the institutional environment as well as companies were consulted for data collection to reach triangulation for a more holistic reflection of CSR pressures and their effects. The research data gathered is restricted to companies within the Netherlands but includes boarder crossing collaborations and partnerships with internationally operating organizations and suppliers. Moreover, this thesis is limited to assess institutional pressures within the fashion industry and the denim sector in specific.

The main outcome of the study was the responses amongst the corporations to each of these sources of pressures vary according to their type of company, showing that the effectiveness of institutional pressures can be associated with the dissimilarity of companies.

With this thesis I intend to give the reader a better understanding of the variety of pressures companies are confronted with, what collaborations with industry stakeholders are possible, and to make recommendations on an government and industry level on how to best apply CSR pressures.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| TBL | Triple Bottom Line |
| EU | European Union |
| NICE | Nordic Initiative Clean and Ethical |
| CCC | Clean Clothes Campaign |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organizations |
| GOTS | Global Organic Textile Standard |
| UN | United Nations |
| CBI | Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries |
| FWF | Fair Wear Foundation |
| ETI | Ethical Trading Initiative |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| SMETA Environmental Criteria | Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit |

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1. Introduction

This thesis is part of the research project “The Sustainable Entrepreneurship Project” of The Centre for Applied Research on Economics & Management (CAREM), a knowledge institute in the field of Economics and Management at the University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam. All research within CAREM is strongly involved in the exchange of education and professional life, and upholds a close collaboration between knowledge institutions and businesses within the region.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained in awareness since the turn of the century, both in the academic world as well as in the public eye. Scholars, society, industries and corporations themselves, have encouraged and developed the discussion and practice of more social and environmental friendly business operations. The fashion industry is a large and significant business, its operations have high social and environmental impacts, and the issue of CSR in the apparel business has been widely discussed. In the Netherlands the fashion sector is an established industry, but still developing and changing. To narrow down the field of analysis my thesis includes a case study involving denim brands, a genre that is expanding, especially in Amsterdam, which has come to be known as denim city.

In this bachelor thesis I seek to analyze and comprehend what institutional pressures on companies exist and how they are perceived by Dutch denim companies. I consider the mechanism of institutionalization of CSR practices and explore the development towards more sustainability in the denim business.

The institutional pressures, examined in this thesis, have sources in social, legal and cultural forces, coming from outside the company, affecting a company’s approach towards CSR (Scott, 2001). Social and environmental pressure is coming from consumers, the government, eco-labels, certifications, guidelines, and multi-stakeholder initiatives. Depending on a company’s characteristic, their response to CSR pressures vary. Even companies, operating in the same institutional environments, react differently to CSR pressures (Oliver, 1991).

The fashion industry has received a lot of negative attention from the media, criticizing social and environmental aspects of textile supply chains. Especially the health and safety of workers in developing countries has been center of discussions around sustainable fashion. The Dutch fashion industry is internationally involved in sustainability practices, and more awareness amongst consumers in the future can be expected as the fashion sector expands further.

1.1 Research Context

Fashion companies want to be legitimate, especially nowadays, as media draws a lot of consumer attention to the clothing industry, in response to various occurring accidents in production countries. It is, however, hard for companies to decide on a suitable approach towards this objective. CSR goals are often ambiguous and cause uncertainty to the companies. The sustainability concern, originating from external pressures, comes from organizations such as the government, media, and competitors.

Amsterdam has the highest concentration of jeans brands in the world. Renown international brands like Tommy Hilfiger, the Levis Vintage Clothing, and Pepe Jeans, and Dutch denim brands such as G-Star and Scotch & Soda, are based in the Dutch capital. Smaller brands are Denham, Blue Blood, Kings of Indigo, and Kuyichi (The House of Denim, 2013). Every year a turnover of €500 million is generated by the Amsterdam denim industry (Onderzoeksbureau O+S, 2013).

In jeans production, sustainability has become a key word. Critique on the denim industry has targeted social as well as environmental factors. Factory workers' health and safety was discussed over the controversial technique of sandblasting, a method used to give jeans a used look. Environmental concerns regard conventional production techniques, requiring 7000 liters of water and various toxic chemicals to make one pair of jeans. The Amsterdam denim industry has made itself a reputation of being avant-garde when in terms of sustainable production (Uitkrant, May 2014).

1.2 Problem Indication

"The Sustainable Entrepreneurship Project" of CAREM was created to contribute to the understanding of the business environment of the Dutch fashion industry in terms of sustainability and aims at supporting policy makers in their work of promoting CSR practices amongst fashion brands.

Policy makers in Amsterdam show special interest in denim brands. The denim industry has gained in importance, as an increasing number of companies has chosen the Dutch capital as location for their European or International headquarters, which has led to Amsterdam being known as "Denim City".

The fashion industry is one of the largest markets and still growing. Growing is also the pressure on companies to become more transparent and accountable for their products' life cycle. Sources of such demands are broad. Companies are influenced to become more sustainable from pressures inflicted by the macro environment (e.g. government,

media, technology, etc.), the micro environment (e.g. consumers, competitors, suppliers, etc), but also their internal company environment (e.g. management).

This thesis seeks to make institutional pressures and their impact more visible. Numerous papers on institutional theory have been published in the past decades. Since CSR and specifically CSR in the fashion industry is a relatively new matter of concern, analysis in this field is sparse and calls for more primary research to achieve a better insight on this particular industry's development. Considering the importance of denim in Amsterdam, I have decided to narrow down the topic of my thesis on this specific sector.

Many definitions can be found for the term sustainability or CSR. However, essentially these words relate to business actions, aiming to improve the social and environmental impact of a company's products.

1.3 Problem Formulation

The initial aim of this thesis is to answer the following main research question:

What institutional pressures are Dutch denim brands exposed to, pushing them to become more social and environmental friendly?

To enable better understanding of the institutional pressures on CSR and the companies' responses the following subquestions were created:

1. How do institutional pressures make the denim brands become more isomorphic?
2. How do CSR pressures affect different types of companies?
3. How do denim brands work together in collaboration or with institutions to cope with institutional pressures?
4. How do pressures on denim brands influence practices at their production sites?

1.4 Delimitation

This thesis is delimited in two ways; firstly by the types of fashion companies chosen and secondly through the geographical location. Since Amsterdam currently represents the hub of the denim industry at the moment and considering the unique role of denim, this analysis is mainly focused on this sector of the fashion industry. Geographically this thesis is restricted on Dutch brands, the effects of institutional pressures, however, will be assessed on an international scope, as many brands join boarder-crossing associations and projects to take on CSR challenges.

1.5 Relevance

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze institutional pressures regarding sustainability and to examine fashion companies' responses to these pressures in terms of collaboration with suppliers and other industry players (e.g. NGOs, multi-stakeholder associations, etc.).

Academically, I seek to make a contribution to the discussion on what pressures are effective in bringing about the adoption of CSR measures and to uncover the conflicts of interest in this matter. From a managerial perspective, this thesis could help provide an understanding of the significance of the different institutional pressures and propose suggestions on how to strategically respond to these pressures through collaboration.

1.6 Research Methods and Design

This is a qualitative research study, using an exploratory approach leading to an inductive reasoning. Data, collected through primary and secondary sources, is used to develop further insights on institutional pressures of CSR inflicted on denim companies. To reflect versatile perspectives on the subject, I decided to include secondary and primary data of companies as well as institutions. Primary research was conducted through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, written correspondence, and by attending two additional presentations. Secondary research originates from industry, government reports, and media coverage alike. The research design is laid out to first illustrate the different types of pressure for social responsibility that fashion companies are facing, followed by the perception of them by denim brands and their reaction in terms of collaboration with other actors in the industry and their suppliers. To visualize this conceptual framework, I have created figure 4. Further information on the data research methods and design can be found in the methodology section.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is constructed of six parts: 1) Introduction, 2) Theory, 3) Methodology, 4) Findings and Analysis, 5) Discussion, and 6) Conclusion.

The introduction enables the reader to get an initial impression of the subject matter and the expected knowledge gain. The objective of the theory part in this paper is to offer a deeper understanding of this topic, through reviewing relevant existing theories and literature. The methodology chapter describes the research methods used to gather data that subsequently aims to answer the research questions. In the findings section, the theory, literature, and empirical data is used to give answers to the stated research questions, followed by a discussion where I conclude from and reflect on my key findings. Eventually, the conclusion gives an overview of the research results and makes a proposal for future research to be done in this field.

2. Theory

The theoretical framework of this thesis was created by reviewing relevant literature on institutional theory to explain the establishment of values through institutionalization. Subsequently, theories on isomorphism are examined, concentrating on DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) three proposed mechanisms, causing companies to become more alike. The following section of the theory focuses on literature, considering the adoption of sustainable practices, uncovering the conflict of interests, companies are facing when trying to balance economic, environmental, and social factors. Eventually, literature regarding the specific adoption of sustainable practices in the fashion industry is reviewed.

2.1 Institutional Theory

Scholars in the end of the 19th century first started paying attention to the influence institutions can have on organizations. Theories have been developed ever since and today institutionalism can be divided in old and new institutionalism (neo institutionalism). Theories developed around the turn of the 20th century were mostly focused on formal institutions and fall under the old institutionalism. Back then, economists mainly focused on formal laws, regulations, and rules (e.g. La Porta, 2008), while sociologists looked more closely at informal cultures, norms, and values (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Some scholars, belonging to one of the two groups, paid attention to the impacts coming of both formal and informal factors (e.g. North, 1990; Scott, 1995). This approach developed into new institutionalism, also known as neo-institutional theory. It recognizes a connection between entities, meaning that organizations aren't merely self-determined but are affected by social and cultural forces as well as the impact of inflicted norms and rules through formal institutions (Scott, 2008).

New institutionalism brought forward a broad variety of theories. Scott (2001) distinguishes between three pillars, making up institutions: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. The regulative pillar is made up of institutional constraints and regulative behavior, such as the implementation of laws and regulations applicable to the environment, a company operates in. The occurring costs when violating these laws and regulations force companies to comply (North, 1990). The authority to implement such regulations usually lies with the state. The state can either use its power to achieve organizations' compliance through giving them incentives to do so or through imposition using fear. Some sociological scholars initially assumed that anger or fear were major factors in decision making, until this theory was outmoded by the discovery of what great influence attention and background assumptions can inflict (Lewin, 1951). Constraints generated by society's norms, procedures, and values, are contained in the normative pillar. The organizations are forced to act according to these normative pressures.

Institutionalization, in a cultural-cognitive manner, describes how cultural differences can affect the operations of a business in specific countries, having to align to cultural values because any other behavior would not be appropriate (Scott, 2001).

The institutionalization of values can take place through different ways, as stated by Meyer & Rowan (1977). They mention that an increase in the presence of a specific issue, that is related to consumers' values, results into an increased awareness towards this issue, leading to institutionalization. Moreover, they state examples such as the development of educational systems, the establishment of consumer values in legislation, and the alteration of market instruments (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Zucker (1977) empathizes that once cultural rules are institutionalized, they are being perceived as fact. Campbell (2004) supports this hypothesis, proposing that, once an institution has managed to establish itself, it continues to have great influence. Additionally, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) claim that culture is made up of implicit and explicit patterns based on historical events, and specific ideas, and the way these are implemented by institutions.

In terms of policy makers contributing to institutionalization, some analysts argue that political systems, generating rules with high impact on organizations, are not neutral entities serving external interests, but instead bring about own interests they act on (Scott, 2008). Here again, looking at past events can help understand these political structures, since choices made are influenced through previous decisions (Ertman, 1997).

However, as mentioned before, a company's institutional context doesn't merely consist of formal policies, it includes the internal firm culture and impacts from its environment, coming from the state, society, and relationships in between companies (Oliver, 1997). The process of institutionalism is closely related to CSR pressures, as institutions shape these pressures. Neo-institutionalism proposes that a company's main interest lies in being legitimate to its consumers, which can be reached by conforming the consumers' expectations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). When companies bow to institutional pressures and comply their organizational structures and processes to the consumers' norms and values, this results in a gain of legitimacy (Oliver, 1997). With the increasing importance of sustainability more institutions, representing core values of this development, are emerging, such as NGO, consultancies, campaign groups, foundations, consumer groups, media bodies, educational programs, technology centers and industry associations (Curbach, 2009).

I have looked, in this first section of the theory, at institutionalism to understand what the source of institutional pressures are, what their driving factors are, and how values are

institutionalized. Subsequently I will review literature discussing isomorphism, a possible outcome of institutionalization.

2.2 Isomorphism

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, institutions apply a constricting influence, that can push companies, operating in the same environment, to become alike one another (Hawley, 1968). This is generally referred to as institutional isomorphism, considered in this thesis.

First to mention isomorphism was Amos Hawley (1968), an expert in human ecology, examining the interaction between the society and its environment. He argues that entities exposed to the same environment would adapt a similar form. Scott's (1995) theory compliments Hawley's view, stating that in order to become legitimate an organization needs to be conform to social and cultural belief systems. Therefore, organizations avoid public disapproval, to increase their chances of survival and securing the resources necessary to minimize the demand for external liability (Scott, 1983). According to Parsons (1960), the legitimization of an organization's goals and practices depends on normative structures within society, meaning that rules, norms, and values result in conform behavior. Depending on the area of business, organizations are faced with different values determining their legitimization. The more an organization aligns with the wider normative structures the more it is considered to be legitimate (Parsons, 1953).

Partially based on these theories DiMaggio and Powell (1983) summarized three different types of mechanisms in institutional isomorphism, which I will use to examine the types of pressures companies are confronted with: *coercive*, *mimetic*, and *normative*.

2.2.1 Coercive Isomorphism

DiMaggio and Powell state that coercive isomorphism takes place when an organization is pressured into taking on specific practices by external entities, this often happens through formal pressures like laws and regulations, but also through informal pressures such as norms and values. The two scholars distinguish between formal and informal pressures inflicted on the organization. These pressures can be perceived as force, persuasion, or invitation to align with the fundamental demand of the pressure. Coercive pressure can also originate from consumers due to cultural expectations which are predominant in the environment an organization is operating in (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Coercive pressure is argued to be the most influential of institutional pressure sources (Jennings & Zanbergen, 1995).

2.2.2 Mimetic Isomorphism

Another source of isomorphism are mimetic pressures. Mimetic pressures, describe the imitation of successful, legitimized organization models by other companies in the field. This kind of pressure can occur when objectives are ambiguous or if there is high uncertainty within the organization's environment. Mimetic isomorphism can occur unintentionally through the takeover of employees or specifically targeted through external organizations such as consultancies or industry associations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

2.2.3 Normative Isomorphism

The final pressure causing isomorphism is normative. It is primarily inflicted by members within the organization itself - called professionalization - who align company practices with their own professional values. DiMaggio and Powell propose that people from the same educational background will tend to approach problems similarly. Normative pressure has its sources in formal education originated by university scholars as well as the establishment and amplification of business networks that unite organizations and lead to the diffusion of new business models. All similarities gained through these mechanisms, will simplify the interaction between the companies and lead to legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Also Scott (2008) acknowledges that institutions determine norms, laws and rules (rationalized myths) on which actions, made by individuals within an organization, are based on. This can either hem the behavior of agents (e.g. people, organizations, governments) or strengthen it (Scott, 2008).

Theories listed previously are sharing the belief in increased isomorphism through institutionalization, but it is noticeable that in more recent research papers, scholars opened up to different scenarios. Scott, for instance, points out that not all organizations operating within the same field are exposed to the equal amount or kind of pressure and can respond in different ways due to their organization model, location and characteristics (Scott, 2008). Internationally operating companies, see themselves confronted with a variety of institutions in many different countries, which enforce pressures, which companies need to comply to. This often has impact on a company's competitive strategy (Martinsons, 1993; Porter, 1990). Due to the differences of institutions in different countries, organizations react differently to similar challenges depending on which country they are operating in (Knetter, 1989; Campbell, 2004). These theories argue against companies' taking on isomorphic behavior and is supported by further scholars in the next section, focusing on the adoption of sustainable practices.

In this study I will mainly rely on DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) distinction between the three natures of pressures: coercive, mimetic, and normative. It brings structure in the analysis section and facilitates the evaluation of isomorphic behavior. Next it is necessary

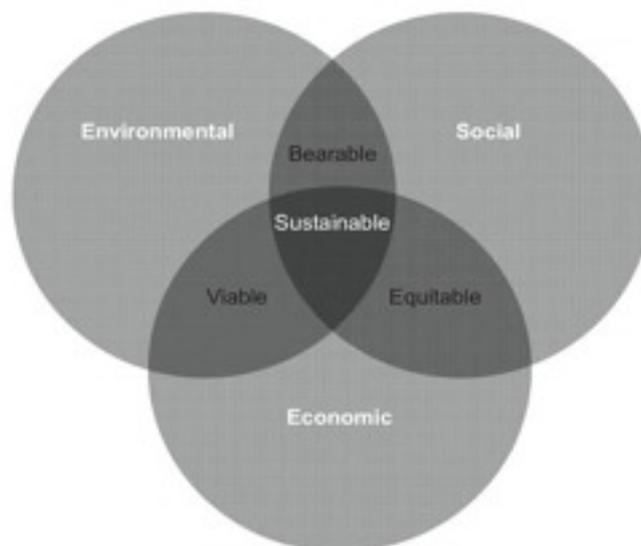
to point out the role of sustainability in companies and how it fits into the mechanics of a corporation.

2.3 Adoption of Sustainable Practices

The Brundtland Commission defines sustainable development as a process that meets current needs in a way that enables future generations to do the same (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This concept stands for strong development, economically and socially, but also emphasizes on preserving natural resources and the environment. The factors are inseparable, since the environment shouldn't suffer under the striving for economic profit and well-being. The scholars Jennings and Zandbergen (1995) claim sustainability to be a notion emerging from society. To meet this demand, organizations follow this concept by implementing sustainability initiatives and aligning their properties.

The following figure, showing the triple bottom line (TBL), visualizes the theory, that in order for a company to become sustainable, social, financial, and environmental factors need to go hand in hand (Carter & Rogers, 2008).

Figure 1: The Triple Bottom Line



Source: Carter and Rogers, 2008. "Sustainability Impacts, Supply Professionals' Decisions and Supplier Relationships"

Some theorists, like Norman and MacDonald (2004), criticized the TBL concept, by Carter and Rogers (2008), as too vague and to allow room for green-washing, merely using a "green" marketing strategy, aiming at creating the perception of the organization's product

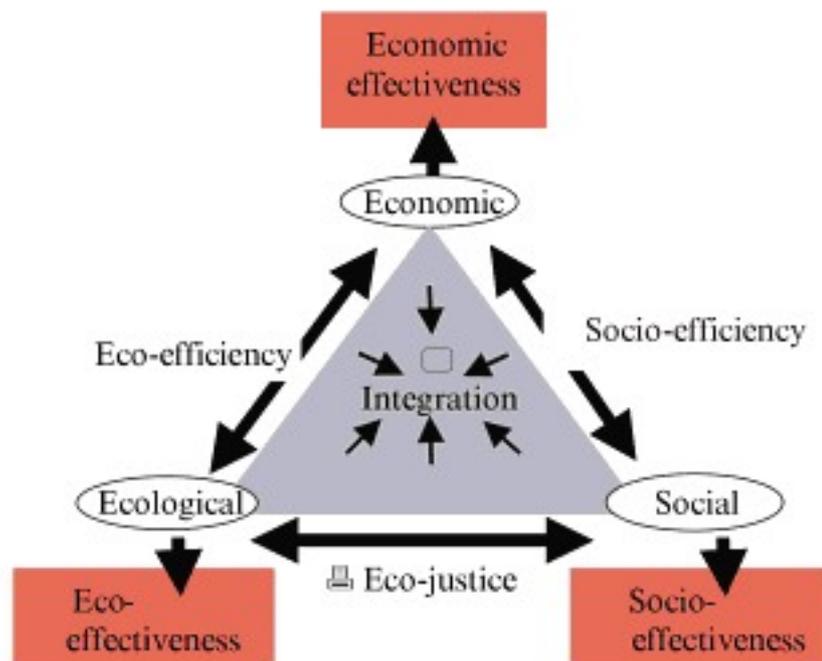
or practices to be socially and environmentally friendly. They argue that sustainability accounting should always be determined in relation to the larger economy and can not be measured individually, only referring to one company's achievements.

A report, with focus on the relationship between media and CSR on an international scope, states that the EU interest of the public and the media in the triple bottom line, has been stronger than in the US, Central America and Asia. Within Europe, in northern countries, like Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, the awareness is claimed to be higher than in southern countries, such as, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain (SustainAbility, Ketchum & the United Nations Environment Programme, 2002).

Another figure to visualize the different factors companies need to consider in their operations was created by Schaltegger and Burritt (2005). They propose that all human activities impact the ecosystem, some of them having irreversible consequences. The sustainability triangle was developed to visualize the interconnection between the economic, eco and social factors. Each corner represents a company's effectiveness in achieving each element in itself. The lines in between stand for the interrelation of the components, showing different ways of achieving socio-efficiency, eco-efficiency, and eco-justice (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2005).

Economic effectiveness has been the conventional goal of corporations. For sustainability accounting the management needs to be provided with information on eco-effectiveness and socio-effectiveness. Ecological effectiveness (eco-effectiveness) refers to the success of a company in having reduced its impacts on the environment. Socio-effectiveness stands for a company's achievement in meeting social and cultural demands, giving the company legitimacy from the society of the country it is operating in. The main challenge for a company is the integration of all the named components to a certain extent. The conflict any company faces is the achievement the maximum of an environmental and social performance whilst being as economically as possible (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2005).

Figure 2: The Sustainability Triangle



Source: Schaltegger and Burrit, 2005. "Corporate Sustainability".

Since the government is highly engaged in making the business environment a more sustainable place and establishes various regulations for organizations to align to, sustainability practices of companies and specifically supply chain management can be described as institutionalized processes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2013). Even though competition has great influence on a company's adoption of sustainability initiatives, also the impact of governments, NGO, media and society in general, pushing organizations towards more sustainability, should not be underestimated (Brockhaus, 2013).

Selznick (1996) argues, that the more the sustainability values become institutionalized, the more organizations adjust their environment to adapt to them. DiMaggio and Powell also point out that homogeneity is not the only possible response to isomorphic pressures, because institutional processes unite with other forces in order to shape structure and action (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Some scholars, also suggest that it is not only the institutions influencing organisations, but also the other way around. This may happen through supporting the readily established practices, or through creating substitutes to them (Oliver, 1991). To cope with the increased uncertainty within their environment, companies create alliances resulting in inter-organizational networks (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). Shamir (2005), describes this process as symbolic de-radicalization of CSR. For

instance an increasing amount of corporate-sponsored or corporate-oriented NGOs are established to spread and update corporate-inspired versions of CSR (Shamir, 2005).

According to Campbell (2007), corporations tend to act more socially responsible if there is strong state regulation, industrial associations, NGOs and readily established normative institutions that offer proper incentives for organizations to apply socially responsible behavior (Campbell, 2007). And also other researchers have found that the way of how a company treats its stakeholders, such as employees, consumers and suppliers, is connected to the institutions in the environment in which it operates (Fligstein & Freeland, 1995).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) claimed that organizations, which adopt new technical innovations early gain in legitimacy. Eventually these innovations become common practice or are established by laws. Organizations that fail to adopt them are seen as irrational and negligent. Therefore most organizations follow the pressure to adopt even if their efficiency suffers from it. Such institutional myths are often merely ceremoniously accepted by organizations, resulting in shallow measures only on the surface, wanting to preserve legitimacy. For instance, only organizational roles and procedures, or a number of job titles, are adjusted to keep up appearances. To maintain these formal structures of legitimacy, the competitive position of the technical environment of an organization can be reduced in effectiveness. Therefore, some organizations decouple their technical core from legitimizing structures and can this way neglect program implementation while still appearing legitimate to the external stakeholders. Such behavior is called decoupled response to institutional pressures. Coupled responses are such performed by companies that implement social values and norms into their corporate ideology (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

Tolbert and Zucker (1983) found that companies are conforming to new rules much faster when the coercive pressure is high rather than when it is low. But also the increase of legitimacy plays a large role in the speed of which new structures are adopted. Zucker (1987) introduced the concept of surface isomorphism, which also relates back to Meyer and Rowan's (1977) theory, where organizations often merely implement ceremonial conformity. Together with Tolbert (1983), Zucker published a study, arguing there are early adopters, who are eager to improve their processes, and adopters that follow later on, wanting to secure their legitimacy, by only implementing shallow procedures to make them look modern and efficient (Tolbert & Zucker 1983).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that institutional isomorphism is higher when companies: (1) are highly depending on the institutional environment, (2) exist under high uncertainty or ambiguous goals, and (3) rely extensively on professionals. Pedersen (2009) suggests there to be a relation between the size of a company and the adoption of CSR practices, stating that larger corporations are more likely to make their supply chain more sustainable than smaller ones.

A study by Criado-Jiménez, Fernández-Chulián, Husillos-Carqués, and Larrinaga-González (2008) showed that progressive and improved legal regulations on reporting of CSR practices improve the sustainable behavior of companies. However, the study also brought forward that many of the analyzed companies were noncompliant with the voluntary disclosure of production data and on the contrary were applying concealment strategies.

Both shown figures visualize the components companies are considering when deciding on their approach towards sustainability practices. The theories mentioned show imply that the perception of equal institutional pressures can vary, depending on the receiving company's nature. Lastly, the theory chapter contains literature explaining more about the industry in focus of my study - the fashion industry.

2.4 CSR within the Fashion Industry

In the first decade of the 21st century the sustainability movement within the fashion industry started to develop. To apply the concept of CSR to the fashion industry, Dickson and Eckman (2006) analyzed the operations within the textile sector. Basing their work on other scholars' definitions of CSR, they found that, firstly social sustainability in the textile business is associated with raw materials, product design, and production techniques. Secondly, social responsibility is considered an important factor at the selling stage to retailers and end consumer. Lastly, CSR is applied to the end-life-stage of the product, including consumption, disposal, and recycling or if possible upcycling (Dickson & Eckman, 2006).

Several different trends and developments must be taken into account when examining the CSR status within the fashion industry.

A threat to sustainable fashion is fast fashion. Rapidly changing trends encourage a throw away society. Simultaneously consumers are becoming more aware of the social and environmental impact their purchases have and try to reduce consumption (London Center for Sustainable Fashion, 2014). Through the rising pressures inflicted by a continuously growing economy, sustainability conflicts have gained in importance to

fashion businesses. Many of them have started to apply “green marketing” in order to appeal to the consumers (Kim & Damhorst, 1989).

Fashion companies leaning away from fast fashion work towards a cradle-to-cradle business model. The idea of the cradle-to-cradle design model originates from a book by Michael Braungart and William Mc Donough (2002). The authors point out the necessity of a dramatic shift in the industries, from a downcycling to an upcycling set of mind. Upcycling envisions that once products have reached the end of their life cycle they would become “biological nutrients”, meaning that the remainders re-enter the environment, or “technical nutrients”, where materials stay within a closed-loop industrial cycles (Braungart & Mc Donough, 2002).

In order to adapt to these developments, fashion companies have options of collaboration with other industry actors and partnership with suppliers. As the clothing industry is mainly consumer-oriented and demand driven the fashion companies often dominate their suppliers (van Huijstee, 2012). To make their supply chain more sustainable brands have to put pressure on suppliers to make them conform with their CSR guidelines. Suppliers have to give in to this pressure to keep the brands as clients (Brockhaus, 2013). Close partnerships with suppliers make both parties, the supplier and the fashion company, more reliant on one another, due to heavy investments seeking to reach a more sustainable production process (Curbach, 2009).

Fashion brands have multiple options to improve their sustainability effort. They can enter a membership or partnership with NGOs and/or join a multi-stakeholder initiative that can include workers’ unions, supplier factories, and other fashion brands (van Huijstee, 2012).

2.5 Summary

This terminology framework serves as base and reference for my further research examining institutional pressures. DiMaggio and Powell’s theory (1991), proposing coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism, serves my approach in examining institutional pressures in the analysis chapter, and the TBL concept and sustainability triangle visualize the various components that companies need to take into account when deciding on their CSR strategy.

The matter of a more sustainable supply chain for fashion companies is complex. Next to institutionalization many developments and trends have influence on the adoption of sustainability practices.

Several research papers, which focus on the adoption of sustainable practices in the fashion industry, can be found. However, literature explaining why and how fashion companies take on institutional pressure, is still scarce and requires further research.

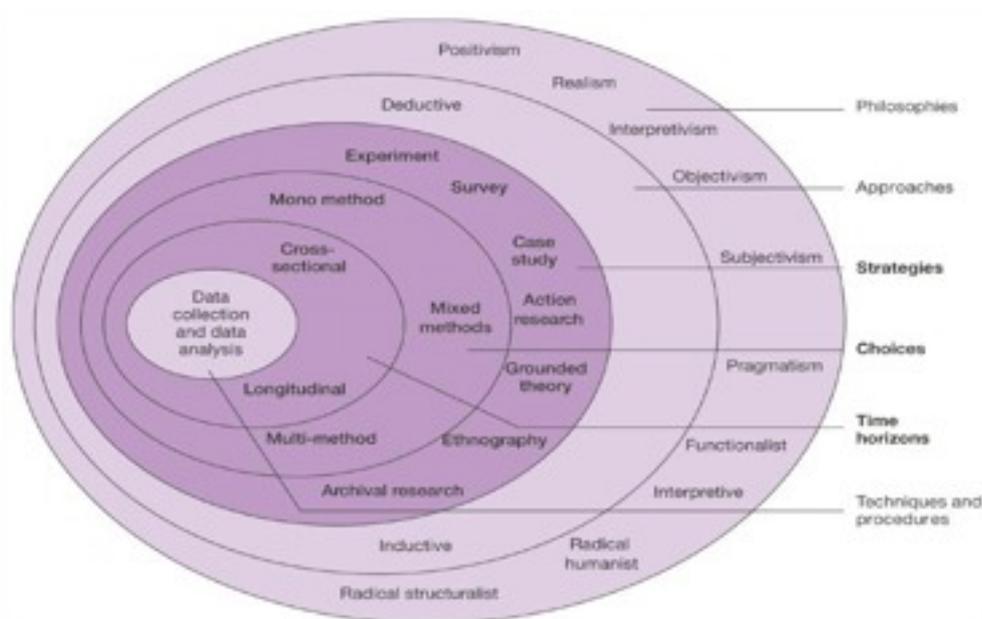
3. Methodology

As the theory section shows, this thesis seeks to analyze CSR pressures coming from institutions and how this results in collaboration amongst stakeholders within the fashion industry. In the methodology chapter I explain my research approach, the conceptual framework, the case-study and data collected as well as the analysis of this data.

3.1 Methodological Approach

This chapter discusses the research methods used. For my research construction, I was inspired by Mark Saunders' (2012) research onion.

Figure 3: The Research Onion



Source: Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006. "Methoden en technieken van Onderzoek".

For this thesis qualitative data was collected, applying an unstructured exploratory research method (Myers, 2009) and therefore a pragmatic approach to the matter. Data is attained through primary and secondary research to ensure validity and reliability. I chose an inductive approach when starting my research - the typical approach for qualitative research (Myers, 2009). After having made observations, I tried to identify patterns that could contribute to my findings. For this research the method of case studies was adopted to obtain data from the companies selected. Interviews were conducted with members of different organizational groups: denim brands, an educational institute, a NGOs, and a informant of from the media. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to be the most

suitable type for this purpose. This interview structure offers a rough outline with some corner points guiding the interview in the right direction, but not suffocating the possibility to discuss the topic freely. However, despite the chosen and prepared format of a semi-structured interview, I decided to somewhat align the protocol along the interview's development, to find out more from each respondent. All interviews were conducted in English in order to avoid losing meaning through translation. Additionally, to interviews, presentations by two informants were used for data collection.

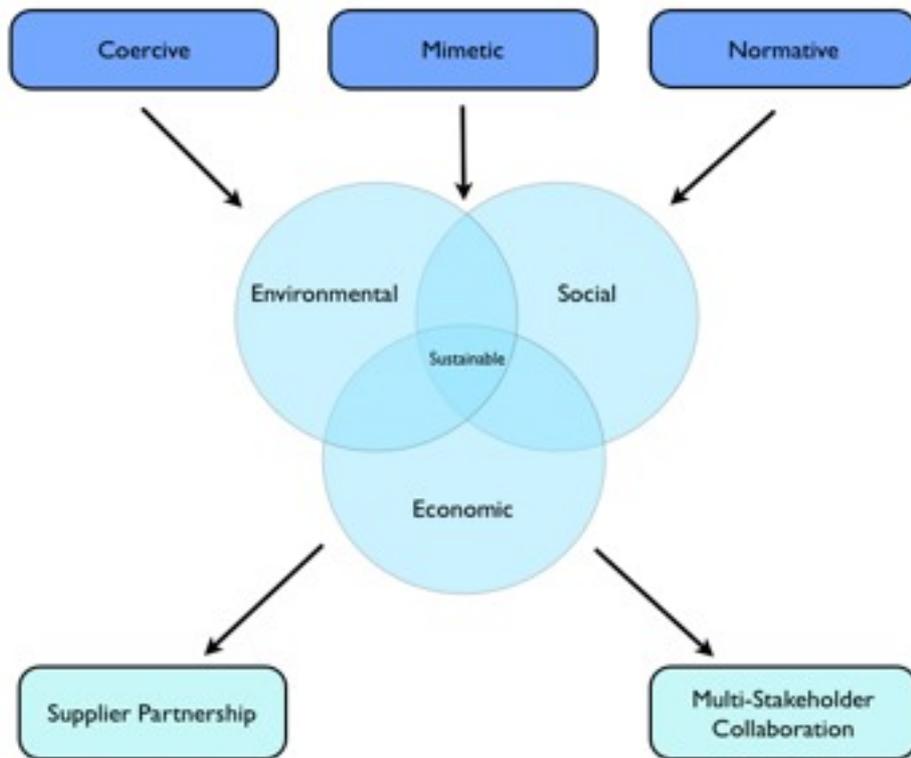
Next to primary data, secondary data was collected from documentaries, newspaper articles and reports published by the industry, the government, and NGOs. Secondary research helped studying the coercive pressures inflicted on fashion companies through press and social media. Secondary research supports the findings of the primary research and verifies their reliability.

Due to time constraints, this thesis is a cross-sectional research, reflecting the situation within the denim industry at the point of time this thesis was composed. This took place in March, April and May of 2014.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework has developed throughout the research phase. It was constructed to visualize what components were considered in my study, and how they are related to one another. I created this figure based on logic and theory and with the aim to support comprehension of how the single existing theories can be interconnected to create a cohesive model.

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework. Institutional pressures, company values and responses of partnership and collaboration.



Source: Own design. Components of DiMaggio and Powell, 1991. "The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis". Carter and Rogers, 2008. "Sustainability Impacts, Supply Professionals' Decisions and Supplier Relationships".

Figure 4 shows the institutional pressures proposed by DiMaggio and Powell (1991). These pressures are enforced on denim companies and based on their corporate value thinking and nature, the pressures are translated in to partnerships and collaboration. I used the Triple Bottom Line concept (Carter and Rogers, 2008), mentioned in the theory to visualize which components are playing a role in processing and eventually reacting towards these influences in terms of collaboration, in form of partnership with suppliers and multi-stakeholder networks.

Both implemented existing theories are widely renown. By applying them in the model above, I am taking a different approach on them. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) propose that their determined pressures lead to isomorphism, I question this by acknowledging the different components of the TBL concept, which are weighted differently by companies and cause them to react to pressures in various ways and to different extents.

3.3 Sampling

I chose the application of case studies to explore differences between the examined organizations (Yin, 2003). To increase the objectivity of this thesis I applied the research strategy of triangulation, gathering my primary data from different kinds of organizations that represent a distinctive view from one another, regarding the matter of CSR within the fashion and denim industry respectively. Amongst my informants are representatives of: four denim brands, an NGO, an educational institute, and the media. I filtered out essential informations about the case-study companies in the following table. More details on the informants can be found in the appendix. Due to confidentiality reasons the names of the informants and their organizations are not named.

Table 1: Denim Case-Study Sample

| Company | Employees | Points of Sales | Customer Base | Production |
|---------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| C1 | 5 | 160 | Europe | Europe, Asia |
| C2 | 3 | 30 | Europe | Europe, Asia |
| C3 | 700 | 7,100 | Europe, North America | Asia, Europe, Africa |
| C4 | 900 | 6,000 | Global | Asia |

3.4 Empirical Data

For full comprehension of the topic, I needed to conduct research both, in width and in depth. Therefore, my data collected stems from diverse sources, ranging from primary and secondary documents to personal interviews. The combination of primary and secondary sources, contributes to the accuracy of my findings (Denscombe, 2010). Additionally, the variety of data sources supports the data's credibility (Patton, 1990), and the broad coverage of data contributes to the greater understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.4.1 Primary Documents

Realizing the value of consulting documents for qualitative research, I used numerous primary and secondary data sources. To gather an understanding of the Dutch fashion sector in general I used statistics and reports from the Research and Statistics Bureau Amsterdam. This supplied me with useful information on the development and scope of the industry. Companies' annual and CSR reports and website contents gave me background knowledge for preparing the questions directed at the informants.

3.4.2 Secondary Documents

Secondary sources included research papers, books, industry and government reports, and newspaper and magazine articles. The found data contributed to structuring the context and gave further background information about the fashion sector.

3.4.3 Interviews

I started out with organizing a focus group with organization 1 to gather inspiration about the structure of my thesis and an impression of the mechanics within the fashion industry. I found it important to get an impression of the aspects of sustainability within the fashion industry from different views and therefore decided to contact denim brands as well as institutions for primary data gathering. During my research phase I attended two trade fairs to develop a better understanding of the industry and its components. The first visited fair was focused on sustainable fashion with more than 75 international sustainable fashion brands exhibiting their products. The second fair was a four day event specifically focused on denim. Amongst the exhibitors were international denim brands, research and development centers, and educational institutions. Moreover, I attended two presentations. One was given by the owner of a denim brand and the other one by a consultant of an NGO. For the case study four denim brands were interviewed, coded as C1, C2, C3, and C4.

3.5 Data Analysis

The figure (Creswell, 2009) shows in what sequence the data analysis took place. Firstly raw data was gathered, primary and secondary alike, as described in the previous sections. For the purpose of analyzing, the data was sorted and prepared. The most important data was extracted from the primary data, gained through the direct contact with institutions and companies. The questions towards my informants were targeting to find out what their fundamental conception of CSR is, based on the Triple Bottom Line concept, how strongly they perceive institutional pressures, based on DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) theory, and how they interact with other actors within the industry and their suppliers.

4. Analysis and Findings

This chapter analyses the findings gained from the data collection and aims at determining the institutional pressures on fashion companies and possible reactions. Throughout this section I will refer to my sources listed in the methodology as C1, C2, C3, C4, O1, O2, and I1.

The first section of this chapter, giving a more general overview of the existing institutional pressures, was created out of information from secondary as well as primary data derived through the informants from O1, O2, and I1. In the second part, I reflect and analyze the data collected about and from the denim brands involved in the case study. Both sections' construction is based on the DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) theory of isomorphic pressures.

4.1 Types and Sources of Pressures

On the following pages, I distinguish between three types of isomorphic pressures that denim brands in the Netherlands have to cope with; coercive, mimetic, and normative. Following an overview of the institutional pressures in the Dutch fashion industry, is the analysis of the denim brands' perception of these pressures.

4.1.1 Coercive Pressures

Government

From the government soft and hard policies have been initiated to promote CSR amongst companies. Such policies can range from campaigns directed towards the consumer for more awareness to offering companies incentives to behave more sustainable and eventually to legislation. Institutions determine norms, laws and rules (rationalized myths) on which actions, made by individuals within an organization, are based on. This can either hem the behavior of agents (e.g. people, organizations, governments) or strengthen it (Scott, 2008). Some sustainability initiatives the Dutch government is involved in are the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Media

There is strong interest in the matter of CSR in the Netherlands, from both the media and the public. This strengthens the influence on corporations of this medium. As social interest in the issue increases, reports on CSR initiatives are most common in industries with strong media coverage and academic as well as societal discussion on CSR. Media coverage on CSR in the fashion industry goes beyond the daily news. Numerous

documentaries on the subject have been produced in the past years, focusing on the fashion industry as a whole but also denim explicitly, such as “China Blue” (Peled, 2008).

Fashion brands are aware of the effects negative media exposure can inflict on their reputation. Especially social networks have become a widely used outlet for consumer CSR demands towards fashion brands. Greenpeace for instance has called on consumers several times to virtually attack companies’ social media profiles (e.g. facebook, twitter, instagramm).

Online ranking sites are also influencing the consumers’ buying behavior, enabling them to compare brands based on their CSR performance. Such consumer information websites, like Rank a Brand, mainly base their rankings on information communicated through the fashion companies’ own disclosed CSR data. The ranking for denim brands through Rank a Brand is based on the criteria such as sustainability issues, fair wages, organic cotton, chemical usage, sandblasting ban, and carbon emissions.

Consumers

Pressure coming from the consumers is intertwined with the media. Consumers have a leading role in the process in driving the textile industry in the direction of sustainability. There are growing expectations of society regarding the transparency and access to information about brands’ supply chains. Transparency should exist internally as well as externally and a company’s practices need to comply with society’s values in order to be perceived as legitimate. Through the emergence of the internet, consumers are supplied with comprehensive information on pricing, quality and also CSR performance. Through social media and online news portals, positive, as well as negative publicity, can be attained quickly and easily. People are becoming more and more aware of their power to influence companies implicitly or explicitly. As stated, social media has become a tool for consumers to help their values become institutionalized, as described in Meyer & Rowan’s (1977) theory of the institutionalization of values. The catastrophe in Bangladesh where over a 1,000 workers were killed, was described by O1 as one of the main triggers of consumers’ awareness for the misconducts within the textile industry. The collapse of the factory was broadly covered by the media encouraging the discussion further. One main problem in the pursue of more CSR, is that the consumers are not basing their buying decisions on ethical considerations (Joergens, 2006). Dutch consumers are primarily motivated by the price of a denim product, pressuring companies to offer their products for low prices, resulting in production abroad and often poor working conditions.

NGOs and Initiatives

Numerous NGOs have emerged to create codes of conduct, offer consultation, and monitor the CSR process of corporations. Initiatives have taken upon the task to raise further awareness amongst consumers, using different tools. One of such projects is the collaboration between the Nordic Initiative Clean Ethical (NICE) and BSR (sustainability consultancy). The program aims to raise awareness amongst consumers, make them demand more sustainable options from the textile industry, and help consumers to take purchasing decisions on what and from whom to buy. Some other NGOs are working together with fashion brands, supporting them to make their practices more sustainable through workshops, trainings and consulting services.

Campaign Groups

Campaign Groups criticize politics and organizations publicly and demand them to take on a global ecological responsibility. Greenpeace and the CCC have been the most influential campaign groups in the Dutch fashion industry. Campbell proposed that once an institution has managed to establish itself in the applicable field, it continues to have great influence (Campbell, 2004).

Greenpeace launched its Detox campaign in 2011, calling on brands to clear their supply chain of hazardous chemicals by 2020. In the beginning, many brands criticized the high set goal of eliminating hazardous chemicals. If the sports brand Puma hadn't joined eventually, as first company to commit to detox, the industry might have managed to push back. By pressuring major brands like adidas and H&M into agreeing with the 2020 deadline, Greenpeace wants to set examples for other brands to follow. After the latest agreement of Primark, now 20 brands have joined the Detox Campaign.

The CCC focuses on the social aspects within the textile supply chain. In 2012, the CCC published the report "Deadly Denim", criticizing inadequate monitoring and audits of factories regarding working conditions and sandblasting. The technique of sandblasting has become widely used in aiming at giving a pair of jeans a worn out appearance. Due to high health concerns caused by this practice the CCC became active by launching the Killer Jeans campaign in 2010. This awareness raising campaign was aimed at the public to boycott brands using sandblasting. This resulted in some companies having announced a voluntary ban of the technique, but the CCC criticizes that this is not enough and demands the government to implement more formal policies in this matter.

Campaigns seem to have great influence on brands since they receive a lot of public exposure, so that companies fear a loss of image. According to O1, most companies are reactive rather than proactive. An example for companies as passive receivers of

pressures is the Greenpeace Detox Campaign, which gained in participants through applying public pressure or merely the threat of campaigning against the brands. Pressure coming from institutions is necessary to bring them to act more sustainable, as companies fear bad publicity could harm their legitimacy.

Educational Institutions

Meyer and Rowan (1977) state that the development of educational systems impact institutionalization. In Amsterdam an increase in such institutions is noticeable, on different stages of higher education. O2, states that due to the increasing settlement of denim brand offices in Amsterdam, more and more educational institutions implement denim focused programs, such as the denim minor at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute or the House of Denim.

4.1.2 Mimetic Pressures

Through the growing amount of brands, the Dutch denim industry is a competitive one. My informants stated that companies are bound to keep track with each others CSR activities and if necessary adapt to them. Many denim brands are working on improving their sustainability efforts which, raising the expectations continuously higher. Large CSR focused associations such as MVO Nederland and Modint brings together various stakeholder of different industries to serve as platform for sharing knowledge and best practices.

4.1.3 Normative

In the opinion of my informants, normative pressure coming from the management and employees inside a company is the strongest influence on a business' CSR practices. Whether the newly established educational programs will have positive impact on fashion industries development towards more sustainability, can be expected but will only be possible to judge in the long term. It has become common for larger companies to have CSR departments and also to import expertise from NGOs and consultancies.

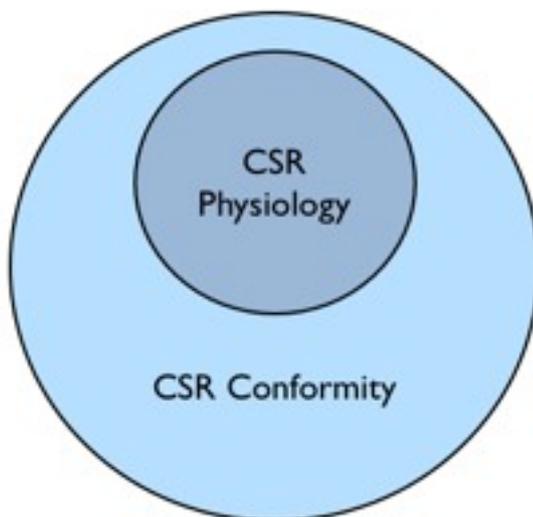
4.1.4 Summary

Despite coercive pressures having the most sources and is also of the most aggressive nature, it isn't said to be the most influential. According to my informants, mimetic and normative pressure has currently most impact on companies. Coercive pressures have great potential to bring around change, but there is still much to be done, which I will point out in my recommendations chapter.

4.2 Case Study: Pressures and Responses

The companies used for my case study are of different size on an financial and organizational scale and show different approaches towards sustainability. As described in the theory, companies operating within the same industry, thus facing the same institutional pressures do not necessarily respond to these pressures equally (Scott, 2008). After having conducted primary and secondary research it became apparent that not every denim brand has the same attitude towards sustainability. Fundamental thinking within a company also impacts its response to isomorphic pressures. To distinguish between these different company mentalities, I categorized them into two groups, referring to them as layers 1 and 2.

Figure 5: CSR Layers



Source: own design

Figure 5 visualizes the companies relationships towards CSR. The inner layer stands for those brands that have made CSR the essence - the core - of their business. Whilst the outer layer represents those companies that have started to apply sustainable practices at some points of their supply chain, as a necessity to remain legitimate. CSR is not included in their company's vision or mission but applied to the companies' practices and supply chains to a certain extent. Creating this figure, I was inspired by the Triple Bottom Line model and the sustainability triangle. These two existing concepts reflect the conflict of interests companies face when reacting to pressures, between economic, environmental and social factors. Evidently, companies in both, the CSR physiology and CSR conformity layer want to be economically successful, but it became apparent that the environmental

and social aspects weigh more in importance for brands with a CSR physiology than the ones with CSR conformity.

In the following table I reason my categorization decisions of the four denim brands of the case study into the CSR attitude groups.

Table 2: Categorization of CSR Attitude

| Company | CSR Attitude | Evidence |
|---------|----------------|---|
| C1 | CSR Physiology | <p>“... as entrepreneur, I feel lucky to have the time and freedom to reflect on social justice ...”</p> <p>“... through our business model we strive to contribute to a circular economy ...”</p> <p>“... if the willingness for more responsibility is there, anything is possible ...”</p> |
| C2 | CSR Physiology | <p>“... to motivate customers, we introduced a Triple-R philosophy: Recycle, Repair, Re-use ...”</p> <p>“... what sets us apart is the fact that we produce all this with a conscience....”</p> <p>“... quality of work environment is just as important as the product itself, therefore we are member of the FWF ...”</p> |
| C3 | CSR Conformity | <p>“... CSR is important, but financial sustainability as well ...”</p> <p>“... pricing is crucial to remain competitive, that’s what consumers look at primarily ...”</p> |
| C4 | CSR Conformity | <p>“... started to implement environmental and social friendly initiatives after having been targeted through campaign groups ...”</p> <p>“... we pay attention to Dutch and international guidelines and work on fulfilling them, as far as our operations allow us to ...”</p> |

In the following I will analyze, how companies within these two layers, perceive and react to institutional pressures, considering Scott’s (2008) theory, that put pressure on companies, despite of having an equal business environment, vary in impact.

Applying DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) theory which suggests companies to be rather passive receivers of institutional pressures, I encounter with the theory of Oliver (1991), claiming that there is initiative coming from corporations, by actively engaging in partnerships with the suppliers and multi-stakeholder associations. This development could derive from the uncertainty spread by the still novel sustainability movement in the fashion industry.

4.2.1 CSR Physiology

Companies with a CSR Physiology reflect their devotion to sustainability in their vision and mission. Social and environmental friendly practices are the core of these companies that they build their business model upon, thus the company's CSR attitude is implemented internally through the management. Dickson and Eckman (2006) relate social responsibility in the fashion sector with practices involving raw materials, design, and production, retailing, and the end-consumption, disposal of the product, and the recycling process. Out of my selected sample Companies C1 and C2 apply CSR practices to most of these categories and have therefore been grouped into the layer of CSR physiology.

C1 and C2, fall into the category of companies with a CSR philosophy. Both brands include their CSR philosophy in every of their business decisions. Companies with a CSR ideology have incorporated sustainable thinking in their company's mission and vision and have social and environmental friendly production as one of their core values.

Pressures

The sources of pressures, companies see themselves faced with, are mostly involving the stakeholder groups of the government, the competitors, the consumers, and the employees - the company leader especially.

Due to their experience and focus on CSR, C1 and C2 experience great interest coming from their consumers and retailers. They are interested in knowing more about the production and operation as a whole. C1 sees a shift in consumer behavior, stating that consumers want to know what their products are made off and where they were produced in order to evaluate how sustainable they are. Also C2 has noticed a growing interest from the consumers' side, but criticizes that this mostly only remains shallow interest and doesn't translate into a purchase. The collapse of the Rana Plaza factory is described as wakeup call by both companies. Both companies feel the consumers' mindset towards CSR is essential to bring around change in the industry. C1 contributes to rising awareness amongst consumers through offering special repair kits for self-application as well as organizing repair events, with the goal to antagonize the throw-away trend. The customers of C2 are called on to return their products after they are done

wearing them, so they can be recycled or upcycled. C2 calls this concept “leasing”. The brand complains about lacking demand from consumers in this project. People seem to like the idea and ask questions and invite C2 to participate in events, but don’t actually buy or lease a jeans respectively. Therefore the consumers discourage the company to act environmentally responsible rather than pressuring it to become more sustainable. Also C2’s retailers hesitate to sell the ‘lease a jeans’ model, as they have a higher profit margin selling a pair of jeans from bigger, conventional brands.

Both brands do not feel great pressure coming from the government. C1 is convinced that the government could and should do more to encourage sustainable behavior within the industry. C1 as well as C2 don’t see the answer in strict rules and regulations rather than guidelines and rewarding incentives for good CSR behavior. C1 feels that the government could become involved and increase its impact more through granting tax reductions, and thus encourage the compliance with sustainability standards and the implementation of eco-labels. C2 feels discouraged by the government, which doesn’t take the company’s CSR practices into account and charges them just as many fees as the other, less sustainable, companies.

Media reports on the Dutch fashion industry and denim sector have become more common, especially since denim has gained a dominant role in Amsterdam and the surrounding area and more denim. Sustainable fashion specific events have been taking place that generate media coverage. Since the occurrence of several accidents at production sites, CSR has become a widely discussed topic in the Dutch media. C1 criticizes that the media is often lacking expertise in the topic of sustainability and tends to reflect the efforts of companies in a wrong way, for instance, displays companies as being avant guard in CSR activities while they only implement shallow policies.

To get ideas of how to become even more sustainable, C1 gets inspiration from competitors regarding production and resource management for organic cotton or other raw materials. C2 is less influenced by competitor companies, it feels like most of them are behind in their CSR strategy and seeks a pioneering position within the industry.

C2 sees great importance in new educational institutions focusing on CSR in the denim sector. Employees of the company have given lectures at such facilities with the conviction that today’s students will be the decision makers of tomorrow and should be prepared to do so in favor of sustainable practices. C1 has not worked with an educational institution yet, but knows about the importance of CSR affine employees and their previous education on this topic and put much emphasis on this characteristic when selecting its own staff.

The owner of C1 worked for other Jeans brands before and decided to start out his own with the fundamental thought of a sustainable jeans product. The owner of C2 used to work for another fashion company, for which he lived in China for some time, where he witnessed the poor sustainability standards in factories. C2 admits that they have financial problems because of its circular model, but its determination to become as sustainable as possible is stronger.

Responses of Collaboration

Both denim brands care a lot about the product life cycle as a whole. C2 started a recycling project, giving consumers the opportunity to return their old, unwanted pairs of jeans and using them to make fiber for new jeans, trying to apply the cradle to cradle pattern (Michael Braungart et. al., 2002). They acknowledge that other brands produce using organic materials and under fair working conditions, but C2 wants to go one step further, and criticizes that many brand aren't thinking about post consumerism.

C1 is keen on contributing to Amsterdam becoming a "Denim City". Therefore they are actively involved in trade shows and other industry events furthermore they try to improve their supply chain's social conditions through a membership with FWF, an international verification initiative. C2 is a member of BSCI and in the multi-stakeholder-initiative SA8000. To minimize its environmental footprint C2 has launched a project, together with a Dutch foundation, that aims to produce climate neutral clothing. Furthermore the brand receives financial support from the National Postcode Lottery to realize their CSR initiatives. C2 stated that it searches for strategic partnerships with institutions. The management of C2 considers joining FWF, which is currently helping the brand to find a factory in Bangladesh, producing under fair working conditions. C2 sees GOTS as the best eco-label and wants to certify as many of its products as possible with it.

Pressure on Suppliers

C1 states to manufacture its products using "the sustainable technology of today" with natural indigo dye & print techniques, including laser, in order to save water and chemicals. The company chooses to use organic cotton that is GOTS certified and a specific fabric made of recycled jeans that is produced in Italy and Japan. C1 is a member of the Fair Wear Foundation and claims to comply with the FWF labour standards, that forbid exploitation of child labor and excessive working hours, amongst others. In the sense of slow fashion C1 believes in classic design that can be worn every season. High emphasis is put on durability of the products to increase their lifetime.

25% of the production volume of C2 is made up of environmentally friendly certified products and recycled raw materials. Additionally, the company uses GOTS certified production techniques for the protection of the environment, and all its suppliers are SA8000 certified, thus monitored. To make the supply chain more human friendly C2 engages actively in the improvement of working conditions at the production sites, instructing its suppliers to follow the FLO demands and has publicly declared a ban of sandblasting from its supply chains. C2 tries to keep their production within Europe, it takes place in Italy, Turkey, Poland and also the Netherlands. C2 only produces on demand to avoid having to throw away products.

4.2.2 CSR Conformity

Companies acting CSR conform seek legitimacy. In their undertaking to meet their customers expectations for more sustainable supply chains they apply CSR practices to protect their image. However, sometimes this can be done merely on a shallow level to keep appearances. CSR conform companies are more reactive than proactive, reacting to pressures rather than taking initiative themselves.

Companies under pressure for CSR conformity are C3 and C4. Both companies are medium- to large-sized, internationally operating denim brands. CSR activities have been implemented from both of them and are perceived it as significant factor in the company.

CSR compliance is influenced by the stakeholders groups: consumers, government, educational institutions, NGOs, competitors, and the media. All of them inflict pressure that either enhances or demotivates companies in attaining CSR compliance.

Pressures

Pressure coming from customers of denim brands can either derive from end-consumers or retailers. Retailers have impact on the brands, and mostly want them to apply eco-labels to their collections to make it more appealing to the consumers by giving the denim brand a “greener” image.

Despite their statement that the government currently does not have a major impact on their CSR compliance, C3 and C4 acknowledge that the government could have significant influence on the industry via its power over the legal system, to pressure companies to become more ethically responsible. However, due to obvious reasons they don't favor too much interference with their operations through new rules and laws, but both companies agree that the government should encourage businesses to become more socially responsible by offering incentives or by rewarding those that have successfully implemented CSR. Nevertheless, the companies share the opinion that there

should be rules regarding proper recycling and waste handling that businesses need to comply to.

The Dutch media has been fairly interested in the topic of sustainable clothing. In news coverage, specific attention has been paid to social issues, especially since the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory. C4, has experienced the force of social networks through which it was attacked by the public, because an international campaign group launched a mediastorm on it. Also in other countries, especially Europe, media focus on the labour conditions and pollution through the fashion industry has increased in the past years as also the consumers have paid more attention to the topic.

Both brands state that the accumulation of trade shows and exhibitions with a focus on “green fashion”, has also put pressure on the denim brands to adopt new technologies, use alternative resources and establish eco-labels.

Campaign groups have been stirring up the topic of sustainable practices for textile companies. C4 was targeted by a campaign group, pressuring it into committing to become part of the initiative to ban hazardous chemicals from the supply chain by 2020. The campaign group built up pressure over months, before C4 became willing to comply, through people powered activities and negotiations behind closed doors. The campaign group chose to target C4, because it believed that the brand was practicing surface isomorphism (Zucker, 1987), by trying to implement some shallow CSR initiatives to appear legitimate to its stakeholders, but not integrating them fully into its supply chain (Meyer & Rowan 1977). In response C4 came up with a concrete action plan, and committed to conduct a case study on how to remove hazardous chemicals from its supply chain, which will eventually serve as examples for policy makers and other stakeholders.

Another campaign group focused more on social issues, pressured C4 into improving its working conditions. In 2006 the campaign group, sent a letter of complaint to the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, accusing C4 to have violated the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises in their business relationship with one of their suppliers. The complaint mainly revolved around workers' rights. Due to the lack of C4's action to improve the situation, information exchange between the human rights organizations and the denim brand came to a halt. After several months of silence SSK/LIW publicized their findings on the C4 case. After the publication of the protest letter, C4 reestablished contact.

According to C3 and C4, activities of their competitors have influence on their CSR strategy. For instance, both companies have started offering products made with materials won from recycled jeans.

C4 has worked on projects together with educational institutions in Amsterdam. C3 has not done so this far but believes that the increase of specific denim education will contribute to push CSR practices forward.

Responses of Collaboration

CSR activities that were mentioned most by the two brands C3 and C4 were related to eco-labels, waste management, fair labour conditions and supply chain management.

C3 and C4 equally stated to try to implement eco-labels if possible and as mentioned earlier both experienced pressure to do so. Other CSR activities involved recycling as much as possible and raising awareness amongst the employees to live a more sustainable lifestyle, by for instance switching from cars to public transport.

C4 partnered with a technology centre to implement their system to manage all environmental, and safety aspects of the manufacturing chain. Furthermore C4 is working with an NGO to achieve a cleaner production outcome by assessing the suppliers water, energy, dye and chemical usage and supports the suppliers to improve if necessary. To reduce water pollution C4 works with a network of academic and national/international water institutions on a four year program. To establish better conditions for factory workers both companies collaborate with other brands, suppliers, governments, industry associations, NGOs and Trade Unions through multi-stakeholder associations. C4 and C3 are part of national and international multi-stakeholder partnerships in which it shares best practices and works on projects with educational institutions to increase their work's validity. After a factory collapse in Bangladesh causing more than 1,000 dead, C4 joined forces with other major fashion brands to finance and create a fire and building safety program, which includes auditing and educating suppliers.

Pressure on Suppliers

C4 states that it has long-term relationships with their suppliers from Asia, Europe, and Africa. The company admits to have restricted influence on production conditions since many manufacturing sites are located in developing countries, where there is limited governmental organization and poor control mechanisms. C4 claims to attach great importance to health and safety conditions in the industry and to only work with suppliers with a sustainable production. Suppliers are required to align to C4's Code of Conduct based on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ILO, ETI, the SMETA

Environmental Criteria, and ISO 14000. C4 has banned sandblasting from its production process and monitors its suppliers for compliance. To protect the environment as well as humans that have contact with the garment C4 requires its suppliers to adhere to its Restricted Substances List (RSL). The RSL follows international laws and regulations and was implemented after pressure from a campaign group calling on the brands to detox its supply chain. To ensure the suppliers' compliance the production process is managed by internal experts and audited and verified through third party organizations. C4 also plans on using more sustainable materials, and feels that close cooperation with its supplier is essential for the supply chain implementation.

Neither of the two companies has disclosed detailed information about their suppliers which could indicate greenwashing. Decoupling their technical core from legitimizing structures and this way neglecting program implementation while still appearing legitimate to the external stakeholders. Such behavior is called decoupled response to institutional pressures (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

4.2.4 Summary

The analysis shows how differently companies perceive institutional pressures to become more sustainable, depending on their understanding and attitude towards CSR. While companies in layer 2 are applying CSR practices in response to institutional pressures in order to gain legitimacy, companies in layer 1 have made it their mission to incorporate CSR thinking into every business decision made.

Companies in layer 1, experience great influence coming from the owners and head designers as well as competitors, which these companies look towards for inspiration. Both companies have a defined understanding of sustainability, they thoroughly inspect their supply chains to ensure the satisfaction of their employees. Companies in layer 1 call for more formal regulation by the government, making a shift from voluntary CSR actions to a more obligatory approach, without suffocating the business. Both brands feel like there is going to be grand development in the fashion industry, but it will take longer than expected and see themselves as CSR pioneers in the industry.

Companies in layer 2 perceive pressures from different types of stakeholders. Amongst the consumers, mainly retailers put pressure on them to adopt new eco-labels, this is also encouraged through trade fairs. Strong attention is paid to competitors' activities. The media and NGOs inflict pressure through raising public awareness of the companies' supply chains. Companies striving for CSR compliance face pressure from all these stakeholders, and the companies seem to be reactive to their expectations.

Overall, the case study showed that brands with CSR physiology are mostly influenced through normative pressure, while the CSR compliant companies are relatively more affected through coercive and mimetic pressures.

Further, the data shows that companies in layer 1 are tending towards collaborations with institutions such as NGOs and foundations while companies belonging to layer 2 are more involved in multi-stakeholder associations. In terms of collaboration with the suppliers or the pressure passed on to suppliers, respectively, companies C1 and C2 have more visibility of their supply chain and most of their production takes place in Europe allowing them to have greater control over their suppliers. C3 and C4, as larger companies, have more complex supply chains, with more production sites in developing countries. Both denim brands put more emphasis on social rather than environmental issues. This could be associated with the media attention towards this topic since the Rana Plaza incident.

During the research phase a general observation of mine was that CSR conform brands are publicizing their social and environmental benefits more publicly via their online presence. This could indicate their need to justify themselves, wanting to create a positive image for themselves to ensure legitimacy from stakeholders.

5. Discussion

In this section of my thesis I emphasize and discuss the most significant insights generated through my research.

5.1 A Matter of Company Size?

The difference in size of the companies in this study and their different responses toward institutional pressures is striking. CSR pressures faced by larger companies appear to be different from the ones smaller companies have to cope with. Larger and smaller companies clearly separate themselves from one another. The companies in layer 2 are the biggest companies in the study and have a more passive way of responding to pressures. Their behavior is reactive rather than proactive, while the smaller companies in layer 1 are beyond any legal CSR requirements and make it their mission to strive for a cradle to cradle business model. Unlike in Pedersen's (2009) hypothesis, stating larger companies to be more active in the adoption of CSR practices, compared to smaller ones, my case study showed that smaller companies are in many ways more advanced in CSR relative to the larger ones. I concluded that this was in relation to the varying leaderships of the denim brands.

My case study reveals that leaders within an organization have great influence on how companies react towards CSR pressures. The companies in layer 1 are the most active in terms of CSR and when taking a look at their management, similarities can be observed. The owners of both brands are committed to the CSR ideology. One of them is influenced through his former work for multiple different brands in the denim sector, having caused him to form an affinity towards denim and sustainable production. When founding his own company he put emphasis on finding like minded employees. The other brand's owner was marked by his experiences from working abroad, where he saw the conditions at production sites in developing countries. Another commonality of the two brands in layer 1, is that both desire to raise awareness amongst consumers, to educate them and to change their buying behavior from fast- to slow-fashion. The behavior of the two brands in layer 1 shows the switch from implicit to explicit CSR. Meaning that companies increasingly approach the matter of CSR voluntarily rather than merely following the government's sustainability requirements. According to Matten and Moon (2008), this shift to explicit CSR is caused by missing governmental activity, companies being ahead of public policy or companies becoming increasingly dependent on CSR investment. This theory could indicate the importance of strong company leaders and explain why some companies are so active in CSR, despite low institutional pressure.

5.2 Do Institutional Pressures Form CSR Actions?

The consumers, competitors, and the government appear to be the stakeholder groups with the most impact on denim brands. It was noticeable that companies in the study with less influencing stakeholders were showing more initiative in CSR behavior, and the companies with strong input from stakeholders apply more passive CSR behavior.

Most of the denim brands feel only to a low extent influenced by their consumers. Awareness from the consumers' side has not yet reached a high enough level to inflict strong power on the companies' adoption of CSR practices. Consumers of brands in layer 1 are more conscious of their environmental footprint, however this can be linked to the fact that these brands are already undertaking CSR on a high level and therefore attract this kind of clients. The result of other studies was that consumers are willing to buy sustainable products, if they are available and transparency and comparability of the products is given (Onderzoeksbureau O+S, 2013).

The companies perceive great pressure in the competitors' CSR behavior. Primary and secondary research revealed that three out of the four denim brands in the case-study, started using recycled fabrics for their products, suggesting that inspiration was drawn from one another.

The government has influence on companies to a certain extent, but legislation concerning CSR is still lacking, mostly only guidelines are given which encourage sustainability on a voluntary basis. Opinions amongst the brands, on whether there should be mandatory regulations, differ. Some companies are convinced that the government should put more pressure on companies to promote CSR behavior, while at the same time fearing that too much government involvement could lead to even higher costs and fees and that such regulations could restrict their business. Rather than fees, the companies in the first layer suggest tax incentives for companies that act social and environmental friendly.

After all, strong regulations from authorities may cause more of a shift away from CSR rather than towards it. As Criado-Jiménez et al. (2008) analyzed in their study, strict legal requirements often cause companies to apply cover-up strategies. This would be counter productive, since a inter-industry collaboration of companies is needed to face the textile sectors' problems.

The examined companies with a CSR physiology are influenced the most by normative pressures. The CSR strategy of CSR conform brands is also mainly driven through

pressures coming from inside the company, but perceive mimetic pressure from their competition and coercive pressure relatively stronger compared to the CSR physiology brands. Most companies show reactions to institutional pressures rather than being proactive themselves. Informants state that institutional pressure as it exists at the moment has hardly or no effect on a companies sustainability initiatives. This concludes that normative pressures are the most influential ones, indicating that educational institutions will play a larger role in the future.

5.3 Does Collaboration Encourage Isomorphism?

I have come to see in my research that isomorphism is only one possible result of institutional pressure, just as stated in Scott's theory (2008). By working together with institutions, for instance via industry associations, companies themselves contribute to the process of institutionalization. At this point in time, companies cannot be seen solely as passive receivers of institutional pressures, but also as active players in their institutional environment. This means that the relationship between organizations and environment is not deterministic but constitutive, meaning that organizations are actively influencing the society's demands.

Companies by themselves have limited impact on change, therefore, collaborations are necessary. Pressures enforcing brands to act in order to become more sustainable have shown to result in companies joining forces with one another, to share their knowledge and data bases, but also but with other industry players such as NGOs, governmental institutions, and global organizations. This can contribute to companies becoming more isomorphic because every participating company has access to the same knowledge. However, due to the complexity and globalization of supply chains, companies are often faced with differing institutional environments and cultural values they need to comply to. Therefore every company is unique in its CSR requirements to adopt certain practices.

Having realized the importance of CSR throughout the entire supply chain, also the collaboration between fashion companies and suppliers has increased. As stated in Curbach's (2009) study it can be assumed that through the closer collaboration between denim brands and suppliers, the dependency of both parties is being intensified, contributing to the range of external pressure. The companies are heavily investing in their suppliers to become more sustainable and the suppliers, adopting technologies that are requested by their client,s make them more reliant on the fashion company and vice versa.

6. Recommendations

To round off my findings and analysis chapter, I would like to point out some recommendations for the denim and fashion industry as a whole. Having looked at the environment of Dutch denim brands, I have come to ask, how could institutional pressures be intensified and would it change the way companies act towards CSR? As this paper is mainly directed towards policy makers I have come up with some suggestions, on government and industry level, that could contribute to evoke change.

Sustainable production is more expensive than conventional procedures and brands with a CSR physiology struggle to stay competitive. They are additionally weakened through fees and taxes that need to be paid to the government. Currently, commitment to CSR is largely taking place through voluntarily initiatives. Obligations, established through legislation, are rare. Scott (2008) argues that governments are not neutral entities, but instead base their decision making on own interests. As proposed by one of my informants the government might lack pressure on the Dutch fashion industry because it wants to lure international companies to settle in the Netherlands and denim brands in Amsterdam especially. Too many strict regulations could result in hampering the business, but it should be considered to grant companies with a good sustainability effort extra advantages, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and lower VAT on eco-friendly garments. This would make sustainable products more affordable and equally more attractive for the consumers, whose purchasing decision is heavily based on price. Furthermore legislation could be used to establish more minimum requirements a product needs to fulfill. These limits could target chemical levels or the textile composition of a garment, for instance could materials consisting of mixed fabrics be restricted. This would be a step to be taken on the level of the entire EU. Just as companies need to collaborate in order to achieve more sustainability, so do governments. One way or the other, certain is that the government has the potential power to generate change in the industry through various “soft” and “hard” policies targeting either the industry directly or through influencing the consumers via for instance media campaigns. A study of Criado-Jiménez et. al. (2008) claims that stronger legal regulation is necessary to improve the sustainability behavior of companies. Therefore I recommend stronger development in policy making to accelerate the transformation towards a more sustainable fashion industry.

The implementation of stronger legislation is one thing, monitoring the compliance of companies, another. To gain visibility governments should establish CSR reporting requirements, including clearly set targets and performance records to make comparisons between companies possible, hence increase supply chain transparency. The mass of standards available in the fashion industry are manifold and lay focus on different

sustainability aspects. However, none of them targets all environmental and social issues. This leads to confusion amongst brands and consumers, who can't judge what certifications to trust. A normed standard would obtain clarity on an industry level, as well as help consumers to make an informed purchasing decision.

Through my research it has become apparent that the true power, to generate change in the way companies operate, lies with the consumers. Once people start purchasing "green" products in larger quantities, the industry will adopt to these demands. Many consumers are interested in sustainable products but rarely transform this attitude into an actual purchase. Uncertainty about the companies' supply chains, due to non-transparency, hinder consumer awareness of the social and environmental effects their purchased products cause, and contributes to their unwillingness to pay more for an alleged sustainable garment. I believe that the food industry is a good example for this scenario. Consumers have come to be more aware of what effects nutrition has on their health and the demand for organic food have gone up. In the matter of fashion, consumer thinking is not as far yet, therefore, awareness raising actions are required. This initiative should be promoted through the government and other institutions, such as NGOs. Campaign groups like the Greenpeace and CCC have drawn the attention of consumers and therefore have contributed to a more sustainable behavior of brands. Also companies themselves can contribute to a shift from fast to slow fashion, which could also be described as a shift from product offering to service offering. Two companies in the case study are already offering repair services to their consumers encouraging them to extend the lifetime of their jeans and call on consumers to return their jeans, once outworn, in order to recycle them most efficiently, aiming for a cradle to cradle model.

One of the main findings of my research has shown that normative pressures, coming from individuals within a corporation, have significant impact on the firm's CSR approach. This indicates the high importance of educational programs, as they shape the leaders of tomorrow. In the fashion industry, both, designers and managers, belong to the main decision makers. They will apply their values and beliefs acquired in their studies in their work and influence their companies' strategic approach of CSR, consciously or subconsciously. Recently, more educational programs that focus on CSR in fashion have been introduced, mainly at design schools. However, since most final decisions are taken by the management rather than designers, it is advisable to create more CSR based programs targeting business students.

7. Conclusion

I approached the analysis of institutional pressures based on DiMaggio and Powell's theory (1991) of three different types of isomorphic pressures: coercive, mimetic, and normative. I have translated these pressures to apply for the denim industry and for CSR practices in particular. To show what components contribute to a company's CSR strategy, I used the Triple Bottom Line concept.

The main research question of this thesis "What institutional pressures are Dutch denim brands exposed to, pushing them to become more social and environmental friendly?" is not easy to answer. The institutional pressures are complex and to what degree each source influences the fashion industry is hard to determine through a small scale research. The result of my findings show that companies differ in their way of reacting to institutional pressures based on their company nature. Despite the fact that all analyzed companies are operating in the same industry, and therefore face the same or comparable pressures, their perception of them varies.

I established two groups of CSR attitudes. Denim brands that I found to have a CSR physiology experience normative pressure, coming from value principles of their leaders and employees, as strongest source. The two other denim brands, I titled as CSR conform. These are also mostly driven through professionalism, but relatively to the first group receive more coercive and mimetic pressure. Coercive pressure is inflicted through the media reports, drawing attention to poor labour conditions and pollution through the fashion industry and campaign groups that target brands specifically and animate consumers to protest against unsustainable practices. This second group of companies also perceives mimetic pressure from competing companies, for instance in matters of eco-label adoption.

Depending on their nature, denim brands experience institutional pressures to a varying degree, it is reasonable that also their reactions differ. My findings on how companies cooperate with institutions in reaction to pressures received from these institutions showed that those companies, belonging to the group of CSR conformity, take part in multi-stakeholder organizations to share and gain knowledge and data. However, there is a conflict between transparency and competitiveness. In order to successfully collaborate with other players in the industry, companies need to disclose information which at the same time makes them more vulnerable towards their competitors. Companies with a

CSR physiology also work with industry associations but mainly work with NGOs and foundations to achieve their CSR goals.

I made it part of my research to gain some insight, into how Dutch denim brands pass on institutional pressure to their suppliers. As many companies do not openly disclose supplier information it was hard to create visibility, but it appears that companies, belonging to layer 1 have better visibility of the components of their supply chain and therefore more power to influence their practices. They put high emphasis on long-term relationships with their suppliers to implement sustainable technologies for a cleaner production and to ensure fair conditions for workers. However, it needs to be acknowledged that these brands are also significantly smaller than those of layer 2, meaning their supply chains are less complex.

The fashion industry in the Netherlands is highly competitive, also amongst denim brands, and likely to increase since the Dutch government wants to encourage more brands to settle in the Amsterdam area. According to Campbell (2007), large competition makes eco-friendly behavior of companies less likely. Therefore, I believe that institutional pressures will become of more significant importance to entice and compel companies to apply CSR.

7.1 Limitations

There were some limitations I came across during my research for this thesis that I would like to point out. Firstly, the matter of CSR is complex and somewhat of a sensitive topic for companies. As a researcher it was difficult at times to evaluate the validity of statements and answers, since all brands want to appear in a good light. Furthermore, it was harder to get primary data from larger companies compared to smaller ones. I assume this is due to the circumstances that larger corporations experience more public exposure and thus more institutional pressure.

7.2 Future research

While working on my thesis I came across other topics that would be interesting to conduct future research on. I was especially intrigued by the mechanics of campaign groups. Further research would be needed to find out, what their strategic approaches are to put pressure on companies, on what criteria they choose companies as target for their campaigns, and how they measure their impact, or to what extent they control the reactions of companies at all.

More in focus on my own conducted research, I think the group of CSR compliant companies, could be broken down further, since it is defined fairly broadly. I have noticed through my secondary research that various companies are becoming more involved in CSR, and even if only a fraction actually internalized a CSR philosophy, which they are basing their entire business model on, many others do more in CSR than they are legally required to and the number of these companies is increasing further due to institutional pressures. Furthermore it would be of great value to examine the companies' strategic responses to pressures on a wider scale beyond collaboration strategies.

Innovation plays a big role in the process towards a more sustainable supply chain. Many companies are experiencing with new alternatives to conventional cotton and new machinery that decreases the industry's environmental impact. The denim brand Levi's, for instance, launched its Water>Less campaign, which achieved tremendous water savings in the manufacturing process. It would contribute to existing research to analyze pressures coming from technical innovations.

In general, the CSR movement is not restricted to the fashion industry. Therefore, it would be insightful, how other industries respond to institutional pressures. For instance the automobile industry, where CSR issues and controversy over new innovations are widely discussed.

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Appendix

Samples for the Denim-Case-Study

Company 1 (C1): Organization 1 is a denim label, founded in 2010 in Amsterdam, selling its collection to 160 retailers worldwide. The brand applies sustainable technology and was chosen, because of its great experience in the matter of sustainability as a denim brand. Consumers are educated to recycle, repair, and reuse their jeans I chose this company as interview candidate, because I felt that it would, due to its role as prize example in terms of CSR, generate more reliable information on my research topic than some of the other brands I looked at for secondary data collection, which might have not told the truth on what pressures they are actually under, to avoid appearing in a bad light. The company consists of only five employees and the production of the denim cloth mainly takes place in Japan, Turkey and Italy and is assembled in Tunisia.

Company 2 (C2): Organisation 2 is another Dutch denim label, that was founded in 2008. The brand has several eco certificates like GOTS and BSCI. To produce its jeans the brand uses recyclable materials and ensures good working conditions. The brand produces its products in Turkey and sells in three European countries. Three full time employees are working for the brand.

Company 3 (C3): Company 3 had its beginnings in the 80s but was reestablished as the brand it is today in 2001. The brand's collections for women, men and children is sold in over 100 stores worldwide and has more than 7,000 other sales points. Products sold include all kinds of clothing items but 2010 a denim project was launched. The brand produces in Asia, Europe, and Africa, mostly in Bangladesh, China, Italy and Vietnam.

Company (C4): This denim brand was established more than twenty years ago and has approximately 6000 points of sale in 68 countries. While focus lies on denim, the full range of products also includes jackets, shirts, knits, dresses, and skirts. Fibers used for production are cotton, linen, hemp, ramie, and Tencel®. The manufacturing sites are mainly based in China, Bangladesh, and India.

Organization 1 (O1): is a NGO, located in Amsterdam and London, providing consulting and performance evaluation services to fashion brands in order to achieve their CSR goals. It was founded in 2004 and has developed a range of tools, helping the brands to become more transparent to their stakeholders. The NGO currently lists 22 partner brands it works with on a long-term basis. I chose to use this organization as primary source due to its wide expertise in the sustainable fashion industry. It has worked with multiple different brands under diverse circumstances. The consultants are experts on social and

environmental matters and have a holistic view of the current developments. The organization consists of 16 employees in total.

Organization 2 (O2): Organization 4 is an educational institution situated in Amsterdam that educates, amongst others, students in Fashion & Design, and offers a minor in denim. The minor involves close project work with denim brands and imparts knowledge about technical background of the industry, social and environmental issues, and innovation. The faculty belongs to Amsterdam's largest University of Applied Sciences.

Informant 1 (I1): This is a freelance journalist, specialized in fashion, sustainability and technical innovations. She has written about the fashion industry for almost a decade and most of her articles about sustainability revolve around the production process, working conditions, environmental aspects, certifications, fairtrade, 'green' trends, and greenwashing. Moreover, the journalist discusses topics related to innovation in the clothing business such as, new materials, recycling, cradle to cradle, 3D-printing, dye-techniques, and science and design projects respectively.

Questions for informants

Case-study denim brands

What's the brand's vision and mission?

What is the company's initiative in CSR and how does it defines the concept?

When was the turning point in CSR for the brand?

Coercive

In what way does the government influence your CSR actions? Are you in favor of stricter CSR guidelines?

Has the brand faced institutional pressure before, and if yes, how did the brand react to them?

Have consumers become more demanding for sustainable products?

Mimetic

Are you part of a multi stakeholder organization?

Do you look at what your competitors are doing in terms of CSR?

What effect do trade shows and exhibitions with focus on "green fashion" have?

Normative

Do you have a CSR department?

Do your employees know about the companies CSR activities?

What is your opinion on the new denim focused educational institutions being established in Amsterdam?

Collaboration

Do you produce locally or abroad? What is the relationship to the production sites?

How does the brand partner with industry players to achieve CSR?

Focus Group Questions with O1

What significant changes in CSR have occurred in the past?

What are the industry's main challenges in CSR?

What needs to happen to cause drastic change? (e.g. stricter government regulation)

What do you think will the future development within the fashion industry look like?

Do you feel external pressure has much influence on fashion brands?

Has consumer awareness increased?

How do you select the brands you target?

How do you measure the impact of your work with/campaigns on brands?

Is it the consumers' responsibility to demand CSR from brands?

Has the Rana Plaza catastrophe changed the mind set of people and leads to the institutionalization of these values?

What are the intentions of politics regarding CSR in the fashion companies?

Questions Towards the Educational Institution

What significant changes in CSR have occurred in the past?

What are the industry's main challenges in CSR?

How are new educational institutions focused on CSR and denim perceived from brands?

How do brands collaborate with educational institutions?

Questions Towards the Media

questions:

What significant changes in CSR have occurred in the past?

What are the industry's main challenges in CSR?

How sincere are the companies intentions to implement CSR into their business?

How do they work with institutions?

What impact do social and cultural forces have?