Research Article

Building Stakeholder Trust Through Industry Leadership in Sustainable Development

Anna Nyquist [ORCID]

Sustainability, Industrial Dynamics and Entrepreneurship, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Sustainable marketing has become essential due to increasing sustainability risks, regulatory pressures and increasing consumer interests. Despite its growing importance, a significant trust deficit undermines stakeholder trust. This study explores the landscape of industry-specific sustainable marketing practices and identify remedies for the low level of stakeholder trust by examining the development of sustainable marketing in the Swedish textile service industry from 1996 to 2024, focusing on trust-building measures. Using a long-term qualitative approach, the research analyzes annual reports, websites, printed materials, Facebook posts, and semi-structured interviews. Findings show a shift from vague, compliance-driven efforts to more detailed and validated sustainable marketing, highlighting a move towards more accountable, transparent, and authentic practices, which are also indicated as foundational for increased trust. Additionally, the results suggest that proactive and more radical approaches that exceed compliance and stakeholder demands can further enhance trust by positioning companies as industry leaders in sustainability.

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable marketing, increasingly pivotal in the contemporary business landscape, is garnering attention due to a confluence of escalating sustainability risks, stricter regulations, and growing market interest (cf. Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Hesse & Rundau, 2023; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2017; Nijhof et al., 2022). This practice, integrating environmental, social, and economic factors within traditional marketing paradigms, has transcended the promotion of mere environmentally friendly products and ethical sourcing. Instead, it now encompasses a broad array of marketing strategies and practices aimed at meeting the current needs of consumers and businesses without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (cf Belz & Peattie, 2012; Lim, 2016; Özturan & Grinstein, 2022).

However, despite its prominence, sustainable marketing faces a significant trust deficit (Taoketao et al., 2018). For example, statistics show that 42% of environmental advertising claims in the European Union (EU) might be misleading (European Commission, 2021), and a significant 87% of investors view sustainability reports with suspicion (Pwc, 2022). This skepticism is grounded in the challenges of maintaining
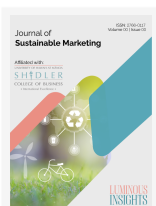
Corresponding author:
Anna Nyquist | anna-maria.nyquist@indek.kth.se | Sustainability, Industrial Dynamics and Entrepreneurship, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden.

credibility within marketing, as highlighted by numerous studies, including those by Dalal (2020), Netto et al. (2020), Gabler et al. (2020), Chen (2010) and Woolverton & Dimitri (2010), which explore the complexities of authentic sustainability communication. The nature of sustainability as a 'credence good' — its attributes not directly verifiable — further complicates trust (Boström & Klintman, 2011).

The importance of building trust through marketing is also underscored by a growing body of more stringent legal frameworks that require heightened in sustainability claims. For example, the new EU (n.d.) Green Claims Directive enforces rigorous substantiation of environmental statements to prevent consumer deception. This directive mandates that companies support their sustainability assertions with clear and reliable evidence. Another example is the **?**'s (n.d.) Green Guides in the United States, which aid marketers in avoiding misleading environmental claims. While these legal frameworks serve as guides for enhancing the credibility of sustainable marketing, they also pose challenges for marketers who must navigate and adhere to various complex regulations. The dual role of these regulations as both aids and obstacles highlight the evolving and complex landscape of sustainable marketing.

Kemper & Ballantine (2019) highlight another significant issue in the field of sustainable marketing: the existing ambiguities in comprehending its role and scope. This lack of clarity, coupled with a somewhat narrow perspective on the complexities of sustainability challenges, may also have contributed to skepticism toward sustainable marketing practices. The credence nature of sustainability and the widespread mistrust, along with the novelty of sustainable marketing as a practice, underscore a need to expand the understanding of this field, both in theoretical and practical terms. While previous research has touched upon the importance of trust in sustainable marketing (Chen, 2010; Netto et al., 2020), there is still a gap in understanding how this trust is cultivated and perceived.

Filling that gap is especially interesting from an industry-specific perspective. Marketing practices, including sustainable strategies, can vary significantly across industries due to differing stakeholder expectations, technological levels, and regulatory demands. Research by Pittman & Read (2024), Kinnunen et al. (2022), Brodie et al. (1997), and Håkansson & Snehota (1989) demonstrates how company and industry characteristics profoundly influence the choice and effectiveness of marketing approaches. This is also seen in sustainable marketing. For instance, the construction industry's substantial environmental impacts necessitate distinct sustainable strategies compared to other sectors (Kinnunen et al., 2022), similar to how the needs for sustainable actions are noteworthy in the textile industry (Abbate et al., 2024; Hesse & Rundau, 2023) and generally in industrial markets (cf. Liu et al., 2012; Sharma et al., 2010).

Thus, this study aims to explore the landscape of industry-specific sustainable marketing practices and identify remedies for the low level of stakeholder trust.

The guiding research question for this study is:

- How can trust in industry-specific sustainable marketing practices be increased?

With this research aim and question, this study seeks to enhance the conceptual framework of sustainable marketing practices. It aims not only to deepen the theoretical understanding of this field but also to provide practical, actionable insights for industry professionals and other stakeholders.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing marks a pivotal evolution from traditional marketing paradigms (e.g., Belz & Peattie, 2012; Pooja et al., 2001) and is specifically designed to tackle the urgent global challenges of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. According to the Marketing Accountability Standards Board's (2024) Universal Marketing Standards Dictionary, sustainable marketing is defined as an approach that 'aims to recognize and address negative environmental and societal externalities while enhancing the positive environmental, international development, and societal benefits of the production, distribution, promotion, packaging, and pricing of an organization's offerings.'

This approach, as a specialized facet of the broader sustainability marketing framework, focuses on integrating sustainability into specific marketing practices. It is crucial for laying the groundwork for more comprehensive strategies in sustainable marketing, which aim to transform business practices across all levels of the organization to support sustainable development (Belz & Peattie, 2012).

2.1. Dichotomy of idealism and realism

The dialogue around sustainable marketing is characterized by a tension between idealism and realism. For instance, Baldassarre & Campo (2016) capture this dual nature, highlighting a genuine commitment to sustainability that often sits uncomfortably close to marketing tactics like greenwashing - where companies exaggerate their commitment to sustainability to gain market advantage. This critical viewpoint underscores the complex challenges of maintaining authenticity in sustainable marketing, an issue that is also explored by Belz & Peattie (2012). They advocate for a transformative approach that reshapes marketing practices fundamentally, ensuring they not only support but drive economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social equity.

This shows a sustainable marketing perspective that calls for an overhaul of traditional marketing practices, and that stands in contrast to a more conservative marketing perspective. A more conservative viewpoint is that sustainability is an incremental addition to existing marketing strategies rather than a complete transformation. Kemper & Ballantine (2019) have articulated a spectrum of approaches within the field of sustainability marketing, distinguishing between three distinct strategy levels. The first level, Auxiliary Sustainability Marketing, involves minimal adjustments to meet legal standards and consumer expectations without deep integration into business strategies. The second level, Reformative Sustainability Marketing, advances beyond mere compliance, promoting substantial sustainable changes that are more deeply integrated into business processes. The most ambitious level, Transformative Sustainability Marketing, advocates for radical changes that redefine the core of business practices and consumer behavior to foster sustainability.

Each of these strategies represents a different depth of integration of sustainable principles into marketing practices, reflecting a broad spectrum from modest enhancements to profound transformations. These varied approaches also demonstrate the depth and diversity of thinking within the field, reflecting a range of strategic responses to the sustainability challenge. Researchers like Bolton (2022) echo this sentiment, emphasizing the need to embed social and environmental concerns into global marketing strategies to address broader sustainability challenges faced worldwide.

2.2. Building Trust

Building trust in sustainable marketing is important as it underpins the relationship between businesses and stakeholders, influencing both the perception and effectiveness of sustainable efforts. However, a pervasive trust deficit remains a significant challenge within the industry. Despite the increased prominence of sustainability in marketing strategies, skepticism about the authenticity of these efforts can diminish their impact (Dalal, 2020; Taoketao et al., 2018).

The phenomenon of greenwashing is particularly damaging to stakeholder trust. Netto et al. (2020) provide a detailed examination of how companies often project a greener image than is warranted by their actual environmental practices, misleading stakeholders with unsubstantiated claims. This deception not only erodes trust but also highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in sustainable marketing.

Drawing from studies by for example Zsigmondová et al. (2021) and Morgan & Hunt (1994), trust is foundational in fostering long-term relationships across various marketing contexts and is thereby essential for the success of business engagements. This broader understanding of trust can also be applied to sustainable marketing, where the trust dynamics are particularly pivotal. Chen (2010) deepens the understanding of how trust functions in this context by introducing the concept of green trust, which is described as essential for cultivating long-term consumer relationships and building green brand equity. According to Chen, when consumers trust a brand's environmental efforts, their satisfaction and loyalty increase, thereby

enhancing the brand's overall market standing. This relationship between green trust and consumer behavior underscores the importance of authenticity.

This discourse is extended by Woolverton & Dimitri (2010) who writes about the compatibility of environmental objectives with profit maximization. They too bring up authenticity by arguing that genuine sustainable efforts, when trusted by consumers, do not just comply with ethical standards but can also enhance a company's profitability. This connection suggests that effective green marketing strategies, which are transparent and verifiable, contribute significantly to a company's success.

Gabler et al. (2020) further support this view by showing how environmental and social orientations, when communicated transparently, positively impact company performance and build stakeholder trust. Their findings emphasize that transparency and accountability in conveying a company's sustainability efforts reassure customers, employees, and investors about the firm's dedication to sustainable practices.

2.3. Concluding the Theoretical Foundations

This study aims to synthesize industry-specific sustainable marketing practices with the objective of enhancing stakeholder trust in these initiatives. At its heart, it positions sustainable marketing as an integral component of the broader sustainability marketing framework, specifically focusing on the integration of sustainability within targeted marketing activities, as detailed by Belz & Peattie (2012). Furthermore, Kemper & Ballantine (2019) framework is utilized to trace a developmental trajectory from basic compliance at the Auxiliary Sustainability Marketing level to profound, transformative changes at the Transformative Sustainability Marketing level. This gradation not only illustrates the potential evolution of sustainable marketing practices from mere compliance to transformative actions but also aligns them with broader organizational sustainability goals.

The integration of these frameworks aims to underscore the pivotal role of enhancing stakeholder trust through sustainable marketing practices. As this review transitions to the subsequent analysis, it will delve deeper into the interplay between the strategic levels of sustainable marketing and the essential constructs of trust, transparency, accountability, and authenticity. These dimensions, as evidenced by previous literature, are important for fostering greater stakeholder trust and are expected to form the cornerstone of the upcoming theoretical and empirical explorations.

3. Research Approach

This study is prompted by the observation that, despite the increasing importance of sustainable marketing, it often faces significant skepticism among stakeholders (Chen, 2010; Netto et al., 2020). The literature to date has defined and conceptualized sustainable marketing, yet there remains a gap in understanding the practical applications, particularly the challenges it faces in building trust within specific industries. Addressing this gap, the current research investigates the practical aspects of sustainable marketing with a focus on trust-building measures tailored to one particular industrial context. A longitudinal approach is employed, as it allows for a thorough examination of the evolving trends and practices over time, a method endorsed by Weinreich (1996). This approach is important given the dynamic nature of evolving market needs and demands, as well as new global and national compliance standards relevant to sustainability. By extending the research timeline, the study can capture the continuous adaptations and innovations that characterize sustainable marketing practices in an industry.

3.1. Practice-Based Berspectives

The study follows a qualitative methodology inspired by the practice-based perspectives of Schatzki (2016) and Nicolini (2012), as well as draws on methodological insights from Skålén & Hackley (2011). This approach aids in capturing both the explicit and tacit elements of sustainable marketing as it unfolds within the industry, which Schatzki (2016) refers to as doings, sayings and understandings. The research is divided into three interlinked dimensions: firstly, the practical implementation of sustainable marketing, examining specific practices and their development; secondly, practitioners' interpretations and definitions of these practices; and thirdly, the

processes through which these practices contribute to building and enhancing trust among stakeholders. To comprehensively explore these dimensions, the study employs a combination of text analysis and semi-structured interviews. The combination of these methods is inspired by Schatzki's (2016) emphasis on the complexity of social practices, which suggests that capturing the intricate interplay between human actions, material artifacts, and shared understandings invites the use of multiple research methods to fully capture the multifaceted nature of these practices.

3.2. The Industry

The research setting is specifically focused on the Swedish textile service industry, classified under the Swedish Standard Industrial Classification (SNI) code 96011 and is an industrial segment of the broader Swedish textile industry. This industry was selected for several reasons: Firstly, the geographical location of Sweden offers distinct advantages. The nation is recognized globally as a leader in sustainability by entities such as **?**. This underscores Sweden's commitment to pioneering environmental policies and practices. While focusing on the Swedish industry might introduce a certain bias, particularly if one seeks general conclusions, it also provides valuable insights into specific sustainability practices employed by a select group of companies within a consistent geographical market. This approach aligns well with the detailed, practice-based perspective advocated by scholars such as Schatzki (2016) and Nicolini (2012).

Secondly, this industry has substantial market impact and is interconnected with various other industries (Eesc, 2010), which makes it a pivotal area for studying sustainable practices. Thirdly, environmental concerns are especially pertinent for textile service providers due to their reliance on natural resources and intensive chemical processes (Börjesson, 2017). Furthermore, the industry has been under long-standing legal scrutiny in Sweden, as seen with the 1969 Swedish Environmental Act, making it a fertile ground for observing sustainable marketing practices. In addition, and to provide a comprehensive backdrop, it is important to consider the entire textile industry's global and European context. Globally, the textile industry accounts for about 8-10% of climate-impacting emissions and is known for significant chemical pollution and water usage, along with poor labor rights (Abbate et al., 2024; Samant et al., 2024). In Europe, similar challenges are prevalent, alongside issues such as unhealthy working conditions and frequent accusations of greenwashing (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). These characteristics underscore the critical need for sustainable-oriented marketing strategies in the textile industry at large. For an overview of the industry case, see Appendix A.

3.3. Selection of Companies

The selection of companies for this study adhered to rigorously defined criteria. Initially, companies had to be categorized under SNI code 96011 as of 2012, which is the midpoint of the broader study period spanning 1996 to 2024. Eligibility was further narrowed to companies that maintained an active website in 2012, with subsequent qualitative reviews to verify that their business activities conformed to the specified SNI code description. Companies structured as non-limited entities were excluded due to the lack of accessible comparable data, such as public annual reports. Ultimately, 56 companies met these criteria and were included in the study. These companies were examined both retrospectively and prospectively from 1996 through 2020 using secondary data, and interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2024. The identification and ongoing tracking of these companies were facilitated through resources such as Retriever Business, Google, Statistics Sweden, and the archives of the National Library of Sweden. The selected companies varied in size according to EU standards (European Commission, n.d), with 42 classified as micro enterprises, 10 as small enterprises, 3 as medium enterprises, and 1 as a large enterprise. All companies and interview participants have been anonymized in the study for privacy and ethical reasons, with companies described by their size instead. This means that for example company names in the quotes have been replaced with /name/.

3.4. Text Data Collection

Text data, encompassing annual reports, printed materials, websites, and Facebook posts, were systematically collected from each company, and monitored

annually with an aim to capture the practices of doings, sayings and understandings (Schatzki, 2016). This data was sourced from both archived materials (including printed matters, annual reports, and websites) and current online platforms. A total of approximately 2600 text units were meticulously read and/or observed, of which 213 were identified as sustainable marketing texts based on the specific criteria outlined in Appendix B for the period spanning 1996 to 2020. However, data collection from websites spanned between 1997 and 2020 since the National library of Sweden's archive for websites was initiated first in 1997, the collection of annual reports ceased already in 2016 due to new regulations that mandated separate sustainability reports, altering the framework for this marketing communication channel. Consequently, data from before 2016 is not directly comparable to that from post-2016, leading to the discontinuation of data collection after the regulatory change. The available material was scanned annually from each company. This involved both digital scanning from respective databases or archives and manual scanning of texts. All marketing materials from the four aforementioned sources for each company, from 1996 through 2020, were systematically collected and analyzed.

To enhance the accuracy of trend analysis and ensure the integrity of data comparison, identical texts found in consecutive years — such as unchanged website content — were treated as a single text unit to prevent redundancy. This approach both improves consistency across the data, as well as enables a systematic analysis of the evolving sustainable practices within the industry. Further details of the selection and analytical processes, along with the criteria for including texts and text units, are provided in Table 1 as well as in Appendix A and Appendix B.

3.5. Interview Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 internal and external industry stakeholders across two distinct phases: from 2012 to 2014, and from 2019 to 2024. The aim was to capture the practices of doings, sayings and understandings (Schatzki, 2016) in and around the industry. These phases encapsulate shifts in sustainable marketing practices, thereby offering nuanced contextual insights. Notable shifts between the periods of 2012-2014 and 2019-2024 include increased consumer awareness of sustainability (e.g., Panda et al., 2020) and stricter environmental regulations (Ashrafi et al., 2020). These changes justify conducting new interviews after the first phase to capture potential developments.

Each interview was designed to access perspectives from participants actively engaged in sustainable marketing initiatives to increase the understanding of their perspectives, as well as the meanings they ascribe to sustainable marketing, the associated trust and additional aspects that they may find relevant. During both phases, all 56 companies involved in the study, as well as the Swedish industry association, were solicited per email for interviews. Despite a general hesitance among the majority of the approached parties, mainly due to time constraints or reservations about participating in a study, 22 interviews with internal stakeholders were successfully completed. These included interviews with 4 owners, 1 CEO, 12 marketing or sales managers, 2 sustainability managers, and 3 representatives from the industry association. These participants were specifically selected due to their direct involvement in sustainable marketing practices. Collectively, the interviewees represented the full spectrum of company sizes within the study, from micro to large enterprises.

Some participants were interviewed once, while others were interviewed twice during the study. The decision to interview certain individuals only once stemmed from changes in their professional roles; several interviewees had moved to different jobs by the time of the follow-up interviews. When this occurred, these individuals were replaced by new interviewees who held the same or similar positions within their respective organizations. This approach offered continuity in the perspectives gathered while accommodating the natural career progression of the participants. The scheduling of these interviews over multiple years — 2013 (6 interviews), 2019 (2 interviews), 2021 (4 interviews), 2023 (7 interviews), and 2024 (3 interviews) — allows for the observation of the evolving dynamics of sustainable practices as they adapted to changing market conditions and

regulatory developments.

In addition to interviews with industry representatives, the study incorporates 10 interviews with external stakeholders, whereof 5 semi-structured interviews in 2014 with customers of the Swedish textile service industry. These participants, chosen for their geographic location, represented, at the time, all hotels and the municipality in a town serviced by several textile suppliers. These interviews provided valuable supply chain perspectives, which can be valuable in an industry positioned in the middle with other organizations as customers. Furthermore, 5 interviews with industry experts and trade representatives, all related to the textile service industry, were conducted during 2012 (2 interviews), 2013 (1 interview), and 2014 (2 interviews). These sessions offered essential background information and supported the informed selection of companies and interviewees. As the study progressed, the interview focus was strategically shifted to concentrate solely on industry representatives. This decision was driven by the goal to explore internal industry dynamics and sustainability initiatives more deeply, areas identified from the secondary data as having undergone significant developments. Consequently, customers and external experts were not interviewed in later stages, enabling the research to focus on the evolving practices within the industry, thereby enhancing the study's depth and relevance in addressing its core objectives.

3.6. Process of Analysis

The data analysis utilized a recursive method inspired by Frostling-Henningsson (2017), incorporating coding, interpretation, and analysis within a structured protocol. While the process was primarily led by a single writer, it adopted a collaborative approach. Coding, interpretations, and analyses were actively discussed among a team and with external scholars, enriching the review process and ensuring a robust examination of the data. The analytical procedure involved an iterative cycle where the collected texts were thoroughly read, significant segments identified, and these segments were subsequently organized into themes based on foundational concepts such as when, how, what, and who. This thematization process enabled the uncovering of deeper structural elements within the data, which were then analyzed through a theoretical lens drawn from the literature review.

4. Sustainable Marketing: Industry-Specific

This study focuses on sustainable marketing practices in the Swedish textile service industry that supplies textiles and services like laundering and repairs to various organizations, ranging from factory uniforms to hotel linens and hospital attire. Despite its low profile, the EU recognized it as a growing sector in the end of the 2000s (Eesc, 2010), and it is deeply integrated into numerous supply chains since there is a wide range of industries in need of textile services. This study traces the development of sustainable marketing practices in the form of marketing texts produced in the industry from 1996 to 2020 and four types of sources: annual reports, websites, printed matters, Facebook posts. The study also includes 32 interviews conducted between 2012 and 2024.

4.1. Texts: Graduate Increase of Accountability, Transparency, and Authenticity

This empirical examination outlines the evolution of sustainable marketing in the Swedish textile service industry, focusing on environmental sustainability texts. The analysis highlights temporal developments through three identified chronological phases: Emergence, Spread, and Becoming standard, while also considering variations by company size and niche, and the marketing communication channels used. Over the study period, the inclusion of sustainable marketing reached its peak with 79% of companies featuring it on their websites, 38% incorporating it in their annual reports, 56% utilizing Facebook posts, and 90% of the archived printed materials including it. These figures reflect a mature stage following years of gradual development, from early, less convincing efforts to a phase with more information, and thereby also increased accountability, transparency and authenticity.

Emergence. The initial observation of sustainable marketing in the Swedish textile service industry dates to 1996 and primarily involves texts from large or medium sized companies. However, one small company also starts communicating its sustainable efforts,

Table I. Data Collection

Data collection method	Data	Data selection	Year(s)
Secondary text collection	213 unique sustainability marketing texts in accordance with the guide created in a pilot study.	Each company's sustainability marketing texts Ire traced individually and annually through annual reports, websites, Facebook pages and printed matters. On average 21 annual reports (1273 in total), 23 website reads (1264 in total), 0,3 (18 in total) Facebook pages (in total containing more than 500 posts), and 1 printed matter (56 in total) per company. Total: approximately 2600 text units.	1996-2020 Annual reports 1996-2016, Facebook 2012-2020, websites, and printed matter 1996-2020. Each year, company, and source type are search units.
Interviews Semi-structured Recorded	22 interviews with representatives from the industry working with marketing and sustainability, owners and marketing managers representing all four company sizes and various locations in Sweden.	Informed selection of companies that showcased relatively "more" sustainability marketing	2013 (6), 2019 (2), 2021 (4), 2023 (7), 2024 (3)
Interviews Semi-structured Recorded	5 interviews with customers to the Swedish textile service industry. All located in one town, Falun.	Informed selection of customers to firms that showcased relatively "more" sustainability marketing	2014 (5)
Interviews Semi-structured Recorded	5 interviews with industry experts/trade representatives related to the Swedish textile service industry. All located in one city, Stockholm.	Background information; aid with selection	2012 (2), 2013 (1), 2014 (2)

and it is from the start very active. It was, as one of the first company in Sweden, environmentally certified as early as in the 1990s. However, this period features the fewest examples of environmentally focused marketing texts, which were generally vague and lacked specific details. For instance, a medium-sized company's 1996 product leaflet vaguely described its environmental impact as 'as little as possible':

"In /name/ we put the environment high, and we take pride in handling our products in a gentle manner and the washing process is done with as little environmental impact as possible."

However, during this phase, most of the companies practicing sustainable marketing expressed ambitions to acquire eco-certifications, suggesting a planned strategy to build trust through increased accountability, validation, and transparency. Nonetheless, the marketing texts lacked clear details on the strategies for achieving these certifications and provided little insight into the companies' actual sustainable efforts, underscoring the overall lack of specificity and substance in their communication.

Spread. In the 2000s, sustainable marketing texts became more frequent and visible, with participation from micro, small, medium, and large firms. These texts were more substantive and detailed than those in the previous phase, prominently featuring eco-certifications and standards, indicating strategies to enhance trust.

Environmental content in annual reports began in 1996 and increased significantly in 1999, likely due to a new mandatory reporting directive. However, it peaked between 2001 and 2008, with up to 38% of companies including such content. During this phase, the annual reports often highlighted environmentally related certifications like ISO 14001, the Nordic Ecolabel, and FR2000. Other third-party acknowledgments, such as awards and honourable mentions by others, also became more common, further building trust. For example, a micro company's one-page website in 2007 mentioned an honourable mention received in 1996:

"Consideration of nature and humans. That is the core of our business. Our laundry process is in the smallest detail environmentally adapted. /Name/ received an honourable mention from the Environmental Protection Board in Borås municipality in 1996. An acknowledgment of our work."

Some texts also referenced eco-certifications held by suppliers rather than the companies themselves, indicating a 'bandwagon effect' where firms aimed to align with sustainability trends and validate claims through association, even without their own certifications.

Becoming standard. By 2020, 79% of industry websites featured sustainable marketing texts, indicating that sustainable marketing had become a standard expectation. Common trust strategies included certifications, honorable mentions, historical references, and personal commitment themes. Sustainable marketing was uniformly expressed on websites. Key terms like "environment" and "certified" were prevalent, often linked to sections like "Environment" or "About Me." Over a third of companies mentioned at least one eco-certification. During this period, 18 companies also opened Facebook pages and where one theme was sustainability, using posts to convey news and personal commitment. For example, one medium-sized company explained in a 2018 Facebook post their responsibility and dedication to environmental issues, linking it to their core business of caring for textiles:

"We often write about environmental issues on our blog, for the simple reason that it is close to our hearts. Like other companies, we have a responsibility to reduce our environmental impact as much as possible. A simple (and perhaps obvious?) way to reduce our environmental impact is to REPAIR the hospital garments instead of throwing them away."

This post indicates an attempt to demonstrate authenticity by portraying a genuine commitment, a theme similarly reflected in many texts from the later phases of the study.

4.2. Interviews: Meanings Ascribed to Sustainable Marketing and Trust

The second part of this empirical exploration focus on the meanings that stakeholders ascribe to sustainable marketing and more specifically, what meanings can be

associated with trust. Interviews were conducted with both internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders are interviewees directly involved in sustainable marketing practices within the companies or are closely associated with them, such as representatives from the industry association. The external stakeholders represent customer companies or are experts tied to the industry. The interviews were made in two phases, first between 2012 and 2014, then a second phase of interviews between 2019 and 2024, with the aim to see if the interviewees had assigned other meanings to sustainable marketing after. However, the external stakeholders were only interviewed in the first phase, while the internal stakeholders were interviewed in both phases, which means that the longitudinal perspective only regards the internal stakeholders.

First phase. In the first phase interviews, two focuses stand out: validating the sustainability efforts and skepticism about other parties' sustainability commitments. Interview data indicates that internal stakeholders attempt to validate their companies' authenticity in sustainability by highlighting their long-standing commitment to sustainable practices. They emphasize a strong historical track record and genuine interest in sustainability among employees and others. These points are often conveyed through personal memories and narratives within the company. One example is from an interview in 2013 with a marketing director of a large company that describes a memory from a company conference when he just joined the company and how the employees had identified sustainability as a competitive edge:

"It was actually like this that we would have a big conference just when I started here, and they asked me to oversee one of those days. […] I had gone back to my books and read about 'what makes your company unique?'. And this writer thought that one should ask the question 'If /name/ did not exist tomorrow, what would the market miss?'. And in such a discussion, you can be pretty blind and say something like 'they would miss our good service' […] So, in the work with the strategy, and not just marketing strategy, the questions 'How can we differentiate ourselves?', 'What are we doing well?' were brought up. And it may be that we

are not unique with it, but we are good at it, and maybe it is something we want to focus on. And the environment was one of the topics that we said 'ok, this is something we want to focus on, we think we are pretty good compared to the industry so therefore we want to focus on the environment'."

Another example when narration of the company's authenticity in regard to sustainability efforts is from an interview in 2013 with a CEO of a medium sized company that emphasize a genuine commitment of the owner family:

"They have family days where they discuss values and they are very focused on environmental footprints, its very value driven. […]They are doing far more than they communicate. They are doing sponsorship, sponsoring a lot of environmental activities, but they don't talk that much about it, they just give money and do a lot of things. But they don't want to end up in the yellow press."

The own authenticity is brought forward in every interview, but also in a careful way. For example, the marketing director that described the conference memory in an interview from 2013, he also critiqued the essence of sustainable marketing in the same interview:

"It is clear that people do a lot, but it is perhaps only planning that may never be implemented. That one can get a company to look much more environmentally friendly than it is. That is why I, about this environmental marketing … already there, I can, oh, oh. Should you really do it, should you not just talk about what you do? Already there, if you have a strategy for environmental marketing, it already feels like you, yes, that you would make greenwashing; how can we make this look better than it is?"

This leads to another focus of the interviews in the first interview phase, glimpses of a more general skepticism. One example is from an interview with an owner of a small sized company in 2013 and how he shows low trust for their customers' genuine commitment:

"Well, I'm going to be really provocative now, I actually think this with the environment is sometimes a little grandstanding when it comes to hotels and restau-

rants, especially on the hotel side. If we take this with the Nordic Ecolabel as an example, there are criteria put up for a laundry that you should have some limits to have the Nordic Eco certification, and that I entirely buy, absolutely. But a small hotel that has its own laundry room in the basement, that hotel has absolutely no demands on water or energy consumption. So, a hotel that chooses to do its own laundry, it may get the Nordic Ecolabel certification from a hotel perspective, while having its own laundry operation where they can spew out any amount of chemicals, water and energy and that doesn't matter."

Interviews with the external stakeholders in the first phase also shows how there is a pressure on the industry companies to be sustainable. The experts spoke about legal pressures on the industry, like allowed chemical uses. They also spoke about how standards and certificates are increasingly important, but also about how certificates and standards help them to trust suppliers' communicated sustainability work. The customers spoke about their own demands, which foremost seemed to be eco-certifications. On the question 'when you choose suppliers, what are the regular requirements regarding the environment?", the answer from a hotel director in 2014 is this:

"It is that those companies use eco-labeled products."

This finding indicates that certifications play a crucial role in establishing trust in sustainable marketing. This importance is also reflected in the interviews with internal stakeholders representing companies in the industry. A marketing director of a large company expressed their need for certifications as "super important" in an interview from 2013:

"We have many customers who also have various types of certifications where we then become part of their process. So, it is super important. We would not have been able to deliver to some customers without this ISO 14000."

Similarly, a sales manager of a small sized company stated in 2013 that their survival hinges on maintaining eco-certifications:

"Customers sometimes ask how environmentally

friendly our activities are, but it usually never leads to any real discussion. Customers are satisfied with our Ecolabel, and that we work according to ISO 14001, I think it feels reassuring for many customers [...] What I have noticed is that 14001 is mostly requested since many companies themselves follow that management system. It then becomes a minimum requirement. The Nordic Ecolabel works much the same way, namely that customers are interested if they themselves use the Nordic Ecolabel."

The interviewees also described how partnerships and associations amplified their sustainable marketing. For example, an owner of a small company described in 2013 how they collaborate with various partners, utilizing these associations to bolster relationships:

"Certification organizations, SP (National Testing) is frequently mentioning […] as an example, […] (via PR), Innocence (they have looked at the press releases so that it is right, they have a very interested contact person), The Energy Office in the municipality (the state is in there somehow). […] property leasing office, to collaborate on gas cars. Strong environmental profiles are interested. The company is a member of both the Swedish trade organization Laundry Association and the American TRSA. […] Suppliers don't talk about the environment, but they are pushing there too. If there is a choice, we take a supplier that is environmentally friendly. The Energy Office, […] for green transports, Biogas south (part of the Energy Office), The Gas association (where we are a member). Eco center south (the municipality is involved) where we attend meetings and there is a strategy to try to be included in such contexts."

The first-phase interviews highlight long-standing sustainability efforts, indicating genuine devotion. Employee and owner commitment is expressed, as well as cost benefits as a driver for sustainability. Trust is seemingly primarily built through certifications, which is a core theme in the interviews. Interestingly, several interviewed internal stakeholders mentioned that a small company is considered the most sustainable in the industry. This company is the company that achieved an environmental certification already in the 1990s, which is also mentioned above in the text

data section. There appears to be a consensus on this point, with many agreeing that this particular smaller company is driving sustainability development within the industry.

Second phase. In contrast to the first phase, the second phase of interviews shows a more sophisticated approach to the topic. The interviewees show more clearer and explicit focus how they have strategies to create and maintain trusted sustainable marketing through more authenticity. An example of this is found in an excerpt from an interview with a marketing manager of a small company in 2023:

"We prioritize honesty and transparency in our communication, ensuring that our sustainability efforts are not just marketing tactics, but are embedded in every aspect of our business. This approach has not only strengthened our brand reputation but has also resonated deeply with our customers who value ethical and sustainable practices."They also more explicitly emphasized that sustainability is part of the company's business strategy, which could be an indication of an authenticity narration. For example, one owner of a small company expressed himself like this in an interview from 2019:

"In our initial discussions years ago, sustainability was often a side note in our business strategy. However, now, it's clear that sustainability has become a cornerstone of how we operate and market ourselves. This shift is not just about staying relevant; it's about genuinely embracing sustainability as a core value."

Another marketing manager of a small company expressed something similar in an interview from 2023:

"As a marketing manager, I firmly believe that integrating sustainability into our business plan is not just a trend, but a fundamental shift in how we operate. We prioritize honesty and transparency in our communication, ensuring that our sustainability efforts are not just marketing tactics, but are embedded in every aspect of our business. This approach has not only strengthened our brand reputation but has also resonated deeply with our customers who value ethical and sustainable practices."

As the above quotes indicate, the interviewees in this phase all express how sustainable marketing involves building knowledge within their own organizations and for other stakeholders, they address ethical concerns like greenwashing and the importance of ensuring that their sustainable marketing is credible. There is an emphasis on the necessity of genuine sustainability work, avoiding exaggeration, and the importance of collaborations and alliances in sustainability efforts. This was to some extent seen also in the first phase interviews but is more clearly expressed in the second phase.

4.3. Beyond Compliance

Do these sustainable marketing practices revolve around compliance, or do they go beyond? While they involve reporting and adherence to laws, interviews reveal that customer interest drives these efforts, enabling a more sustainable supply chain. Larger companies, encompassing both large and medium sized companies, lead this market-driven movement, along with some small and medium-sized enterprises advancing sustainability beyond mere compliance.

Both datasets show an evolution towards more proactive and innovative environmental stewardship, driven primarily by large companies and a few smaller ones. Initially, some companies viewed environmental initiatives as regulatory burdens. For example, a micro-sized company owner described his transformation from reluctance to appreciation for green practices in a 2019 interview:

"In the beginning, we thought this environmental certification was difficult, but over time we learned to appreciate it. It is important for both quality and the environment. Our interest in the environment has grown, and it has influenced our personal lives as well."

This shift from compliance to deeper engagement is also exemplified by a large market leader advancing its practices through innovations, voluntary certifications, and long-term sustainability goals. Their products, like a highlighted towel dispenser and a hand dryer as alternatives to paper towels, offer sustainable alternatives. Their commitment is further demonstrated by certifications like ISO 14001:2004 and the

Nordic Ecolabel, which go beyond legal requirements. They focus on reducing environmental impact through energy-efficiency, water-saving, and eco-friendly transportation solutions. Sustainability goals are integrated into their long-term strategies, promoting textile recycling and a circular economy model.

This trend is also evident among smaller companies that, as a group, have made significant changes over time. However, one smaller company stands out; the one perceived by interviewed competitors as the most sustainable in the industry. This company, recognized for its radical approach, uses eco-friendly materials and processes, ensuring all products are made from recycled materials and can be fully recycled. In their sustainable marketing texts, they educate customers on the environmental benefits of their products, promoting sustainability and influencing customer behaviours.

They serve as a prime example of a company relatively more trusted for its accountability, transparency and authenticity, as reflected in interviews with competitors, as well as their environmental prizes and eco-certifications. This company has clearly worked on its sustainability for a long time, since the 1990s, holds several eco-certifications, and is frequently mentioned by others as particularly sustainable. No other company in this study has demonstrated such persistent sustainable marketing efforts, indicating a foundation for a seemingly more authentic sustainable reputation.

5. Discussion and Implications

Comparing the sustainable marketing trajectory in the Swedish textile service industry with Kemper & Ballantine (2019) framework, which includes Auxiliary, Reformative, and Transformative Sustainability Marketing levels, shows that the industry has followed a similar progression over time. A few, primarily large, enterprises began their sustainable marketing journey in the 1990s, typically starting at the Auxiliary level, where marketing texts often discussed minor adjustments or merely expressed environmental concern without showing significant changes and were often vague and lacking in detail. However, this approach is fragile. As Dalal (2020) suggests, scepticism can easily undermine efforts perceived

as superficial or mere box-ticking exercises rather than genuine commitments. Additionally, Netto et al. (2020) emphasize that misleading claims erode trust and suggest greater transparency and accountability as remedies. A notable exception in the this study is a small company reputed as the most sustainable in the industry, which made a substantial commitment from the outset in the 1990s by for example achieving ISO 14001 certification.

During the 2000s, sustainable marketing texts in the industry began to include more detailed information and certifications supporting sustainability claims. Several large, medium, and some smaller companies appear to have advanced to what Kemper & Ballantine (2019) term the Reformative Sustainability Marketing level. At this level, they moved beyond mere compliance to implement substantial sustainable changes integrated into their business processes, along with increased accountability and transparency through in-depth information and certifications validating their claims. This indicates that many companies may have recognized the strengths of sustainable marketing rooted in greater accountability and transparency, prompting them to shift their practices. Furthermore, interviewees from the first interview phase stated that their sustainability efforts were based on the values of employees or owners, indicating either a genuine commitment or a desire to portray themselves as genuinely committed. However, significant scepticism towards others was also evident in the interviews, emphasizing the need for companies to validate their sustainable statements. Certifications thus seems to play a crucial role in substantiating sustainable marketing on the levels of Auxiliary and Reformative Sustainability Marketing, as interviewees described primarily relying on third-party verifications to gauge the authenticity of a company's sustainable efforts.

In the 2010s, as evidenced by the sustainable marketing texts, more companies practiced sustainable marketing, but not all advanced beyond the Auxiliary or Reformative Sustainability Marketing levels. Smaller companies often remained at the compliance level, responding primarily to legal or basic customer requirements. However, large and medium-sized com-

panies could promote more substantial sustainable changes, and also seemingly integrate them into their overall business processes. Interviewees, both in the first and second interview phases, emphasized the importance of communicating only actual practices without exaggeration. The appropriateness of that aligns with existing theories. Chen (2010) describes how genuine efforts are recognized and trusted by customers, fulfilling ethical standards while boosting loyalty and market standing. Similarly, Woolverton & Dimitri (2010) discuss how authentic sustainable practices aligned with business objectives can enhance profitability.

However, in an era where most companies practice sustainable marketing with relative accountability and transparency through certifications and other validating actions, as seen in the text data from the 2010s, standing out and creating truly trusted sustainable marketing may require going the extra mile. As discussed by Baldassarre & Campo (2016), genuine sustainable commitment can be close to practices seen as greenwashing, so companies need to strengthen their authenticity to mitigate the risk of appearing inauthentic. As seen in the interviews, only one company is perceived as distinctly more sustainable. This company appears to have achieved what Kemper & Ballantine (2019) call the Transformative Sustainability Marketing level, which involves advocating for radical changes that redefine core business practices and consumer behaviours to foster sustainability. Instead of using sustainability as an added feature in traditional marketing, this company seems to have focused on becoming genuinely sustainable beyond legal requirements or customer demands, and then letting that commitment be reflected in their marketing. Strong authenticity, highlighted by several competitive company representatives, along with validating certifications that emphasize accountability and transparency, could be the key factor behind the company's strong reputation in sustainability. This small company's radical approach, which goes beyond compliance and stakeholder demands, can set it apart as an industry leader in sustainability. By doing so, they influence not only their own practices but also those of competitors, customers, and other

stakeholders.

Therefore, the answer to "How can trust in industry-specific sustainable marketing practices be increased?" aligns with previous research, which emphasizes accountability, transparency, and authenticity. However, this study also indicates that to strengthen their reputation for authenticity, companies can adopt a more radical approach by leading sustainable development and setting new sustainable standards within their industry, rather than merely reacting to customer demands and legal requirements.

5.1. Implications

This study offers new insights into the strategic development of sustainable marketing trust within an industry-specific context, impacting both theoretical understanding and practical application.

5.1.1. Theoretical Implications

The study traces the evolution of sustainable marketing in the Swedish textile service industry from the 1990s, highlighting a shift from compliance-driven efforts to more integrative strategies. This progression aligns with Kemper & Ballantine (2019) framework, moving through Auxiliary, Reformative, and Transformative levels. The findings illustrate how companies evolve from basic compliance to deeper strategic integration, driven by market and regulatory demands. This adds depth to current theory by detailing an industry-specific trajectory of sustainable marketing. Furthermore, the study indicates that advancing to higher levels — Reformative and Transformative — can strengthen trust by enhancing accountability, transparency, and authenticity in different ways. Additionally, the results suggest that companies can gain increased trust by adopting a proactive and radical approach to sustainability, exceeding stakeholder demands.

5.1.2. Practical Implications

Building trust in sustainable marketing within the Swedish textile service industry requires an authentic and evolving approach. Companies should engage in transparent communication with in-depth information and validate their efforts through certifications and standards to counter perceptions of greenwashing.

Moreover, taking a radical stance on sustainability, beyond mere compliance and stakeholder demands, can establish a company as a sustainable industry leader.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study's focus on the Swedish textile service industry limits its generalizability. The specific cultural, economic, and regulatory environment of Sweden may not apply to other contexts. Future research could expand to multiple industries and geographic locations to enable comparative analysis and validate the findings across different industrial contexts and regulatory conditions. Exploring sustainable marketing strategies in diverse industrial markets would provide a richer understanding of sector-specific responses to sustainability challenges. Additionally, examining the influence of global sustainability trends on local practices can offer a holistic view of the interplay between global pressures and local actions in sustainable marketing.

ORCID

Anna Nyquist
| https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6584-6256

References

Abbate, S., Centobelli, P., Cerchione, R., Nadeem, S.P., & Riccio, E. (2024). Sustainability trends and gaps in the textile, apparel and fashion industries. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, *26*(2), 2837-2864. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-022-02887-2

Adamkiewicz, J., Kochańska, E., Adamkiewicz, I., & Łukasik, R.M. (2022). Greenwashing and sustainable fashion industry. *Current Opinion in Green and Sustainable Chemistry*, *38*, 100710-100710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogsc.2022.100710

Ashrafi, M., Magnan, G.M., Adams, M., & Walker, T.R. (2020). Understanding the conceptual evolutionary path and theoretical underpinnings of corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability. *Sustainability*, *12*(3), 760-760. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12030760

Baldassarre, F., & Campo, R. (2016). Sustainability as a marketing tool: To be or to appear to be? *Business Horizons*, *59*(4), 421-429. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.03.005

Belz, F.M., & Peattie, K. (2012). Sustainability marketing: A global perspective John Wiley & Sons.

Bolton, R.N. (2022). The Convergence of Sustainability and Marketing: Transforming Marketing to Respond to a New World. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *30*(2), 107-112. https://doi.org/10.1177/18393349211005200

Börjesson, N. (2017). Toxic Textiles: Towards Responsibility in Complex Supply Chains.

Boström, M., & Klintman, M. (2011). Introduction: Green Consumerism, Green Labelling? In *Eco-Standards, Product Labelling and Green Consumerism* Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230584006_1

Brodie, R.J., Coviello, N.E., Brookes, R.W., & Little, V. (1997). Towards a paradigm shift in marketing? An examination of current marketing practices. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *13*(5), 383-406. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.1997.9964481

Chen, Y.S. (2010). The drivers of green brand equity: Green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *93*(2), 307-319. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0223-9

Dalal, B. (2020). The antecedents and consequences of CSR skepticism: An integrated framework. *Journal of Sustainable Marketing*, *1*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.51300/josm-2020-18

Eesc (2010), OPINION of the European Economic and Social Committee on Changes and prospects for the textile services sub-sector in Europe (own-initiative opinion) (CCMI/076). Retrieved from https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/textile-services-sub-sector

European Commission (2021), Screening of websites for 'greenwashing': half of green claims lack evidence. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_269

European Commission (n.d), SME definition. Retrieved from https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition_en]2562097:32414486 Federal Trade Commission, Green Guides. Retrieved from https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising/green-guides

Frostling-Henningsson, M. (2017). Kvalitativa metoder: introspektion, poesi, netnografi, collage och skuggning Lund: tudentlitteratur AB.

Gabler, C.B., Landers, V.M., & Richey, R.G. (2020). Benefits and challenges of developing an eco-social orientation:

implications for marketing practice. *European Journal of Marketing*, *55*(4), 1155-1176. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-05-2019-0400

Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (1989). No business is an island: The network concept of business strategy. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *5*(3), 187-200. https://doi.org/10.1016/0956-5221(89)90026-2

Hesse, A., & Rundau, J. (2023). Effects of Sustainable Marketing on Fast Fashion Shoppers' Perception and Behavioral Inertia. *Journal of Sustainable Marketing*, *4*(2), 265-285. https://doi.org/10.51300/jsm-2023-114

Kemper, J.A., & Ballantine, P.W. (2019). What do I mean by sustainability marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *35*(3-4), 277-309. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2019.1573845

Kinnunen, J., Saunila, M., Ukko, J., & Rantanen, H. (2022). Strategic sustainability in the construction industry: Impacts on sustainability performance and brand. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *368*, 133063. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.133063

Laszlo, C., & Zhexembayeva, N. (2017). *Embedded sustainability: The next big competitive advantage*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351278324

Lim, W.M. (2016). A blueprint for sustainability marketing: Defining its conceptual boundaries for progress. *Marketing Theory*, *16*(2), 232-249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593115609796

Liu, S., Kasturiratne, D., & Moizer, J. (2012). A hub-and-spoke model for multi-dimensional integration of green marketing and sustainable supply chain management. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *41*(4), 581-588. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2012.04.005

Marketing Accountability Standards Board (2024), Sustainable Marketing" Terms Defined for Marketing Dictionary. Retrieved from https://themasb.org/sustainable-marketing-terms-defined-for-marketing-dictionary/

Morgan, R.M., & Hunt, S.D. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(3), 20-38. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252308

Netto, S.V.D.F., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B., & Soares, G.R.D.L. (2020). Concepts and forms of greenwashing: A systematic review. *Environmental Sciences Europe*, *32*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3

Nicolini, D. (2012). *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction*. Oxford: OUP Oxford.

Nijhof, A., Wins, A., Argyrou, A., & Chevrollier, N. (2022). Sustainable market transformation: A refined framework for analyzing causal loops in transitions to sustainability. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, *42*, 352-361. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2022.01.010

Özturan, P., & Grinstein, A. (2022). Can the marketing department benefit from socially responsible marketing activities? The role of legitimacy and customers' interest in social responsibility. *European Journal of Marketing*, *56*(2), 400-441. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-09-2020-0670

Panda, T.K., Kumar, A., Jakhar, S., Luthra, S., Garza-Reyes, J.A., Kazancoglu, I., & Nayak, S.S. (2020). Social and environmental sustainability model on consumers' altruism, green purchase intention, green brand loyalty and evangelism. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *243*, 118575-118575. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118575

Pittman, M., & Read, G. (2024). Internal versus External Corporate Social Responsibility: Company Age and Size Moderate CSR Efficacy. *Journal of Sustainable Marketing*, (26), 4-29. https://doi.org/10.51300/jsm-2024-117

Pooja, T., Shirin, A., & Sujata, K. (2001). Sustainability Marketing: A Literature Review From. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, *6*(2s), 131-149. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137468

Pwc (2022), PwC's Global Investor Survey 2022: The ESG execution gap. Retrieved from https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/sustainability/publications/global-investor-survey.html]2562097:32414325 Robeco, Country sustainability index. Retrieved from https://www.robeco.com/en-int/sustainable-investing/expertise/most-sustainable-countries-in-the-world

Samant, L., Pavan, M., Goel, A., & Kaur, M. (2024). Impact of the Textile Industry on Global Climate Change. In *SDGs and Textiles* (pp. 11-26). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9856-2_2

Schatzki, T. (2016). Practice theory as flat ontology. *Practice theory and research*, 44-58. https://doi.org/10.4324/978131565690-12

Sharma, A., Iyer, G.R., Mehrotra, A., & Krishnan, R. (2010). Sustainability and business-to-business marketing: A framework and implications. Industrial Marketing Management. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *39*, 330-341. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2008.11.005

Skålén, P., & Hackley, C. (2011). Marketing-as-practice: Introduction to the special issue. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *27*(2), 189-195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2011.03.004

Taoketao, E., Feng, T., Song, Y., & Nie, Y. (2018). Does sustainability marketing strategy achieve payback profits? A signaling theory perspective. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *25*(6), 1039-

1049. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1518

Weinreich, N.K. (1996). A more perfect union: Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in social marketing research. *Social Marketing Quarterly, 3*(1), 53-58. https://doi.org/10.1177/152450049600300106

Woolverton, A., & Dimitri, C. (2010). Green marketing: Are environmental and social objectives compatible with profit maximization? *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems, 25*(2), 90-98. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1742170510000128

Zsigmondová, A., Zsigmond, T., & Machová, R. (2021). Theoretical Background to the Role of Trust in Marketing. *SHS Web of Conferences, 115*, 3019-3019. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202111503019

Appendix A. Overview of the Industry Case

- **Industry and classification:** Swedish textile service industry, under the SNI Code 96011 (Industrial and institutional textile and laundry service), in Sweden.
- **Population:** 56 companies
- **Selection criteria for the companies:**

  – Active as of 20121
  – Listed under SNI (Swedish Standard Industrial Classification) code 96011
  – Maintained an active website in 2012 with a content that matched the SNI code
  – Excluded non-limited companies

- **Data extracted:**

  – Secondary data types and quantities:

    * Annual Reports: 1,273 reports (1996-2016)
    * Websites: 1,264 unique website reads (1997-2020)
    * Printed Matter: 56 documents (1990-2020) (e.g., brochures, leaflets, magazines)
    * Facebook Posts: Over 500 posts (2011-2020)
    * Identified as sustainable marketing texts based on the 12 principles listed in Appendix B : 213

  – Interview data: Total number of interviews: 32

    * Internal Stakeholders: 22 interviews (phase 1: 2012-2014, phase 2: 2019-2024)
    * Roles: Owners, CEOs, marketing managers, sustainability managers
    * Geographic location: Different locations in Sweden
    * External Stakeholders: 10 interviews
    * Customers: 5 interviews in Falun (2014)
    * Experts: 5 interviews in Stockholm (2012-2014)

- **Data Analysis:**

  – *Coding*: Systematic identification of significant segments in texts following 12 principles detailed in Appendix B.
  – *Thematization*: Organization into themes based on foundational concepts (when, how, what, who)
  – *Analysis*: Iterative cycles of reading, identifying segments, organizing themes, and theoretical analysis
  – *Process*:

    * Organized by a single author
    * Collaborative discussions with a team and external scholars to enrich the review process

Appendix B. 12 Principles for Identifying Sustainability Marketing texts

1. **Source selection:** For identifying texts related to sustainability marketing with an environmental focus in the Swedish textile service industry, the following sources are scrutinized: websites, annual reports, printed materials, and Facebook pages. These are found through Google, the companies' own websites, the National library of Sweden (archived websites and printed materials), Retriever Business, and Facebook.
2. **Definition:** In this study, sustainability marketing texts in the chosen industry with an environmental focus are characterized as promotional content produced by the companies that pertains to environmental aspects.
3. **Visual and design elements:** The placement, design, imagery (including pictures, photos, illustrations), and colour schemes of a text will be observed and assessed to determine its qualification as a sustainability

marketing text with an environmental dimension.

4. **Keyword identification:** Texts containing any of the following terms will be categorized as sustainability marketing texts with an environmental focus: "environment", "environmental", "green", "water", "energy", "detergents", "ISO 14001", "waste", "recycling", "oil", "gas", "pellets", "purification", "permit", "obligation", "pollutants", "biological".

5. **Text unit criteria:** A unit of sustainability marketing text with an environmental dimension may range from a single word or phrase to a complete sentence, or a substantial text segment, but should not exceed one page (including web sub-page, printed page, social media post, etc.).

6. **Industry relevance:** Only text and symbols directly associated with companies in the industry, or their textile services, will be classified as sustainability marketing texts with an environmental focus for the purpose of this study.

7. **Temporal scope:** The analysis will encompass sustainability marketing texts with an environmental dimension from the year 1996 onwards, with each text unit being attributed to a specific year.

8. **Website data handling:** For website data, a unit of sustainability marketing text with an environmental dimension is considered to encompass the entire website.

9. **Handling non-functional website versions:** In instances where website versions are non-functional for certain years, they will be approximated based on the versions immediately preceding and following the non-functional period.

10. **Defining new website versions:** A new website version is identified by significant alterations that could potentially modify the interpretation of the sustainability marketing texts with an environmental focus present on that website.

11. **Shared texts analysis:** Sustainability marketing texts with an environmental dimension shared among companies in the industry, such as via Rikstvätt, will be accounted for once or multiple times based on the analytical perspective applied.

12. **Facebook content criteria:** For Facebook, only sustainability marketing texts with an environmental dimension that are directly written in a post will be considered for analysis, while links to external articles will be excluded.