Corporate Social Responsibility

The Act of Creating Awareness of CSR Activities for H&M

MASTER THESIS

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Abstract

Purpose:
The purpose of this master thesis is to examine H&M’s CSR communication in terms of strategy, content and communication channels in order to gain insight into how they communicate their CSR activities to customers in terms of creating awareness for H&M’s CSR activities.

Design/method/approach:
The thesis employs a case study approach in order to gather relevant data to use as findings. The data collecting methods used were interview, document analysis and questionnaire. The interview was with Christina Jørgensen who is Fashion PR Manager at H&M Denmark. The documents used were CSR communication from H&M and the questionnaire was conducted via an online provider in order to survey customers from H&M.

Theory:
The theories used in this thesis are first a general theory of stakeholder management and communication. This theoretical background leads into the three stakeholder communication strategies presented by Morsing and Schultz; stakeholder information strategy, stakeholder response strategy and stakeholder involvement strategy. Next are the inside-out approach, the expert CSR communication process and the endorsed CSR communication process. The theory section also consists of a content theory for communicating CSR, theory about communication channels to use for this purpose and also what makes for effective CSR communication.

Findings:
The findings from the interview with Christina Jørgensen show that H&M uses different strategies when communicating their CSR activities to customers but the main strategy is the stakeholder information strategy. There are also examples that can be interpreted as the stakeholder response strategy and the stakeholder involvement strategy but these examples are few and far apart. The findings from the document analysis show that H&M mainly uses the subtle way of communicating their CSR activities as represented by the expert CSR communication process and the endorsed CSR communication process. The findings from the document analysis also show that H&M uses the communication channels normally associated with these CSR communication processes such as sustainability reports, information on corporate websites and press releases. The findings from the questionnaire show that the respondents think that CSR engagement is important in general, that they notice/pay attention to CSR communicating in their everyday lives and also that they find the treatment of the employees and the environment the most important CSR issues. The findings from the questionnaire also show that even though the respondents notice/pay attention to CSR communication they do not seek out this information on their own.

Conclusions:
The findings from the interview, the document analysis and the questionnaire show indicate that H&M uses a subtle way of communicating CSR meaning communicating their activities via subtle channels such as CSR reports and through their corporate website. When customers, as mentioned in the different theories, do not actively seek CSR information on their own the subtle way of communicating CSR activities, as via CSR
reports and corporate websites, then there is a low chance of creating awareness about CSR activities for customers as the customers will not see the information.

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is certainly becoming a hot topic. From sustainable business practices to decreasing CO2 emission in production to green products, the concept of doing good is taking up a lot of time in the business world. But CSR is a very difficult thing to work with. Not only it is a concept that is hard to define but communicating the organisation’s CSR activities can be very tricky. Being seen as someone bragging about the good deeds done is never a good thing. But on the other hand, the good deeds should not go unnoticed because of the benefits a company can receive for being a good corporate citizen. It is a balancing act, and the key question here is; how can a company create more awareness about their CSR activities?

Earlier studies have shown that the recommended way of communicating CSR activities is very discrete and subtle, such as through corporate websites and in annual CSR reports. Customers do not have a positive view on very direct and active CSR communication, such as advertisement in magazines and on TV. The paradox is that these studies show that customers think that it is very important for a company to be associated with being socially responsible but they do not deem it appropriate to communicate CSR activities, some even discourage any kind of CSR communication; Morsing et al call this the Catch 22 of communicating CSR (2008). Another paradox is presented by Du et al which states that “while stakeholders claim they want to know about the good deeds of the companies they interact with, they can easily become leery of extrinsic motives when companies promote their CSR efforts” (2010: 17). Customers are unlikely to seek out CSR information about a company on their own (Morsing and Schultz 2006, Schmeltz 2011 and Du et al 2010). Therefore it is very hard to keep the customers informed and increase awareness about corporate CSR activities. More recent studies have shown that younger customers are more positive towards a more active form of CSR communication, such as advertisement in magazines and TV-advertisement (Schmeltz 2011). There are a lot of values and benefits associated with CSR. It can help a company differentiate itself from competitors, increase profits and create a positive brand image for customers and current and future employees. But “the values of working with CSR in a corporate context is, however, limited if the engagement is not communicated to relevant stakeholder groups” (Schmeltz 2011: 30). But, of course, there are no benefits without there also being difficulties and limitations with corporate social responsibility. One of the major difficulties with CSR is how to communicate an organisation’s CSR activities to stakeholders, in this thesis, the customers in terms of creating awareness about the organisations CSR. As Schmeltz states: “one of the main challenges of communicating CSR is that of creating
awareness, i.e. how can companies increase the likelihood of the audience both noticing, processing and accepting CSR communication” (2011, 36).

Empirically this thesis is based on material about CSR activities found on H&M’s corporate website, an interview with an employee from H&M in Denmark and a customer questionnaire in order to examine customer knowledge of H&M’s CSR activities in order to find out if H&M’s current CSR communication strategy is generating increased awareness about their CSR activities. H&M was chosen because they have a strong CSR profile, they were just made one of the most ethical companies in the world and they want to make their customers “more aware of all the work we do to be more sustainable” (H&M – Interview: Helena Helmersson - Head of Sustainability).

Problem questions:

1. Which CSR communication strategies does H&M used? – and why?
2. Which communication channels does H&M use in terms of communicating their CSR activities to customers? And are they communicating these activities in a way that creates awareness with the customers?
3. Which kind of content should be included in the CSR communication when communicating with customers? – and does H&M use the recommended content?
4. How do the customers perceive H&M in terms of their CSR engagement? Do they find CSR activities important? And how much do they know about H&M’s CSR activities?

Thesis statement:
Based on a case study method which includes an interview, document analysis and a customer questionnaire, the purpose of this master thesis is to examine H&M’s CSR communication in terms of strategy, content and communication channels in order to gain insight into how they communicate their CSR activities to customers in terms of creating awareness for H&M’s CSR activities.

Structure
The thesis is divided into seven sections. The first section is an introduction containing motivation for the thesis. The second section is the theoretical part where the term Corporate Social Responsibility is explained. This section also contains theoretical background for general stakeholder management and communication, an overview of different CSR communication strategies and approaches, content used
when communicating CSR and also theories about which communication channels to use when communicating CSR. The third section is the empirical part which starts with an introduction to H&M and an overview of their CSR activities and also an indication of where they are in terms of stages of corporate citizenship. The third section contains a theoretical walk-through of the methods used for data collecting. Here case study, interviews, document analysis and questionnaires together with the design and procedure of these data collecting methods will be explained. The fifth section contains the findings from the interview, document analysis and the questionnaire and how the findings relate to the theories presented in the theoretical part of this thesis. The sixth section is a conclusion to the findings from the three data collecting methods and the final, seventh section, is a discussion containing thoughts on H&M could communicate their CSR activities in accordance with the findings presented in this thesis.
Theoretical part

What is corporate social responsibility?

Corporate social responsibility is a term in which there is no agreed upon definition and there are many different ways to see CSR. Gupta and Sharma describe CSR as “the way a company achieves a balance or integration of economic, environmental and social imperatives while at the same time addressing shareholder and stakeholder expectations” and that it is about meeting current needs while ensuring the needs of future generations (2009: 397). Others have taken the stand that the only responsibility of a business is to make a profit for owners and shareholders while following the rules and laws (Ihlen et al 2011: 8), others again say that "socially responsible business practices are where the corporation adopts and conducts discretionary business practices and investments that support social causes to improve community well-being and protect the environment" (Kotler and Lee 2005, 208). Some take on the definition that companies earn their license to conduct business from civil society and must therefore “act in accordance with accepted social norms” in order to prosper and survive. This means that businesses must always be on top of what is accepted in society and “attempt to avoid or rectify the harmful effects of its activities (Ihlen et al 2011: 7). Some even feel that if CSR is about making a profit it is not a moral decision and is therefore an economic strategy (Ihlen et al 2011: 8). As state by Ihlen et al “while CSR at a minimum implies that businesses have responsibilities beyond profit-seeking, the notion is still ambiguous. There is no dominant paradigm of CSR and no commonly agreed upon definition” (2011: 7).

The definition standpoint taken in this thesis is that corporate social responsibility “means valuing the interdependent relationship that exist among businesses, their stakeholder groups, the economic system, and the communities within which they exist” (Werther and Chandler 2011, 7). CSR is about taking responsibility for the actions of the organisation in terms of economic, legal, ethical and discretionary actions. It is about giving back and doing something good for the community in which the organisation operates, helping the environment and the people that are impacted by the corporation, on a long term basis. As Werther and Chandler describe it, CSR is “both a means and an end. An integral element of the firm’s strategy – the way the firm goes about delivering its products or services to markets (means) – it is also a way of maintaining the legitimacy of its actions in a larger society by bringing stakeholder concerns to the foreground (end)” (2011, 7). CSR are “practices that improve the workplace and benefit society in ways that go above and beyond what companies are legally required to do” (Vogel 2005: 2). As Vogel puts it “CSR reflects both the strengths and the shortcomings of market capitalism” (2005: 3). On the one hand, CSR promotes social and environmental innovation, adaptation of new policies, strategies and the development
of new products, creates social benefits and “boots profits by reducing costs, creating new markets, or improving employee morale” (Vogel 2005: 3). On the other hand, “because CSR is voluntary and market-driven, companies will engage in CSR only to the extent that it makes business sense for them do to so” (Vogel 2005: 4).

There are many reasons to why a company should choose to conduct itself more socially responsible. The financial benefits have been associated with decreased operating costs, monetary incentives from regulatory agencies, and increased employee productivity and retention. Marketing benefits are numerous as well, with the potential for increasing community goodwill, creating brand preference, building brand positioning, improving product quality, and increasing corporate respect. And, as with other social initiatives, these activities also provide opportunities to build relationships with external partners such as regulatory agencies, suppliers, and non-profit organizations (Kotler and Lee 2005, 2011). The non-financial benefits of corporate social responsibility are that it can generate “favourable stakeholder attitudes and better support behaviours, but also, over the long run, build corporate image, strengthen stakeholder-company relationships, and enhance stakeholders’ advocacy behaviour” (Du et al 2010: 8).

Strategies

General stakeholder management and communication theory

Stakeholder management as we know it today stems from socio-economic theory which suggests that accountability extends to other groups, besides shareholders, who are considered to be important to an organisation (Cornelissen 2011: 40). This is a change from the earlier notion of the neo-classical economic theory which suggests that an organisation’s purpose is to make a profit for shareholders and themselves and only by doing that does an organisation contribute to society (Cornelissen 2011: 40). Corporate social responsibility initiatives are a direct outcome of the shift from the neo-classical economic theory to the socio-economic theory. “The drive for CSR came with the recognition of the need for business to deliver wider societal value beyond shareholder and market value alone (Cornelissen 2011: 44). This new approach to stakeholders is illustrated by the Stakeholder Model of Strategic Management pictured below (figure 1 below). As the model shows, an organisation has a variety of stakeholders ranging from customers to political groups that all affect and is affected by the organisation. This model “recognizes the mutual dependencies between organizations and various stakeholder groups” and that the different stakeholder groups and the organisation affect each other. A stakeholder is defined as a “group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s purpose and objectives” (Cornelissen 2011:
Definition by Edward Freeman). Freeman identified three types of stakes; equity stakes which are held by those who have some kind of ownership in the organisation, economic or market stakes which are held by those who have a economic interest in the organisation and last, influencer stakes held by those “who have interests as consumer advocates, environmental groups, trade organizations and government agencies” (Cornelissen 2011: 43).

As mentioned earlier there are many stakeholder groups connected to an organisation and managing all the different stakeholders is a difficult task considering that they all want different things. It is therefore important to identify the key stakeholders, ones the organisation cannot survive without, and keep them satisfied. Ideally, an organisation should communicate with all their different stakeholders who all need different kinds of information from the organisation. For this thesis, the focus is on the customers, so this is the only stakeholder group that will be included. Customers mainly need information about products and services which is mostly communicated through advertisements, sales promotions and in-store communication (Cornelissen 2011: 44). In the Stakeholder Salience model (figure 2 below), which is a model used to identify and classify stakeholders on the attributes power, legitimacy and urgency, customers are categorised as dominant stakeholders which are part of the expectant stakeholder group. These are stakeholders that have two of the three attributes. According to this model, customers have both “powerful and legitimate claim, giving them a strong influence on the organization” and they need to be communicated with on a regular basis (Cornelissen 2011: 47).
When communicating with stakeholders there are three strategies one can use; informational strategy, persuasive strategy and dialogue strategy. An informational strategy is a very simple strategy used to inform someone about something. A persuasive strategy is used in order to try to change attitude, knowledge and behaviour of stakeholders and a dialogue strategy is used for mutual exchange of ideas and opinions between the organisation and its stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011: 49-50). The informational strategy is categorised as a one-way symmetrical model of communication. With this strategy there is no listening to stakeholders, no feedback from e.g. customers and also no attempt to change the stakeholders mind about the organisation. The aim with using this strategy is only to inform the stakeholder about the organisation in the most objective way possible. This is generally done via press releases, newsletters and reports on the company website (Cornelissen 2011: 49). The persuasive strategy is categorised as a two-way asymmetrical communication model where the organisation tries to change the attitudes of the stakeholders through campaigns, meetings and discussions in order to create a more favourable image of
the organisation (Cornelissen 2011: 49-50). The model is categorised as asymmetrical because the organisation is favoured in the communication from the organisation, meaning that “the organization does not change as a result of communicating with its stakeholders; instead, it only attempts to change the stakeholders’ attitudes and behaviours” (Cornelissen 2011: 51). The dialogue strategy is categorised as a two-way symmetrical model because it “consists of dialogue rather than monologue”; meaning that the communication flows between the organisation and its stakeholders as “the goal is to exchange views and or reach mutual understanding between both parties” (Cornelissen 2011: 51). As explained by Cornelissen, the “dialogue strategy involves active consultation of stakeholders and incorporation of important stakeholders into the organisations’ decision-making (2011: 50).

**Stakeholder information, response and involvement strategies**

Morsing and Schultz created three CSR communication strategies for communicating with stakeholders. These three strategies are based on three of the four models of public relations presented by Grunig and Hunt; Public information model, two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model. These three models corresponds with the stakeholder communication strategies presented above by Cornelissen (informational, persuasive and dialogue).

The first CSR communication strategy presented by Morsing and Schultz is the stakeholder information strategy. Like the informational strategy from Cornelissen and the public information model from Grunig and Hunt, this strategy in one-way communication from the organisation to the stakeholders and should be kept as objective as possible (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 326-327). This information is communicated to the stakeholders via different channels such as the media, press releases and in brochures and magazines (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 327). In this strategy there is no other feedback from the stakeholders other than showing support by showing loyalty, purchasing products or services or praising the organisation for their good deeds, it is therefore must important that the organisation communicates their CSR activities to the stakeholders in order to ensure positive support from them (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 327).

The second CSR communication strategy is the stakeholder response strategy. Like the persuasive strategy and the two-way asymmetrical model from respectively Cornelissen and Grunig and Hunt, this strategy aims to change the public’s attitude and behaviour. This strategy does require feedback from the stakeholders in terms of mostly opinion polls and market surveys in order to find out where the company has improved its CSR efforts and where there is still work to be done (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 327). Even though this strategy is modelled after the two-way asymmetrical communication model from Grunig and
Hunt, Morsing and Schultz explain that their view is that the stakeholder response strategy is mainly one-sided sender-oriented because “the company has the sole intention of convincing its stakeholders of its attractiveness meaning that stakeholders are perceived as being influential but are only passively responding to the organisation’s initiatives (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 327).

The last strategy is the stakeholder involvement strategy. Similar to the dialogue strategy from Cornelissen and the two-way symmetrical model from Grunig and Hunt, this communication strategy assumes a dialogue strategy between the organisation and its stakeholders. In this strategy the focus is on building and maintaining a relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders meaning that the organisation both influence and is influenced by the stakeholders, changing their CSR activities if needed. Morsing and Schultz state that “while informing and surveying is necessary, it is not sufficient. Stakeholders need to be involved in order to develop and promote positive support as well as for the company to understand and concurrently adapt to their concerns, i.e. to develop its CSR initiatives” (2006: 328).

**Inside-out approach, expert and endorsed CSR communication processes**

The CSR communication theory presented by Morsing et al suggests using “the inside-out approach” to CSR management and a two part communication strategy they label the “expert CSR communication process” and the “endorsed CSR communication process” (2008: 105).

The inside-out approach consists of firstly ensuring employee commitment before communicating the organisations CSR engagements to external stakeholders and secondly the organisation should communicate the CSR activities that are related to treatment of the employees because it is what the respondents in the Reputation Institute survey deem the most important CSR issue (Morsing et al 2008: 102). This is recommended because employees need to take ownership of the CSR issue in order for CSR to gain organisational support and also if CSR is just a top manager commitment the communication is likely to be perceived as untrustworthy. To sum up, the inside-out approach can be described as an approach where “an organizational anchoring of CSR activities is a precondition for trustworthy CSR communication, and this implies active involvement of employees in the CSR activities themselves” (Morsing et al 2008: 103).

In the expert CSR communication process, an organisation directs its CSR communication towards groups of CSR experts e.g. politicians, the media, investors and critical interests groups, so called “elite readers of corporate CSR messages” (Morsing et al 2008: 105). Their study show that there is an expectation from the public that companies engage in CSR activities but they do not want the companies to communicate their activities “too ‘loud’” (Morsing et al 2008: 108). Morsing et al suggest using the expert
CSR communication strategy because CSR communication is generally expressed through facts, figures and statistics from the company that are not easy to understand for people who are not knowledgeable about CSR (2008: 106). The communication channels used in the expert CSR communication process are websites, CSR reports, internal personnel magazines and in face-to-face meeting with stakeholders (Morsing et al 2008: 106) and this is confirmed by the two companies represented in the study. According to Morsing et al, this also confirms the findings from Reputation Institute that “a relative high percentage of the Danish public encourage little or no communication on CSR issues from the companies themselves” (2008: 107).

In the endorsed CSR communication process CSR communication is conducted through a third party. As Morsing et al put it, “endorsed CSR communication activities are perceived as key to avoid appearing as a self-complacent and self-serving organization in the eyes of the general public and customers in Denmark” (2008: 107). This relates back to the findings from Reputation Institute that shows that Danes are more reluctant in welcoming CSR into corporate communication (Morsing et al 2008: 101). The case studies done by Morsing et al show that the two Danish companies use employees and the media as their thirds party communication channels. This refers back to the inside-out approach to CSR management presented earlier by using the employees as a kind of CSR ambassador. Interestingly, both companies in the study agree that customers do not read corporate CSR communication but will base their assessment of corporate reputation from opinions that other stakeholders have about a certain company (Morsing et al 2008: 107).

In this two part communication process, the company relies on the CSR expert stakeholders to “generate and disseminate a favourable image of the company” (Morsing et al 2008: 108) to the general public and customers. The two processes are closely linked and the company must take into account the values that the general public and customers have in order for the CSR communication to have any effect on them.

As mentioned earlier, the preferred way for many stakeholders to receive information about CSR engagements is through non-financial reports, also called CSR reports or sustainability reports. These reports consist of objective and factual CSR data from the organisation. “They are produced to inform and convince public audiences about corporate legitimacy and, as such, they are framed within a one-way communication perspective” (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 333). According to the finding from Morsing and Schultz, non-financial reports can seem self-absorbed because managers are proud of their accomplishments and want to communicate them to stakeholders without realising that “stakeholders may be uninterested in the information presented, and more importantly, that other stakeholders may not find
it appropriate for companies to publish information on how good they are” (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 333). In order to avoid this they suggest close collaboration with stakeholders to make sure the information presented in the CSR reports are relevant to as many stakeholders as possible. They also suggest what they have labelled “pro-active endorsement”. This method often consists of listing the partners the organisation interacts with but organisations can also take it further and invite “stakeholders to critically raise CSR concerns in public in collaboration with the company” (Morsing and Schultz 2006: 334).

Content

There are several factors that play a part in communicating CSR to stakeholders. Companies today are “faced with demands from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders for greater accountability, responsibility, and transparency about their activities (Waddock and Googins 2011: 23). It is the question of communicating these demands to stakeholders that are vast and difficult for companies to handle as “communicating about CSR often raises skepticism about the organization rather than achieving its intended aim of illustrating its contributions to society” (Waddock and Googins 2011: 24). One thing that is a very important factor in the CSR communications paradox is the lack of trust in what organisations are communicating; “because of this lack of trust, the more a company touts its corporate responsibility overtly and publicly, the less likelihood there is that it will be believed by many important stakeholders” (Waddock and Googins 2011: 25). This means that because of this distrust “companies need to approach the communication of corporate responsibility with as much care and attention as they approach any other management task – or perhaps even more” (Waddock and Googins 2011: 26). And because there has been many examples of greenwashing and CSR communication being just a public relations exercise this has created sceptic and even cynics about if business can actually be good. This means that companies have to work hard in order to communicate their CSR as effectively as possible. Of course that is easier said than done, as trust differ from country to country and also industry to industry. When dealing with this communication paradox, Waddock and Googins state two important challenges. The first in developing trust with the various stakeholders and the other is ensuring that the communication is based on authentic values and beliefs as well as these values and belief being practices within the company (2011: 27).

According to Morsing et al “The difficulty is in how to make it known, and acknowledged by stakeholders, that the company is dedicated to a path of social responsibility, and further, to what extent and how the company deliberately should communicate it” (2008: 98). Their research of CSR communication is based on data from Denmark, a survey from Reputation Institute and two case studies from two Danish companies,
and shows that Danish citizens have a “high regard for those companies associated with social responsibility” but they “encourage companies either not to communicate about their social responsibility or to communicate in a less conspicuous way” (Morsing et al 2008: 102). When asked about if companies should communicate their corporate citizenship 33% answered ‘yes, publicise through corporate advertising and public releases’, 45% answered ‘yes, minimal releases such as annual reports and on websites’ and 21% answered ‘no, should not publicise’ (Morsing et al 2008: 103 figure 4). This shows the so called ‘catch 22’ of CSR communication that is present. It is difficult for a company to communicate their CSR engagements when the public is so divided on the question of how to communicate CSR. The study also shows that Danes perceive social causes differently and put more importance on some rather than other. When asked what the most essential CSR engagement was 45% answered ‘the treatment of employees’ and 23% answered ‘treatment of the environment, while social causes like ‘the local community’ and donating money to charity was not deemed important (Morsing et al 2008: 101).

A more recent study of communicating CSR activities to customers by Schmeltz wanted to test “the prevailing assumption within the limited field of CSR communication that companies should apply a very subtle, implicit and sometimes even endorsed way of communicating CSR” (2011: 30). The view in this study is that if customers indeed are becoming more sophisticated and more aware of CSR than seen before, then the customers should expect a different style and approach to CSR communication from the companies (Schmeltz 2011: 30). Schmeltz state that customers have been overlooked by the corporate and academic world in terms CSR research because the focus has been more on investors, business partners and the government (2011: 31). Her study is based on a survey conducted within the age group 18-30 and proposes the idea that consumers have moved past the expectation that companies are engaged in CSR out of empathy or compassion to also take into account more self-serving motives to why companies engage in CSR activities. She explains that the reason for choosing this particular age group is that this group of consumers is “predicted to be largest and at the same time the most complex and influential group of consumers” (Schmeltz 2011: 31). The survey conducted by Schmeltz was divided into different themes; awareness, importance, relevance, credibility and rhetorical strategies (2011: 37). In relation to the awareness/importance the study showed that the respondents want more CSR information from companies than what they are currently receiving but at the same time, the respondents are not willing to seek out CSR information on their own (Schmeltz 2011: 39). Another finding in relation to the awareness/importance theme was the fact that even thought the respondents claim that CSR is important they do not notice it in their daily lives (Schmeltz 2011: 40). The survey also shows that responsibility towards employees is still the most important CSR engagement, followed by responsibility towards the environment (Schmeltz 2011: 40). One of the most important and interesting findings was that 43,3% of the
respondents answered Completely disagree/disagree to the statement ‘I become sceptical when a company informs about its CSR – it is only doing it to gain more profits’ (Schmeltz 2011: 43 table VIII). This shows that there has been a change in the view of CSR communication in the public. This also means that a company should communicate their CSR activities more actively and not be afraid of being misunderstood or accused of bragging or green-washing; if they communicate their CSR activities in a clear and factual way.

According to Du et al the key challenges with CSR communication are creating awareness and minimising stakeholder scepticism (2010, 9). Their research into this topic shows that CSR awareness among both internal and external stakeholders is typically low, making it “a key stumbling block in the company’s quest to reap strategic benefits from its CSR activities (Du et al 2010, 9). It also showed that there is a growing tolerance to CSR messages that have a mix of intrinsic (acting out of general concern) and extrinsic (wanting to increase profits) information among consumers. “They are increasing willing to adopt a ‘win-win’ perspective, believing that CSR initiatives can and should serve both the society and the bottom lines of business” (Du et al 2010, 10). This means that even though companies spent a lot of time and money developing CSR profiles, they are not doing a good job in communicating the efforts to stakeholders. Therefore, in order to minimise scepticism and create increased awareness about CSR initiatives among stakeholders, a company should communicate why and how the CSR efforts benefit both the society and the business. As Du et al mention, most CSR communication is focused on the company’s involvement indifferent social causes. They present four topics a company can emphasise in its CSR communication in order to combat scepticism and raise awareness; CSR commitment, CSR impact, CSR motives and CSR fit. 

CSR commitment focuses on the various ways in which a company contributes to a cause, meaning the amount of input, the durability of the commitment and the consistency of the input. These include donating funds or resources and employee volunteering (2010: 11). With CSR impact, the focus is on “the societal impact, or the actual benefits that have accrued (or will accrue) to the target audience of a social cause” (2010: 11), meaning the outcome or output of a company’s commitment to a cause. CSR motives are focused on why a company has chosen to support a specific cause. Here a company can chose to communicate intrinsic, extrinsic motives or a mixture of the two. Du et al suggest in their research that a mixed communication style will decrease consumer scepticism because “when CSR attributions were mixed, respondents’ reactions to CSR were actually more positive than when attributes were purely intrinsic or extrinsic” (Du et al 2010, 10). CSR fit refers to “the perceived congruence between a social issue and the company’s business” (Du et al 2010: 12). A company should always take time to explain why the specific cause was chosen because the fit might not be as obvious to the consumers. Both CSR commitment
and CSR impacts are communication tools that are linked to a factual style of communicating CSR efforts. Communicating CSR commitment and impact is beneficial to the companies because when communicating CSR efforts one should avoid bragging and focus on facts which, as the study by Schmeltz have shown, are something customers react positively towards.

**Channels**

There are many ways to communicate a company’s CSR efforts; annual CSR reports, corporate websites, press releases, magazines, TV commercials, product packaging and so on, there are many opportunities. These options are all internal means of communication or what Du et al refers to as “company-controlled CSR communication channels” (2010: 13). There are also external communication channels, such as the media, customers and blogs, but these cannot, for the most part, be controlled by the company. Du et al mention at there is a “trade-off between the controllability and credibility of CSR communication” (2010: 13), meaning that stakeholders are more likely to perceive less controlled CSR communication as more credible than corporate-controlled CSR communication and they generally respond more positively to information about CSR efforts from a non-corporate source. That being said, the less controlled communication channels are more powerful when it comes to creating awareness and credibility about CSR efforts. The general public, such as consumers, do not often seek CSR information about a company, even with regards to issues they consider to be important. They often become aware of CSR activities through independent channels such as TV or press, word of mouth, marketing campaigns or advertisements (Du et al 2010: 16). It is therefore important that a company not only use their corporate websites and CSR reports to inform about their CSR activities if they want to reach the general public.

The findings from the Schmeltz study show a change in terms of the fact that customers do want more CSR information, but the twist is that her study shows that they are not willing to actively seek out CSR information themselves. But the most interesting finding from this survey is that the respondents would like to see CSR information on packaging and in magazines mainly, but CSR information on web-sites, sponsorships and in advertisements is also rated positively (Schmeltz 2011: 41). This contradicts the earlier recommendations about communicating CSR in a very subtle way as presented by Morsing et al. These findings mean that it is up to the companies to communicate their CSR activities to the customers via channels where they are going to see it. Another finding contrasting the theory from Morsing et al is that Schmeltz found that there is no longer scepticism towards companies engaging in CSR communication. The respondents express that “CSR increases corporate credibility, and that the longer companies have been engaging in CSR, the more credible they are perceived” (2011: 42). Schmeltz concludes her study by stating
that a much more direct approach to communicating CSR is needed instead of the subtle, indirect approach that is currently recommended from earlier studies and that companies should communicate competence-oriented values because this is how the respondents from the survey evaluate a company’s CSR efforts (2011: 44-45).

Something that has transformed corporate communication and how an organisation can communicate their CSR activities to customers is the internet. “Global Internet access means that companies are in an ever-brightening spotlight from which it is virtually impossible to escape, and where stakeholders of all stripes can and do seek – and obtain – information” (Waddock and Googins 2011: 33). This transformation relates to who provides corporate communication and how the stakeholders obtain the information (Capriotti 2011: 360). “The internet has transformed communications from a sender-based model to a receiver-based model”; meaning that the stakeholders can now participate in the communication by seeking information or by creating and communicating information themselves (Capriotti 2011: 360). Just as with non-internet based communication methods, the communication possibilities though the internet are vast. Via the internet, stakeholders can not only download CSR reports, search online newspapers and read articles from NGO’s, but they can also comment or criticize CSR communication from organisations and share their opinions about an organisation’s CSR engagements on many different channels. This illustrates Du et al’s statement that “The power of consumer word of mouth has been greatly magnified given the popularity and vast reach of Internet communication media such as blogs, chat rooms and social media sites” (2010: 14). Consumers can actively participate in the communication about organisations and their products and services and their opinion is one of the main sources of information and reference for new potential consumers (Capriotti 2011: 367). This means, as Capriotti points out, that consumers are becoming prosumers, meaning people are still consumers but they are also producers of information, opinions and recommendations about products, services, activities and corporate behaviour that have an effect on both the organisation and other consumers (2011:367-368). This also means that “stakeholders are no longer receiving information about CSR activities just from the company, but from a range of sources, not all of which the company can control” (Capriotti 2011: 360-361). This is both an advantage and a disadvantage for an organisation as the uncontrolled CSR information about them can be either beneficial or hurt the organisation depending on what is being said. This means, as suggested by Capriotti, “that organizations must define a clear and proactive social media communication strategy to offer updated trustworthy information in real time about the company and its CSR activities” (2011: 361). One of the real benefits on communicating CSR information though the internet is that the organisation can cut out the middle-man, such as media houses, magazines ect, and communicate directly to their stakeholders in a
quick, easy and controlled manner, controlled meaning that the message can reach the stakeholder in the original form.

It is suggested by Capriotti that CSR communication via social media requires the use of the stakeholder involvement strategy presented by Morsing and Schultz (Capriotti 2011: 362). This is because social media was made to be an interactive, two-way communication tool where the organisation and its stakeholders can have a dialogue and exchange of ideas; “blogs and social media can change the way people and organizations communicate and engage in relationships, facilitating the bidirectional and symmetrical communication among organizations and stakeholders which allows a balanced relationship through the exchange of information and the negotiation in conditions of equilibrated power” (Capriotti 2011: 359). But, as presented by Capriotti, organisations have not changed their communication habits and are these new media technologies as a means of presenting old media in a new format, such as e-CSR reports, e-mail newsletters etc, meaning that “different Internet technologies are mainly being used as a communication tool to disseminate CSR information but not to engage in dialogue with stakeholders about CSR activities and corporate social behavior” (Capriotti 2011: 365-366). This is also true for stakeholder, they are not that active on social media even though they have the tools “that facilitate dialogue and participation” (Capriotti 2011: 369). It is estimated that only 1% of users on social platforms are these so called creators of content on social media sites where as about 9% of users comment or share already existing content and all of 90% of social media user just look or read content (Capriotti 2011: 369). This makes the stakeholder involvement strategy proposed by Morsing and Schultz hard to implement as it seem like either organisations or the stakeholders are ready.

**What makes for effective CSR communication?**

According to Du et al there are two groups of factors that play a part in the effectiveness of CSR communication; these are company-specific factors and stakeholder-specific factors. Company-specific factors relate to corporate reputation and CSR positioning and stakeholder-specific factors relate to stakeholder type, issue support and social value orientation.

The first company-specific factor is corporate reputation which “encompasses different dimensions, such as product quality, innovation, investment value, people management and CSR” (Du et al 2010: 14). The existing reputation that a company has plays a large part in how effective their CSR communication will be. Companies that already have a reputation for being good corporate citizens will experience positive effects from their CSR communication, and the opposite will be the case for companies with a poor reputation. The second corporate-specific factor is CSR positioning which refers to how a company position
itself from other in the same category by their CSR efforts. If customers perceive a brand as being the social responsible leader in their category stakeholders are more likely to pay attention to and believe in the CSR information (Du et al 2010: 15).

The first stakeholder-specific factor is stakeholder type which Du et al divide into two main groups; the opinion-leaders containing business press, investors and NGO, and the general public containing consumers and local communities (2010: 15). The last group, the general public, is what will be focused on here because they are most interesting in relation to this case. The second factor is issue support which refers to the stakeholder support of a certain issue. Issues that reflect stakeholder needs and values are more likely to “break the media clutter and be more effective” (Du et al 2010: 16). It is very important that companies communicate and explain the importance of the issues they support because awareness and knowledge about an issue can lead to greater support (Du et al 2010: 16). The last factor is social value orientation which refers to the stakeholder’s motivation to process CSR information; meaning the outcome for oneself and others. Du et al divides this factor into three categories: prosocial (wanting to maximise the outcome for themselves and others), individualists (wanting to maximise their own outcome with no regard for others) and competitors (wanting to maximise their own outcome and have advantage over others) (2010: 16-17). It is expected that prosocials have a greater support for companies’ CSR activities in general because of their social value orientation and therefore they are more motivated to process a company’s CSR communication than individual with either an individualist or competitor social value orientation (Du et al 2010: 17).

**Stages of Corporate Citizenship**

The model for stages of corporate citizenship was developed by Mirvis and Googins. They consider “the development of citizenship as a stage-by-stage process where a combination of internal capabilities applied to environmental challenges propels development forward in a more or less "normal" or normative logic” (2006: 106). As show in the figure below, the model is divided into 5 stages, all representing a different profile of citizenship.
Elementary state
At this stage citizenship is underdeveloped and there is very little awareness of what citizenship is about, most likely because of top-managers that are uninterested or indifferent about corporate citizenship. The focus of these companies is just to comply with laws, regulations and industry standards (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 109).

Engaged stage
“At this second stage, engagement, top management often "wakes up" to what is involved and adopts a new outlook on their company’s role in society” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 110). This often involves drafting policies that “call on the firm to ‘exceed the law’ with respect to employment and health, safety, and environmental practices” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 110).

Innovative stage
Two things happen at this stage. The company embraces a more comprehensive concept of citizenship and it deepens its involvement because top-managers take on a stewardship role (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 112). What also happens at this stage is that companies “begin to monitor their social and environmental performance and issue public reports on the results” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 113).
Integrated stage

“Companies at this stage take serious steps to drive citizenship into their lines of business. In operational terms, this involves setting targets, establishing key performance indicators, and monitoring performance through balanced scorecards” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 115). Companies at this stage of citizenship have more openness and their citizenship in integrated in the core values of the company, e.g. in a code of conduct (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 115).

Transforming stage

At this stage companies aspire to “change the game of business. Their strategic intent is to create new markets by fusing their citizenship and business agenda” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 117). It is common for companies in the transforming stage to work together with other businesses and NGO’s to address the social and environmental problems they want to change (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 118).

Conclusion of the theoretical part

From the theories it seems that the act of communicating CSR engagements is a difficult task with a wide range of sometimes conflicting options. As shown in the different theories presented earlier, customers expect CSR engagement from companies but they do not want the companies to communicate these activities in a direct, explicit way. Findings from other studies show that even though customers request more CSR communication they are not willing to actively seek out this information (Schmeltz 2011). And also, even though customers deem CSR important but they do not notice it is their everyday life (Schmeltz 2011: 40). Another paradox presented in the different theories is that of language style in the CSR communication. Morsing et al state that CSR activities should be communicated via the “expert communication process” because CSR information generally is expressed through facts, figures and statistics from the company that are not easy to understand for people who do not have pre-existing knowledge about CSR (2008: 106). But findings from the Schmeltz study show that respondents “favour CSR communication employing a factual rather than an impressionistic writing style”: 72.5% of the respondents liked or really liked the more factual and committing statement exampled in the survey (2011: 41). This could mean that customers and external stakeholders in general are becoming much more knowledgeable and interesting in CSR activities and engagements within companies and that they deem the factual language style must more credible and trustworthy than a non-factual and impressionistic language style.

So far in the theories presented here, we have seen that the indirect approach to customer CSR
communication has been favoured but according to other studies, such as Schmeltz and Du et al, customers are becoming more sophisticated when it comes to CSR and therefore they require a more direct and actively communicated information of CSR initiatives.

What does the mentioned theory tell us about communicating CSR information to customers?

1. What we know from general stakeholder management theory is that customers are dominant stakeholders who need to be communicated with on a regular basis.
2. We know from general communication that when creating awareness one should employ a one-way symmetrical informational strategy.
3. From Morsing and Schultz we know that informing and surveying is not sufficient when communicating CSR to customers, there needs to be an involvement of customers in order to develop positive support for CSR activities.
4. From Morsing et al we know that companies should use an inside-out approach along with the expert CSR communication process and the endorsed CSR communication process in order to lessen scepticism amongst customers.
5. As for the content we know from Du et al and Schmeltz that factual content is preferred and that stakeholders react positively to content with a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes.
6. From Du et al we also know that a company can focus on CSR commitment, fit, impact and motives when communicating CSR to stakeholders.
7. As for CSR communication channels the opportunities are many; CSR reports, corporate websites, press releases, magazines, TV-advertisement, packaging, social media and news media, just to name a few.

A newer approach to communicating CSR to customers would be to:

1. Communicate CSR activities to customers in a much more direct way in order for an organisation to gain customer awareness about CSR activities, because as mentioned by Du et al and Schmeltz, customers are unwilling or unlikely to seek out CSR information on their own.
2. Use a variety to communication channels or focus on one or two channels that are highly visible to customers, as mentioned by Du et al. and Capriotti this could e.g. be social media channels such as Facebook, as most companies already have a corporate Facebook page setup and they can reach a lot of people through here. By using social media channels the organisation can cut out the middle man such as traditional news media, and communicate their CSR activities directly to the customers without gatekeepers interfering with the message.
3. Involve the customers in the development of CSR activities and the causes and issues to support because as Du et al state activities that are important to stakeholders are more likely to break through the communication clutter.

4. Continue to communicate intrinsic and extrinsic attributes and communicate in a factual manner in general. As Schmeltz states the organisation should focus on ability rather than morality when communicating CSR initiatives, as respondents to her survey stated that they are not sceptical about CSR communication.

As a concluding notion by Waddock and Googins “no matter which function is delivering the message or engaging the stakeholder group, what is important, however, is that the message that is being communicated is consistent, integrated deeply with the company’s business practices, and based on authentic values and the actual strategy of the firm” (2011: 37).
Empirical part

About H&M and CSR values and activities

In 1947 Erling Persson opened the first store, Hennes (an all women’s clothing store) in Västerås Sweden. In 1968 Persson buys Mauritz Widforss and Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) was born, now selling clothes to men, women and children. In 1976 H&M opened its first store outside Scandinavia, namely in London and there are now more than 3200 stores in 53 countries with about 116.000 employees.

H&M’s business concept is to bring “fashion and quality at the best price” to their customers (H&M – Our Business Concept). Fashion of course meaning supplying the customers with the latest fashion trends, quality meaning “durable, well made, functional, safe and free from harmful chemicals” (H&M – Quality is Key) and best price meaning the lowest price possible. But H&M also wants to be “the more sustainable choice” (H&M – Our Business Concept). H&M has seven CSR commitments; provide fashion for conscious customers, choose and reward responsible partners, be ethical, be climate smart, reduce/reuse/recycle, use natural resources responsibly and lastly strengthen communities (H&M – Our Seven Commitments). In order to fulfil these commitments, H&M has developed plans for each of the commitments, plans they call Conscious Actions. H&M states that “design, quality and sustainability are not a question of price: we should always offer inspiring fashion with unbeatable value for money” (H&M – Our Business Concept). By this H&M is combating the notion that sustainable fashion is expensive and something not everyone can afford to consider when purchasing affordable clothes. Helena Helmersson how is Head of Sustainability at H&M states: "I think it is important to bring our customers along with us on this journey. We need to make them more aware of all the work we do to be more sustainable. Fashion should be fun and we want our customers to be able to rely on us taking our responsibility seriously. We want to inspire them to adapt their own behaviour too; for example, by lowering the temperature at which they wash their clothes. I hope that giving our sustainability programme a name, H&M Conscious, will make it easier to engage with our customers on these issues and help them to make more sustainable choices" (H&M – Interview: Helene Helmersson, Head of Sustainability)

In 2011 H&M launched the first Conscious Collection, a collection made with sustainable materials such as organic cotton, recycled cotton and recycled polyester. This year’s Conscious Collection, launched in April, had a basic and an exclusive collection. The exclusive collection was made in collaboration with the sustainable fashion and design think-tank EVER Manifesto. For this collection H&M introduced something new and very exclusive, organic leather made from Sweden organic cows and organic silk made from
organically grown mulberry trees (H&M – Conscious and Conscious Exclusive). H&M also runs a non-profit fund, H&M Conscious Foundation, which was created in connection to H&M’s 60th anniversary in 2007. It is a philanthropic fund aimed at making a positive influence on political issues and making the life better for the people living in countries where H&M has their production factories (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1).

**Stage of citizenship at H&M**

From the theory about the different stages of citizenship presented by Mirvis and Googins it can be said that H&M is in a place between the integrative stage and the transformative stage.

As mentioned earlier, companies in the integrative stage have taken great steps to integrate citizenship into their lines of business, meaning “setting targets, establishing key performance indicators, and monitoring performance through balanced scorecards” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 115). H&M shows this through their Conscious Actions which, as mentioned above, are their plans to fulfill their seven commitments; provide fashion for conscious customers, choose and reward responsible partners, be ethical, be climate smart, reduce/reuse/recycle, use natural resources responsibly and lastly strengthen communities (H&M – Our Seven Commitments). H&M’s business concept is “fashion and quality at the best price” and as stated by Helena Helmersson in an interview with Fashionect.com “sustainability should be completely integrated into that” (Gyben 2011). This indicates that sustainability is something that H&M is incorporating into every part of the company. Another characteristic of a company in the integrative stage is that the company is more open with their citizenship, both in terms of the good they do, but also in terms of the things they need to work on. H&M states: “We are committed to transparent reporting on our sustainability performance” (H&M – Conscious Actions Sustainability Reports) and they show this by making their sustainability reports accessible to everyone via their corporate website. Here stakeholders from all groups and other interested can download sustainability reports from as far back as 2002. The most important characteristic about companies in the integrative stage is that, for the most part, their premise for citizenship efforts are in the core values of the companies (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 115).

The characteristics of a company in the transformative stage are “visible, visionary leaders”, they are “deeply troubled by social and environmental conditions in the world and motivated by a higher sense of corporate purpose” and they partner with other “businesses, community groups, and NGOs to address problems, reach new markets, and develop local economies” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 118). H&M might
not have the visible, visionary leader, yet, but Helena Helmersson, H&M’s Head of Sustainability, is in some cases the front figure for H&M’s CSR activities. She presented this year’s sustainability report in a live-streamed press conference and she was again this year one of the key speakers at the Copenhagen Fashion Summit, where H&M is also a sponsor. Another characteristic of a company in the transforming stage is that their stakeholder relationships are represented by multi-organization alliance (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 108 figure 1). H&M partner with many different organisations for their different causes. In an interview for just-style.com Helena Helmersson states that “collaboration and having multi-stakeholder initiatives in very, very important. We have collaborated a lot in the industry but we could do more” (Russell 2014). In their fight to empower women which is one of three causes in the Conscious Foundation (H&M – Strengthening Women), H&M has partnered with CARE which is a humanitarian organisation with focus on working alongside poor women in order to help them and their families escape poverty (CARE – About Us). H&M has also partnered with UNICEF on multiple occasions since 2004, such as with their All For Children collection which is a special clothing collection for children where 25% of the sales price is donated to UNICEF (H&M – All For Children). H&M also partner with UNICEF in their Conscious Foundation’s Flagship Programme to help educate children (H&M – Education). Another partnership that H&M has is with WaterAid which they started working with in 2002 (WaterAid – H&M). They have partnered in both the clothing collection H&M For Water an “exclusive swimwear/fashion collection from which 25% of the proceeds are donated to WaterAid” (WaterAid – H&M) and in the Conscious Foundation’s Flagship Programme to deliver “washing facilities, separate child friendly toilets for girls and boys and promotion programs for improved hygiene practices including menstrual hygiene” (H&M – Clean Water).

What also characterises a company in the transforming stage if corporate citizenship is that their CEO’s are generally “deeply troubled by social and environmental conditions in the world and motivated by a higher sense of corporate purpose” (Mirvis and Googins 2006: 118). This is shown in an interview with H&M’s CEO Karl-Johan Persson for www.theguardian.com. Here he states that in order to continue to grow they need to consider the planet’s boundaries, that the resources that are needed must be shared between today’s and future generations and that H&M is already “setting the direction so that we play our part in ensuring that there will be enough clean water to everyone in the future to come” (The Guardian - 7 questions on sustainability with H&M CEO Karl-Johan Persson).

Something that indicates that H&M is ahead of the pack, with is also a characteristic of a company in the transforming stage, is that not only did the 2013 Conscious Collection win the Elle Style Awards CSR award this year (Lawaetz 2014) but H&M was also named the most ethical company in the world by the Ethisphere Institute which is an independent research centre in corporate ethics and governance (H&M -
H&M named as a 2014 World’s Most Ethical Company). The scores for this are generated from five categories: ethics and compliance program, reputation, leadership and innovation, governance, corporate citizenship and responsibility and culture of ethics (H&M - H&M named as a 2014 World’s Most Ethical Company). It is the fourth time H&M has been named the world’s most ethical company showing that H&M really is a leader when it comes to CSR. Another commitment that shows that H&M are ahead of the pack and even game changers when it comes to CSR and corporate citizenship is that fact that H&M wants to change the lives of the workers in the garment industry. As Karl-Johan Persson states; H&M’s vision is “that all textile workers should be able to live on their wage (...) Now we have taken this to another level and launched our Fair Living Wage roadmap, making an important contribution towards fair living wages in the textile industry” (The Guardian - 7 questions on sustainability with H&M CEO Karl-Johan Persson). With this Fair Living Wage roadmap H&M hopes that others in the industry will follow their example and join the campaign. This shows that H&M is taking an active part in changing the industry which in they operate and the fact that they are encouraging others in the industry to do the same shows that they are visionaries in their field.
Method

Case study
For this thesis the method used is a case study because it allows for the use of different methods of data collecting to explore the same phenomenon. This is preferred here because the question of creating awareness of CSR activities is a complex and somewhat under-developed theme that there is a need to look at different sources of information to gain insight into this question. The unique strength of the case study method is the ability to deal with a wide range of evidence such as documents, interviews, articles, observations and even quantitative methods (Yin 2003: 8).

As explained by Robert Yin “case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (2003: 1). A case study is used to investigate different real-life events such as individuals, organisational and managerial processes and international relations (Yin 2003: 2). According to Yin, there are at least five different applications for conducting a case study. The first application is to “explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (Yin 2003: 15). The second is “to describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Yin 2003: 15). Third application is to illustrate certain topics in a descriptive mode. The fourth application is to use a case study to explore those situations where there is to clear, single outcome. And lastly, the fifth application is a meta-evaluation (Yin 2003: 15).

There are four different designs when it comes to case studies: the single-case design, the single-case embedded design, the multiple-case design and the multiple-case embedded design. Firstly one must decide whether to choose a single or multiple-case design. The rationales for conducting a single-case study is when it represents a critical case, an extreme or unique case, a representative or typical case, a revelatory case or a longitudinal case (Yin 2003: 41-42). A case study can also have more than one unit of analysis. If that is the case then it is called a multiple-case study. This form of case study requires extensive resources and time because of the multiple units there are within this kind of case study. According to Yin, conducting a multiple-case study is like that of doing multiple experiments; it is about replicating the experiments in order to predict similar or contrasting results (2003: 47). As shown in figure 3 below both the single-case study and the multiple-case study can have either a holistic or embedded design depending on if there are one or more subunits to analyse. With a multiple-case study the “study may consist of multiple holistic cases or of multiple embedded cases (Yin 2003: 52).
As for choosing a holistic or embedded design for the case study, if the case study has more than one unit of analysis it is an embedded case study one should conduct. This means that a single case might have subunits that need to be given attention (Yin 2003: 42). In contrast, if there is only one unit to be analysed e.g. one program or department, then a holistic approach to the case study would be used. This means that the holistic case study “design is advantageous when no logical subunits can be identifies or when the relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic nature” (Yin 2003: 45). A disadvantage with the holistic design is that “the entire nature of the case study may shift (...) during the course of study” if the evidence addresses different research questions than what was initially the case study orientation (Yin 2003: 45). An embedded design has the advantage of focusing the case study inquiry because of the subunits of the analysis. One of the main disadvantages of conducting a case study with an embedded
design is “when the case study focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis” (Yin 2003: 45).

The six most common sources of evidence used for a case study are, according to Yin, documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations and physical artefacts (2003: 85). One can chose to use only one of the sources, even though this is not recommended for a case study (Yin 2003: 97), but also a mixture of all the sources but as Yin states; “not all sources will be relevant for all case studies” (2003: 96) Therefore one should consider carefully which data collecting methods there are suitable for the case study conducted. And also, as mentioned earlier, the major strength of the case study method is the use of multiple sources of evidence therefore is would now be recommended to only use one source of data when conducting a case study as there are other methods one can use. As stated by Yin; “the use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues” (2003: 98).

As for analysing the results from the data collecting there are three strategies one can use. The first is relying on the theoretical propositions that lead to the case study as they would have shaped the “data collection plan and therefore would have given priorities to the relevant analytic strategies” (Yin 2003: 112). The prepositions from the theory will help to focus the attention on some data and ignore other data. The second analytical strategy is to think about rival explanations which “tries to define and test rival explanations” (Yin 2003: 112). This strategy is related to the first strategy in the way that this strategy most likely also contains a theoretical proposition but of the rival theory. The third and last strategy is developing a case description which is a general analytic strategy that consists of developing a “framework for organizing the case study (Yin 2003: 114). As mentioned by Yin, this strategy is the less preferred of the tree strategies and “serves as an alternative when you are having difficulty making either of the other approaches work” (2003: 114).

Design and procedure
The case study conducted for this thesis is a single-case study focusing on H&M: namely their CSR communication. To get a rounded view of both how they strategise their CSR communication and how the customers perceive this communication the chosen methods of data collecting are an interview, a document analysis and a questionnaire. These data collecting method were the most relevant for this study because they all give individual information to the case that can be used separately but also the combination of the data will provide a rounded view of the issues. The interview will provide a background view into the CSR communication strategies and the thoughts behind the different strategies used at H&M.
The document analysis will be a source of additional background data in order to illustrate and explain the different CSR communication strategies and approaches not only illustrated in the theoretical section but also by the information collected from the interview. Lastly, the questionnaire data will illustrate how the general public, mostly H&M customers, perceived CSR communication in general and also H&M and their CSR communication. Theoretical groundwork of each method along with the design and procedure of the individual data collecting methods will be presented in the next sections.

About interviews

As stated by Bailey, there are both advantages and disadvantages to conducting an interview. On the one hand an interview is flexible, there is a high response rate, one can observe non-verbal behaviours, the interviewer can record spontaneous answers and the questions can have greater complexity (Bailey 1994: 174). On the other hand the costs of doing an interview is high, it is time consuming, there is no opportunities to consult records, there is less anonymity and there is less standardised wording with the questions (Bailey 1994: 175).

According to Yin, one of the most important sources of information in case study is the interview (Yin 2003: 89). He describes the interviews used in case studies as “guided conversations” rather than structured queries” (Yin 2003: 89). In an interview, the interviewer has to job: one is to follow the line of inquiry and two is to ask the actual questions in an unbiased manner (Yin 2003: 89-90). The most common interviews used in the case study are interviews where the questions asked are open-ended because you want the respondent(s) to give very detailed answers to the questions and also their opinion on things or their insight into the matter (Yin 2003: 90). A second type of interviews are the more focused kinds which also consists of open-ended questions but here the interviewer is more likely to follow “a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol” in contrast to having an unstructured conversation (Yin 2003: 90). These kinds of interviews are mostly used when the interviewer have established certain facts that needs to be confirmed (Yin 2003: 90). A third kind of interview consists of more structured questions more in line with a formal survey. Here, the interview follows “the sampling procedures and the instruments used in regular surveys, and it would subsequently be analyzed in a similar manner” (Yin 2003: 91). Hunt and McHale mention four ways to structure an interview. The first being describes as “a fixed series of questions that are unaltered”, the second as “a fixed series of questions with prompts that enable the interviewer to obtain more detailed answers”, the third as “a series of issues that the interviewer wants to address but which can be addressed in any order, depending of the flow of conversation” and lastly, the
fourth which is described as “an open-ended interview with no protocol” (Hunt McHale 2007: 1416). Commonly, interviews are done face-to-face with only an interviewer and a respondent but there is also the possibility to do a focus group interview with more respondents or doing an interview over the phone (Hunt McHale 2007: 1416).

Here, an e-mail interview was used to interview the respondent. Some of the advantages of conducting an e-mail interview is that the costs are very low as one does not need travelling, purchasing recording equipment or transcribing costs (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1416). Another advantage of doing this kind of interview is that it is possible to interview people from all over the world, the only requirement is that they have an e-mail address (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1416). A third advantage is that the respondent has time to reflect on the questions asked. This means that the reflection time “enables deeper processing of information and a more complete review of the issues that are being discussed” (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1416). Fourth, the respondents might write something in the e-mailed interview that they would not say face-to-face with an interviewer and fifth, with an e-mail interview it is possible to interview multiple people at the same time which enables data to be collected more quickly (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1416-1417). A disadvantage of conduction e-mail interview is that the interviewer misses non-verbal communication from the respondent because the interview is not conducted face-to-face (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1418). Another disadvantage is that conducting an e-mail interview is impersonal which also relates to the fact that the interview is not conducted face-to-face (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1418).

**Design and procedure**

There were two interviews conducted to this case study. The first one was an e-mail interview with Christina Jørgensen who is Fashion PR Manager at H&M Denmark. I contacted her via her Instagram where I follow her, just to ask if she was willing to answer some questions or if she could forward my request to someone who could. Luckily she agreed and gave me her e-mail address. The second interview was also an e-mail interview, this time with Morten Kondrup who works in the press and communications department at H&M Denmark. The e-mail interview landed in his mail box, forwarded by Christina Jørgensen, because he was better equip to answer the questions. Both interviews were structured with open-ended questions and were conducted in Danish. As the questions answered by Morten Kondrup was mainly to gain some factual information about H&M that I was not able to find answers to on H&M’s corporate website, I will not go into a detailed description about the construction and procedure of this interview. It was actually only the first three questions that I could not find answers to on H&M’s corporate website (Interview with
Morten Kondrup – Appendix 2) and the fourth questions was asked in hopes that he had more information about this than what was found on the website (Interview with Morten Kondrup – Appendix 2).

The interview conducted with Christina Jørgensen was what Hunt and McHale would describe as “fixed series of question that are unaltered” (Hunt and McHale 2007: 1416) meaning that the interview was very structured, more like a formal survey, as mentioned by Yin (Yin 2003: 91). For this interview Christina Jørgensen acts as what Yin describes as an informant rather than a respondent, meaning that she provided information and insight to the issues that were critical to the case study (Yin 2003: 90). The questions for the interview with Christina Jørgensen were constructed so that there were a short introduction to the theme of the question and then the question was asked. This was done in order to secure that questions would be understood in the way that was most beneficial and because it was an e-mail interview, there was no option for her to ask for the meaning of the questions or for me to ask additional questions if the answer given was not fulfilling. The interview contained six questions about different aspects of H&M’s CSR communication done in order to gain background information about the strategies H&M uses to communicate their CSR activities. The first question was related to what kind of channels H&M used to make customers aware of their CSR activities. The second question was related to which strategies H&M used to inform the customers about their activities related to sustainability because this seems to be one of the main causes for H&M. Third question was about the 2014 Conscious Collection and the TV-advertisement made for the collection. The fourth question was related to the current sustainability initiative; the Garment Collecting and advertisement related to this. Fifth question was about H&M’s participation in the Copenhagen Fashion Summit 2014 and what H&M did to make the customers aware of their participation in this summit. Last question was about the Conscious Foundation and why H&M is not communicating the activities related to the foundation to customers.

About document analysis

Documentary information is likely to be relevant when doing a case study and there are many different forms that this information can come in, such as letters, agendas, announcements, written reports of events, internal records, newspaper articles (Yin 2003: 85-86), advertisements, diaries, manuals, books, brochures, journals, event programs and press releases (Bowen 2009: 27-28). As mentioned by Yin, documents are very useful in a case study but they are not always accurate and they may contain bias (2003: 87). This is something that should be remembered when using documents and conducting a document analysis.
There are of course both advantages and disadvantages in using documents. Some of the advantages with documents are that they are stable, meaning that they can be reviewed multiple times, they are exact in that they contain names, references and details, and they have a broad coverage (Yin 2003: 86. Figure 4.1). Also, as mentioned by Bowen, “documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher’s intervention” (2009: 27). Another advantage is that conducting a document analysis is more efficient as it requires data selection and not collection. Also, with the Internet, many documents are available as public domain which does not require permission to use (Bowen 2009: 31). Some disadvantages with documents it that they can be hard to retrieve and one can even be blocked from gaining access to some documents. Also, documents can contain insufficient details because they were produced for other purposes than research. As a consequence, this means that they usually do not provide enough detail to answer all research questions. Lastly, is the notion of biased selectivity meaning that “in an organisational context, the available (selected) documents are likely to be aligned with corporate policies and procedures and with the agenda of the organisation’s principals” (Bowen 2009: 32).

As mentioned by Bowen, documents can be used for specific purposes. First is that documents can provide context in the form of background information, description of past events and historical insight which can be beneficial when understanding specific issue (Bowen 2009: 29). Also, data collected from documents can be used to contextualise data which has been collected during interviews (Bowen 2009: 30). Secondly, the information collected via documents can be used when developing questions for interviews or as a guide to issues that need observation as a part of an ethnographic study (Bowen 2009: 30). Thirdly, documents can provide supplementary research data as a means of creating a base of knowledge (Bowen 2009: 30). A fourth purpose is that documents can provide a means of following change and development such as examining financial reports in order to track economic development within an organisation (Bowen 2009: 30). A fifth and final purpose is that “documents can be analysed as a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources” (Bowen 2009: 30).

Conducting a document analysis requires that the data is examined and interpreted in order to gain meaning, understanding and to develop knowledge (Bowen 2009: 27). The analysis has three steps; skimming the documents, than doing a thorough reading and last, conducting an interpretation (Bowen 2009: 32). This, Bowen states, is done with a combination of content analysis and thematic analysis. “Content analysis is the process of organising information into categories related to the central questions of the research” (Bowen 2009: 32). The “thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data” (Bowen 2009: 32). This process consists of a focused reading and re-reading and review of the data in order to find emerging themes within the data and constructs categories from the data (Bowen 2009: 32). When evaluating the evidence from the document analysis, Bowen states that one could be critical and not treat
the documents as being precise or accurate. The researcher should “establish the meaning of the
documents and its contribution to the issues being explored” (Bowen 2009: 33). Something one should also
consider when conducting a document analysis is the purpose of the original document and also the target
audience of the document (Bowen 2009: 33).

**Design and procedure**

In this case, the document analysis is conducted in order to gain knowledge about which kinds of CSR
communication strategies H&M employs when communication their activities to customers. For this
purpose I have used information found mostly on H&M’s corporate website, such as information about
different CSR activities, background information about CSR values and business concepts and information
about collaborations with NGO’s and other organisations. I have also used articles written about H&M and
their CSR engagements along with interviews, speeches and videos.

The documents used for the document analysis were chosen to depict the CSR communication
strategies that H&M used when communicating these activities to their customers and also to support the
findings from the theories presented earlier about how to communicate CSR activities. Therefore, it was
important to select CSR communication documentation that showed the use of the different stakeholder
communication strategies. The larger part of the documents was found on H&M’s corporate website. The
target audience here are stakeholders who have an interest in H&M’s CSR activities as everyone can access
the corporate website and find this information. On the corporate website there is also a newsroom where
H&M posts articles written by an H&M press team. This section is also available to everyone but the target
audience is most likely members of the expert CSR communication process such as employees from news
media, interest groups and investors; the so called “elite readers of corporate CSR messages” (Morsing et al
2008: 105). The collection process consisted of going through H&M’s corporate website and selecting pages
that described CSR communication in order to use this information in connection with the information from
the interview with Christina Jørgensen to confirm or refute the information collected from the interview.

**About questionnaires**

The main reason for choosing survey as the method is that “Survey research provides a quantitative or
numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that
population” (Creswell 2009: 12). There are two types of questions; open-ended, closed-ended, and these
can be mixed within the same questionnaire. Open-ended questions are questions where the respondent
writes his/her own answer to the question, meaning that there are no fixed or specified answer category to select. The advantages with open-ended questions are that the respondents can give a detailed answer to the question and are good when researching complex issues. Open-ended questions also allow more creativity and unique answers and the respondents do not feel constrained by the limited answers like with closed-ended questions (Bailey 1994: 120-121). On the other side, some of the disadvantages of using open-ended questions are that the respondents might give worthless or irrelevant answers. Also answers from open-ended questions are much harder to compare than closed-ended questions because the data is not standardised. And open-ended question require a lot more time and effort from the respondent than closed-ended questions (Bailey 1994: 121). Closed-ended questions are questions where “the respondent selects one or more of the specific categories provided by the researcher” (Bailey 1994: 118). The advantages of using closed-ended questions are that the answers are standard making the answers easy to compare, code and analyse. There are a minimum of irrelevant responses because the answers are fixed and closed-ended questions are often easier to answer because the respondent just have to choose an answer (Bailey 1994: 118-119). Some of the disadvantages with using closed-ended questions are that it is easy for the respondent to guess the appropriate answer or just answer at random. Another disadvantage is that respondents may feel frustrated because the answer they want to give is not represented among the selection or that they do not get the opportunity to clarify the given answer (Bailey 1994: 119). Deciding whether to use open- or closed-ended questions depends on what one wants to research. Open-ended questions are used to investigate more complex issues such as personal opinions, views and attitudes which require more detailed answers than closed-ended questions. “Open-ended questions are preferred wherever accuracy, detail, and exhaustiveness are more important than time or simplification of coding and data processing” (Bailey 1994: 122). Closed-ended questions are used to investigate issues that require statistical data; data that needs to be compared from respondent to respondent.

No matter what type of questions one uses in a questionnaire there are some pitfalls that one should avoid. According to Bailey these are questions such as double-barrelled questions, meaning two or more questions in one question, ambiguous questions, meaning questions that can be understood in many ways, level of wording, which relates to the difficulty and formality of the wording, abstract vs factual questions and leading questions (1994). By being aware of these pitfalls and working to avoid them in the questionnaire one should be able to decrease the amount of “don’t know” answers from the respondents and thereby get a better result from the questionnaire. Another thing to keep in mind is the order in which the questions are presented in the questionnaire. Bailey recommends putting open-ended questions late in the questionnaire because they require more effort and writing from the respondent and also asking easy-to-answer questions first, like opening questions such as age, gender, occupation and education (1994: 121).
One should also place questions in a logical order. This refers to the frames within the questionnaire. The questions dealing with the same frame should be answered before moving on to the next frame. That way, the respondent’s concentration and train of thought will not be broken (Bailey 1994: 133). Lastly Bailey mentions determining if a funnel technique is appropriate. “In the funnel technique broad, general, or even open-ended questions are asked first, and then the funnel is narrowed by asking more specific questions” (1994: 135). Bailey does however not recommend starting with open-ended questions but think one should start with factual and closed-ended questions (1994: 135).

**Pretesting**

Before sending out the questionnaire or conducting interviews it is important to subject the questionnaire to pretesting. Bailey mentions that the pretesting should be done in the same manner as the actual testing (1994: 144) in order to get correct feedback and a clear picture of the design. A sample questionnaire is usually sent to friends, family or co-workers for feedback so flaws in the design such as the wording, missing questions, redundancy, confusion or the order of questions can be corrected before conducting the actual data collecting. The testing group should answer the questionnaire as if they were a real respondent and also make comments about the things they find are inadequate with the questionnaire form as well as the individual questions. After dealing with the general design of the questionnaire, such as the order of the questions or the level of formality in the wording, the researcher should look at how the questions were answered. If there are a lot of unanswered questions or a lot of questions answered with “don’t know” the researcher should think about writing the questions so it can be answered (Bailey 1994: 144).

**Design and procedure**

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section contains questions about CSR communication, information and advertisement in general. This is done to get a feel for how people view CSR communication and advertisement. The questions asked in this section are questions such as “How important is it for a company to engage in CSR efforts?”, which CSR commitment is the most important (from the view of the respondent), how a company should communicate their CSR efforts and if the respondent actively seek out CSR information (Questionnaire – Appendix 3). This section was inspired by both the Morsing et al study and the Schmeltz study in terms of the questions asked in this section. Some of the questions asked here are taken from these two studies to gain insight to any changes in the perception from the time of their studies to present day.
The second section contains questions about H&M’s CSR communication and advertisement. The first question asked in this section was “In 2-3 words/sentences, how would you describe H&M as a company?” (Questionnaire – Appendix 3). This was an open question to gain insight into how customers perceive H&M. Other questions asked in this section was questions about if they found H&M CSR profile was strong, the engagements credible and if H&M shows responsibility towards the environment, employees, and people from other parts of the world. Also asked here was if H&M partakes in creating a sustainable future, if they actively communicate CSR activities to customers and if they do a good job in utilising their social media when communicating CSR. These questions were asked as statements where the answer options were agree, somewhat agree, do not agree and have no opinion. Last question in this section was about where they had seen information about H&M’s CSR activities. Here the answer options were web-shop, corporate website, Facebook page, Instagram and other/no advertisement.

The last section of the questionnaire contained demographic questions; age group, sex, employment status and country of origins. For age group the answer categories were under 18, 18-24 years old, 25-34 years old, 35-44 years old, 45-54 years old and over 54. The employment category was divided into full time employee, part time employee, unemployed, student, retired and other. And country of origin was an open question with no answer options. The demographic information was purely to gain insight into who answered the questionnaire. There will be no comparing the different age groups or male/female in term of how they answered the questions.

Before the survey was sent out, I conducted a pre-testing by sending the survey to a select group of friends in order to get their critique and suggestions for changes. Only one change was made; adding the option “yes, through all channels” to the statement “I think companies should communicate CSR engagement”.

The data was collected via an online survey provider; Enalyzer.com. The programme is divided into three parts; questions, collecting and analysing, and is very simple and easy to use. The collection process consisted of sending out a link to the survey via Facebook. I created an event for the survey and invited everyone on my friends list to join the event and encouraged them to invite their friends to participate. The link to the survey was also posted, with a short message explaining what it was about, on H&M’s Facebook page and in the Aarhus University Facebook group.
Findings

In this section, the findings from the interview with Christina Jørgensen, the findings from the examination of the CSR communications material from H&M and findings from the questionnaire is presented.

Findings from the interviews with Christina Jørgensen

To the first question, “What are you doing to make your customers aware of your CSR activities through the news media, social media, etc?” (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1), Christina answered that H&M does a lot in terms of informing the customers about new collections. This is done in stores, on social media, in the press and in magazines. She also mentions that the H&M store is one of the most important communication channels when conveying information to the customers. This shows that H&M uses a wide range of channels to communicate general information, such as the launch of a new collection, to their customers. In terms of CSR related material, this can be found on posters and in brochures in store. Every year H&M produces a sustainability report which is available for everyone to download via H&M’s corporate website. Most of H&M’s CSR information is found on their corporate website, such as the sustainability reports, their CSR commitments and information about the sustainable materials they use, so it seems that when it comes to communicating CSR related information to customers, H&M uses the subtle, informational way of communicating. Christina ends her answer to question one by mentioning that H&M would like to tell the customers more about their CSR activities and that they continually work to communicate our actions to our customers and the consumers in general (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1).

The second question in the interview was related to a statement made by Helena Helmersson, Head of Sustainability for H&M, in an interview on H&M’s corporate website where is says “I think it is important to bring our customers along with us on this journey. We need to make them more aware of all the work we do to be more sustainable” (H&M – Interview: Helena Helmersson, Head of Sustainability). The questions asked was “What initiatives / strategies have you taken to make consumers more aware of your sustainability activities?” (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). To this Christina mentioned the Garment Collecting, launched in 2013. The aim of the Garment Collecting is to involve the customers in the creation of a more sustainable future. Short term, the aim is to reduce the amount of clothes that ends up in landfills and instead make sure that the clothes are recycled either through reusing, recycling or using the clothes to produce energy. Long term, the aim is to close the loop in the production of clothing with the clothes that the customers collect and deliver to the Garment Collecting (Interview with Christina
Jørgensen - Appendix 1). She also mentions that H&M do a lot in terms of coming up with new production processes that are more sustainable but that they can only do so much because the consumers contribute a large part to impact clothes have on the environment by the way they use, wash and dry the garment. Therefore, the consumers also have to think about how they treat the garments after it leaves the store.

The third question was related to the TV-advertisement made for the launch of the 2014 Conscious Collection. The advertisement shows a selection of garments but does not have any information about the CSR related activities related to the collection in terms of materials or sustainability. The only thing informing the customers that this was a more sustainable collection was the type logo for the Conscious Collection. The question here was why none of this information was featured in the TV-advertisement? She comments that the TV-advert is meant to inform the customers that they (H&M) are launching a new more sustainable clothing line and that there are limits to how much information such an advert can contain in terms of how much of the information the viewer can pick up during the short TV-advertisement. She also mentions that the related CSR information is available on H&M’s corporate website (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). This relates to what is presented in the theory above, that CSR communication is mostly conducted in a subtle way through corporate websites and not something that is actively advertised through explicit media outlets such as TV-advertisements. She ends by mentioning that it is important for H&M to show that they offer fashion and quality at the best price and this is the message they want to convey in their TV-adverts (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). This is the H&M motto; “fashion and quality at the best price” (H&M – Our Business Concept). But, as mentioned earlier, H&M also wants to be “the more sustainable choice” (H&M – Our Business Concept) and here H&M has the opportunity to show the customers that sustainable fashion can be affordable and something everyone can purchase but they do not grab the chance to do so.

Fourth question was related to the Don’t Let Fashion Go To Waste campaign related to the H&M Garment Collecting. For this campaign H&M created a webpage and a video explaining the cause, how it works, what it does and the sustainable aspects of the cause. At the height of the campaign the link to the webpage and video was located at the bottom of the front page of HM.com. The question here was why this was buried at the bottom of the page when this campaign/event was going on and what was done to advertise this campaign/cause? (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). Christina explains that H&M has a lot of news they want to communicate to their customers and that the website should offer fashion and quality to the customers but that it also is important to communicate their CSR activities. She also says that there is in rotation on the website so all the news receives the opportunity to be in focus (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). This information does seem a bit contradictory because she states that it is important for H&M to communicate their CSR activities but then defends the fact that
the Garment Collecting is not in focus on HM.com by saying that the website should signal that they offer fashion and quality to customers. Considering the fact that this campaign had just launched to 2014 and that it is an important cause for H&M it would be something that one would communicate in an active way to ones customers in order to involve them in the cause. Because without the customers H&M will not collect any garment to reach both their short and long-term goals mentioned above.

The fifth question was related to H&M’s participation in the 2014 Copenhagen Fashion Summit and how this was communicated to the customers. The question here was what H&M had done in terms of informing the customers about their participation and what the participation meant for H&M in terms of their CSR activities and the sustainable work they do. Here, the answer was just that they had advertised via their own social media channels such as twitter and Facebook and also in the Danish newspapers (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). There was no answer given for the second part of the question relating to what H&M’s participation in the Copenhagen Fashion Summit would mean for the CSR work that H&M does.

Last question was related to H&M Conscious Foundation and the CSR activities there that are not connected to any clothing collection. Asked here was why H&M does not communicate these activities to the customers? To this she says that H&M communicates the foundations activities via the corporate website, they send out press releases and arrange for editorial coverage when it is possible. As with the upcoming collections they are dependent on the media to find the activities interesting enough to mention them in newspapers and other news media (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). This information indicate that H&M uses what Morsing et al refers to as the expert communication process in which an organisation communicates their CSR activities to so-called experts who understand the terminology associated with CSR communication and then communicate this information to the general public. This means, as Christina also mentions, that the organisation is depending on the experts as a middle man between the organisation and the general public.

**Findings from the document analysis - CSR communication at H&M**

In this section an examination of H&M’s CSR communication with customers will be presented. The basis for this consists of information from H&M’s corporate website, their Facebook page and articles from online new channels. This information is supported by a short e-mail interview with Christina Jørgensen which is presented above. H&M’s corporate website is not accessed directly from hm.com, which is just their web-shop. The corporate website is about.hm.com which can be accessed via hm.com. From the front page of hm.com there is no other visible CSR information other then the link to “sustainability” at the very
bottom of the page, there is not even a direct link to the Conscious Collection. This gives the feeling that CSR and sustainability is not something that there is a large focus on within H&M when in fact there is, from the corporate information, the panels, summits and collaborations that H&M participate in and H&M’s sustainability reports a very extensive focus on CSR engagements at H&M.

H&M mainly follows the subtle, implicit, stakeholder information strategy when communicating CSR efforts which is mainly through corporate websites, annual reports, pamphlets and press conference. That being said, there is also a few examples of H&M taking on a more involved stakeholder approach in some of their strategies and also try to get the customers involved in spreading the word about conscious clothing. H&M also have a newsroom where they post press releases and news stories of different topics, including CSR information. All the press releases and news stories are written by H&M press staff for the newsroom. Even though the purpose is not stated anywhere, this newsroom seems to be a part of the expert CSR communication process strategy employed at H&M. In the newsroom are articles ready to be picked up and reported by outside news channels; this being part of the endorsed CSR communication process, the two processes being closely linked to each other. This does mean that H&M are dependent on external sources to convey their CSR messages. This strategy in an advantage, according to Morsing et all, due to the fact that CSR information about an organisation coming from a third part is perceived as being less self-serving and less bragging than CSR communication coming directly from the organisation itself (2007: 107). But, as the findings from the Schmeltz study indicate, organisations should not be afraid of communicating their CSR activities in a more direct way because customers are not sceptical of companies communicating CSR (2011: 43 table VIII). As mentioned in the section presenting the Schmeltz study, the respondent’s rate CSR information communicated via websites and advertisements positive. This means that H&M should communicate their CSR activities in a more active and direct way to their customers, because the customers want the CSR information and are not willing to look for it themselves. So in order to create more awareness about their CSR activities H&M should employ a direct CSR communication strategy instead of the subtle approach of the expert CSR communication process and the endorsed CSR communication process. By doing that H&M has control over the CSR information they communicate to customers and they will not be dependent on news media to convey their messages.

H&M’s main way of communicating CSR efforts is using the stakeholder information strategy described by Morsing and Schultz. This is done through their corporate website where they make their CSR information and sustainability reports accessible to everyone. They also have a corporate press room where they have news articles about sustainability among other things. One of H&M’s most important communication channels, as explained by Christina Jørgensen, is their stores (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). Here their use posters and pamphlets to communicate CSR activities to customers. The clothes itself is
also use to communicate CSR engagements. The garments made from sustainable materials such as organic cotton or recycled polyester are labelled with a green hangtag with a short description of the material used for the garment. Another CSR activity that is seen on the garments is H&M new Clever Care label which was launched at this year’s Copenhagen Fashion Summit. As mentioned by Jasmine Mali Chua, managing editor at Couture, in a panel discussion about sustainable fashion future; a lot of the impact from clothes comes from the customer washing and tumble-drying the clothes (H&M – Vogue Panel Discussion video). Therefore clothing companies have a responsibility to teach the customers to wash at a lower temperature and to let the clothes air dry. This issue is what the Clever Care label aims to improve. On the Clever Care label are washing guidelines for how the customer can make the garment last longer and how they can wash the clothes in a way that protects the environment (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). The last in store CSR activity mentioned by Christina Jørgensen is the garment collecting boxes which are located by the checkout. The Garment Collecting was launched last year and is a worldwide initiative aimed to close the loop on materials. Short term this mean that H&M aims to stop customers throwing away clothes. By donating the old garments and other textiles to H&M, H&M can rewear, reuse and recycle them. When one of these three is not an option, the textiles are used to produce energy and other things like insulation for houses (H&M – Live Long Fashion). For every kilo of textiles collected H&M donates 0.02 Euros to a local charity chosen by H&M. Worldwide over 6 million kilos of textiles has been collected so far, amounting to over 129.000 Euros donated to charity (H&M – Charitestar). The Garment Collecting initiative is the only one out of the in store CSR activities that has been advertised to customers. A brochure with information about the garment collecting called “Don’t let fashion go to waste” was made and is available in stores. More significant, a video was made to inform customers about the collecting, how the garments are used and what this means for the environment. The video is available on H&M’s YouTube page and has been viewed over 185.000 times since 21. April 2014 (H&M – Garment Collecting video). Unfortunately the video was not posted on H&M’s Facebook page which could have given the cause more attention because of their 19 million “likers” (H&M – Facebook) opposed to only 74.000 subscribers on YouTube. In Denmark, H&M set up a garment collecting event in Copenhagen. This was done not only to create awareness to H&M’s cause but also to mark that Copenhagen was named environmental capital 2014 (H&M Danmark – Long Live Fashion!). This event gave customers the opportunity to see what happens to the clothes after you donate them and also have a chat with H&M about the cause and sustainable fashion in general. This event could be characterised as a part of a stakeholder response strategy as referred to by Morsing and Schultz. This event gives H&M a chance to see how the customers react to their engagement with this cause in the sense that customers show their support for the cause by showing up and participating in the garment collecting. Also, the event gives H&M a chance to ask the customers about the opinion of the
event, the garment collecting and sustainable fashion in general. Even though the strategy for the garment collecting is to get the customers involved, this is not an example of what Morsing and Schultz refer to as stakeholder involvement strategy because the customers are only taking part in the CSR activity after the CSR activity has already been chosen. For it to be a stakeholder involvement strategy the stakeholder has to be part of deciding and constructing the CSR activities, meaning that the organisation and the stakeholders are co-creators of the CSR efforts. Something that would be considered as a part of the stakeholder involvement strategy, and also a part of the inside-out approach, is the fact that customers and employees at H&M took part in deciding which causes the H&M Conscious Foundation should focus on. The decision-making process consisted of customers and employees taking part in a worldwide online voting process, voting for the issues they found most important for H&M to tackle (H&M – H&M Conscious Foundation). The causes that customers and employees voted on were taken from the UN’s Millennium Goals which are; eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental stability and lastly global partnership for development (UN – Millennium Goals). The selection of the CSR activities is part of the inside-out approach, as presented by Morsing et al, because it involves the employees in the creation of CSR messages within H&M. For CSR engagements to be credible the whole organisation has to stand behind the activities and issues and having the employees be a part of the selection process is a good way to ensure that the CSR activities are something they want to support. The selection of CSR engagements for the H&M Conscious Foundation is also a part of the stakeholder involvement strategy because it involves the customers in deciding on which causes and issues H&M’s non-profit organisation should support. As mentioned by Morsing and Schultz, this strategy involves the stakeholders, in this case the customers, in the development of CSR initiatives in order for the customers “to develop and promote positive support” (2006: 328). By having the customers chose with CSR activities the Conscious Foundation should support H&M secures that these causes are something that the customers support, because they chose them. But considering the fact that the customers and employees chose these CSR activities they are not being communicated actively to the customers. Being that these causes is something the customers have an invested interest in, having chosen them, they are not receiving any information about further developments, meeting the goals or the progress of any of these causes. Considering that H&M involved the customers and employees in choosing what causes to support one would expect them to keep the customers informed about the causes. As stated by Du et al “CSR information on initiatives that stakeholders deem important or personally relevant (i.e. strong support) is more likely to break the media clutter and be more effective” (2010: 16). Therefore it would benefit H&M
in terms of increasing awareness for their CSR activities if they communicated CSR information related to the H&M Conscious Foundation’s causes.

The largest CSR campaign H&M have done so far this year in the launch of the 2014 Conscious Collection; clothing collection made entirely from sustainably and organic materials. This year the collection consisted of a basic collection and an exclusive collection. In the interview with Christina Jørgensen she mentions that when launching a collection H&M does a lot to inform customers about the new collection and the actions behind the collection. This is done via in store advertisement, advertisement on different social media channels, in the press and in magazines (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). Even though there has been quite a lot of advertisement for this collection it mostly consisted of advertisement for the clothes in terms of fashion value and not much advertisement about the CSR value connected to the collection. The TV-advertisements created for the launch of the Conscious Collection contained no information about the way the clothes were made or the materials used, meaning no real CSR information, only that this collection was launching. According to Christina Jørgensen this was the case because the TV-advertisement is only meant to convey the message that they (H&M) are launching a new more sustainable collection and because there is a limit to the amount of information a viewer will receive via TV-advertisement (Interview with Christina Jørgensen - Appendix 1). Therefore, background information about the Conscious Collection is available in stores or on H&M’s corporate website. H&M did use their social media platforms for informing the customers about the 2014 Conscious Collection. Facebook was used to showcase the Conscious Exclusive collection by making photo albums showing pictures of the clothes (Appendix 4 – CSR communication from H&M on Facebook). But again, the only mention of anything related to CSR or sustainability is in the description box of the album Conscious Exclusive Collection where it state that “The collection is made out of sustainable materials such as organic cotton, recycled polyester and TENCEL” (Appendix 4 – CSR communication from H&M on Facebook). In addition to using Facebook, H&M also used their Instagram (a social photo sharing app for smartphones) page to create a campaign to raise awareness about sustainability in connection with the release of the 2014 Conscious Collection and Conscious Exclusive. The campaign consisted of creating butterflies by using the hashtag #everconscioushm, thereby transforming each picture with the hashtag into a butterfly via the website created for the campaign, www.everconscious.hm.com. By typing in their username on the Ever Conscious website, the user find their own personal butterfly which they can then spread their on different social media to create awareness for sustainability and sustainable clothing. H&M states on the Ever Conscious website that the campaign is launched to spread the message and “allowing people across the globe to contribute to the “butterfly effect” of consciousness” (H&M – Ever Conscious: how to participate).
Considering the fact that H&M has 2.7 million followers on Instagram only 2223 pictures on Instagram have the #everconscioushm, meaning that only 2223 butterflies was created to spread awareness about sustainability. The campaign was also shared on H&M’s Facebook page where they currently have over 19 million “likers” (Appendix 4 – CSR communication from H&M on Facebook). The lack of participation in the everconscious campaign could be because H&M has not done a good enough job in communicating the campaign to their customers via their different social media channels over time. The campaign was only shared on H&M’s Facebook page in the week of the 2014 Conscious Collection launch and people might not have seen it enough times to recognise or even see it.

Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire
The questionnaire was open for responses for 16 days and in that time period 107 people completed the questionnaire. For reasons unknown to me, a 100 people started the questionnaire but did not finish it. In the short description posted with the link to the questionnaire I had requested that if there were any problems with filling out the questionnaire they should e-mail me with the problem so I could try to correct it. Only one person e-mailed me with difficulties completing the questionnaire and unfortunately there was nothing to be done about the problem she had. Do to the fact that 200 people began the questionnaire but only 107 completed it there are some differences in the percentage of the results. The questions that have a higher number of respondents are question 2: I think the most essential CSR commitment is, question 5: I mostly see CSR communication/advertisement and question 18: I have seen information about CSR activities from H&M on. There is also a difference in the number of respondents in question 7: if yes, where do you look for this information. There are 54 respondents to this question even though only 31 answered yes to questions 6: Do you actively seek CSR information about companies?

Demographic findings from the questionnaire show that 67% of the respondents were women meaning that only 33% of the respondents were men. Most of the respondents were in the age-group 25-34 years old; 62% were in this age-group. The second largest were 35-44 years old were 16% of the respondents were in. This shows that it is probably mostly friend from my own Facebook and their friends who have responded to the questionnaire because this is the same age-group I would be in. 46% of the respondents were full time employed and 35% were students which corresponds nicely with the largest age-group being 25-34 year olds. Lastly, information about country of origins shows that 96 respondents out of 107 were from Denmark.
Findings from the questionnaire

In this section I will present the findings from the questionnaire and relate them to the theories presented earlier and to the findings from the interviews.

The findings presented in the first section of the questionnaire, the general questions about CSR, show that the respondents important/very important that companies engage in CSR efforts. 50% of the respondents answered important, while 37% answered very important. This supports the findings from the studies presented in the theory part. The two most essential CSR commitments are treatment of employees and treatment of the environment. This corresponds to the findings from Morsing et al who in their study also found that the treatment of employees and treatment of the environment were the most important CSR commitments (Morsing et al 2008: 102 figure 3). This also shows that H&M should communicate CSR efforts related to the employees and the environment as these two areas are important to the respondents. The next findings relates to where a company should communicate their CSR engagements. Here, 45% answered that companies should communicate CSR engagements through all channels, 37% answered through CSR reports and on corporate websites and only 7% answered that companies should not publicise their CSR engagements. This illustrates the ‘Catch 22’ that is presented by Morsing et al is still a concern for companies (Morsing et al 2008: 103 figure 4). But there is a change in the number of respondents who answered that companies should not publicise. Findings from Morsing et al showed that 21% answered that a company should not communicate their CSR engagements in any form while the findings from this questionnaire show that this number has dropped to only 7%. This indicates that people might be more accepting of CSR communication now than they were at the time of Morsing et al’s study and that they are getting use to seeing CSR communication in other ways than via the subtle channels recommended in earlier studies. When asked about if they paid attention to CSR communication, 73% answered yes and 64% answered that they mostly see CSR communication/advertisement on corporate websites. 29% answered on packaging and 23% answered on posters and signs in stores. But when asked if they actively seek CSR information about companies 71% of the respondents said no. These findings indicate that people are becoming more aware of CSR communication but they are still not actively seeking out CSR information on their own. This refers to another of the CSR paradoxes mentioned earlier, as findings from Schmeltz showed that customers are not willing to seek out CSR information (Schmeltz 2011: 39). Something that has changed from the time of Schmeltz study to now is the fact that the findings from this study show that the respondents do pay attention to CSR communication/advertisements. Schmeltz
mentions that even though the respondents in her study claimed that CSR was important they did not notice CSR communication in their everyday lives (2011: 40). Findings from this study however, show that not only do the respondents find CSR to be important; they also pay attention to it.

In the second section, questions about H&M’s CSR activities, the first question was an open question where the respondents wrote 2-3 words/sentences they thought described H&M as a company. The words/sentences used to describe H&M are mainly divided into two camps; a negative and a positive. The words used the most to describe H&M was cheap which was used 47 times. But cheap is a dual meaning word, as it can mean both some that cost very little and something of poor quality (Oxford English Dictionary). The word is used in both ways to describe H&M, as in “Cheap, fashionable, responsible” but also “cheap, not good quality” (Questionnaire – Appendix 3). There are also divided opinions about H&M’s CSR engagements. 18 out of 107 respondents mention CSR in some form like environmental effort/responsible, “conscious”, eco-friendly, charity, organic line and poor treatment of employees. On the negative side, there are comments such as “forced into having a CSR policy due to the criticism they get”, “not a very environmentally friendly company” and “poor treatment of employees” (Questionnaire – Appendix 3). On the positive side are comments such as “conscious collection and they encourage the customers to recycle clothing”, “more focus of being eco-friendly”, “I think they do have a strong focus on CSR, especially through their products”, “more aware of environmental responsibility throughout the last couple of years, hence their ‘Conscious’ collection” and “they think about the environment” (Questionnaire – Appendix 3). Only 10 out of 107 respondents had something positive to say about H&M’s CSR engagements, six respondents makes negative CSR comments and two respondents make mixed comments about H&M’s CSR engagements. This testifies that H&M are not using their CSR communication strategies in a way that creates awareness and trustworthiness with the customers when only 18 respondents mention CSR in some form. The next questions are sets of statements where the answer options are agree, somewhat agree, do not agree and have no opinion. The pattern that emerges from these statements is that most respondents answered either somewhat agree or have no opinion. Quite a few people wrote me explaining that they had answered no opinion because there was no answer option for “I don’t know”. Taking that into account there should have been an option to answer I don’t know to the statements.

When asked if H&M had a strong CSR profile 44% answered somewhat agree and 28% answered have no opinion. The percentages are almost the same for the next question relating to H&M’s CSR credibility. This illustrates that the respondents are unsure of what to think about H&M’s CSR engagement. This may be due to the face that H&M mainly communicates their CSR activities in a subtle way through CSR reports and on their corporate website and not in through more explicit and direct channels like social.
media. When asked if H&M showed responsibility towards the environment 38% answered somewhat agree, 29% answered no opinion, 19% answered do not agree and only 14% answered agree. The percentages for the question related to if H&M takes part in creating a more sustainably future are almost the same. These findings show that H&M, who according to the CSR information about sustainability and the environment from their corporate website and the interview with Christina Jørgensen think about and do a lot in terms of sustainability, is not communicating this to customers in an active way that can increase the awareness for the CSR commitments relating to the environment and creating a sustainable future. To the question if H&M was responsible towards people in other parts of the world 36% answered no opinion, 30% answered somewhat agree and 25% answered do not agree. Even though the treatment of employees in the production countries is something that is important to H&M and the fact that the Conscious Foundations causes which were chosen by the employees and customers are aimed at helping to make life better for the employees in other parts of the world, the respondents from this questionnaire are very much in doubt about this commitment. The last four questions in the questionnaire are related to the way H&M communicate their CSR efforts. The first question is “I think that H&M communicates their CSR activities actively to their customers”. To this 38% answered somewhat agree, 24% answered no opinion and 21% answered do not agree. To the question about if it is easy to locate H&M’s sustainable clothes in stores, 30% answered somewhat agree and 30% answered do not agree. To the question about H&M using social media channels to communicate CSR messages, 49% answered no opinion while 21% answered somewhat agree and 19% answered do not agree. Lastly, when asked about where they had seen CSR communication from H&M, 39% said packaging, 36% said on H&M’s corporate website and 33% answered other/no advertisement seen where 22 of the respondents answered no advertisement seen and 7 answered in stores. These findings contribute to the findings presented earlier that H&M mainly uses the subtle way of communicating their CSR activities meaning through channels such as their corporate website and on packaging. As to the information from Christina Jørgensen that the H&M stores are one of their most important channels when it comes to communicating CSR activities, the findings from this questionnaire show that the stores are not contributing in conveying the CSR messages to the customers.

In terms of the effectiveness of H&M CSR communication to their customers, the findings from the questionnaire indicate that the CSR communication strategy employed at H&M is not very effective in terms of creating more awareness for their CSR activities. As mentioned earlier, there are two factors that play a role in how effective CSR communication is; company-specific factors and stakeholder-specific factors (Du et al 2010). Du et al mentions that a company’s existing reputation plays a part in the effectiveness of the CSR communication (2010). From the way the respondents describe H&M in the
questionnaire it is apparent that H&M does not have a very good existing reputation when it comes to CSR. The second corporate-specific factor that plays a part in effectiveness is CSR positioning of the company in relation to other companies in the same category. When a company has taken a CSR positioning “stakeholders are likely not only to pay more attention to its CSR message, but also to believe in the authenticity of its CSR endeavors” (Du et al 2010: 15) and this fosters a greater favour for the company in terms of increased reputation and a more effective CSR communication. In terms of stakeholder-specific factors, H&M’s CSR communication is mostly directed at the so-called opinion-leaders such as business press, investor and NGO’s. Not a lot of CSR communication is directed at customers specifically because most of the CSR information is found on their corporate website and as mentioned earlier by Schmeltz in her findings and restated in these findings; customers are not willing to seek CSR information on their own. This might be the reason why H&M’s CSR communication is not having the wanted effect of increasing awareness.
Conclusion to findings

The findings from the interview indicate that H&M employs a subtle way of communicating the CSR activities to customers. Most of their communication in related to the stakeholder information strategy presented by Morsing and Schultz which is explained earlier in this paper. The findings also indicate that H&M used different channels to communicate their CSR activities to customers but most of the channels are connected to the subtle way of communicating CSR such as CSR reports and on corporate websites. These are methods where the customers have to seek CSR information themselves and, as mentioned by Schmeltz as a finding from her study, customers are not willing to do this. This means that the CSR information is not getting directly to the customers and is therefore not creating awareness for the CSR activities. Even though H&M is using the stakeholder information strategy which is the recommended strategy for creating awareness they are not utilizing their communication channels in a way so their CSR communication reaches the customers. In order to increase awareness of their CSR activities they need to reach the customers directly via advertisement and a more PR related informational strategy and not the subtle, indirect way of the expert communication process they are using now.

Even though H&M uses many different channels when communicating CSR activities to their customers the strategy for doing so is the same informational strategy for all channels. It seem that for H&M the most important things related to their CSR activities in to inform and educate their customer about their activities and getting the customers involved in the activities themselves afterwards, like the Garment Collecting, but not in a ways as the stakeholder involvement strategy as described by Morsing and Schultz.

From Christina Jørgensens statements in the interview it seems that H&M have a lot of CSR activities and that CSR is something they have great focus on throughout the company. From production to treatment of the environment and employees, they have a wide range of CSR engagements but even though sustainability is something H&M take a lot of pride in, the respondents who participated in this questionnaire does not think that H&M show particular responsibility towards creating a sustainable future. This combined with the result that the respondents claim they pay attention/notice CSR communication from companies indicate that H&M are not doing a good enough job in communicating their CSR engagements to customers. The findings also show that the respondents do not actively seek CSR information on their own meaning that if CSR activities are not actively and directly communicated or advertised they are not going to be heard. This seems to be the main weakness for H&M.
The analysis of H&M’s CSR communications shows that they employ different strategies when communicating their CSR activities to customers. The most used strategy is the stakeholder information strategy and the expert communication process but H&M also employs a stakeholder response and a stakeholder involvement strategy on one or more occasions. As shown in the findings from the document analysis H&M has a lot of CSR activities, a lot of activities they can communicate directly to their customers, but they do not. Communicating these activities to their customers would create more awareness about their CSR engagement and most likely create a brand position for H&M as a pioneer of CSR engagement in their category.
Discussion

In 2012, Helena Helmersson, who is H&M’s Head of Sustainability, was one of the key speakers at that year’s Copenhagen Fashion Summit. In her speech, she mentioned that when asked: Do you actively look for more sustainable clothing, 23% from the respondents (H&M customers) answered yes. This was an increase from previous years. “Costumers more and more see sustainability as an added value” (Helmersson 2012 – Copenhagen Fashion Summit). As it seem that more of H&M’s customers are increasing their interest in sustainable fashion it is a bit of a mystery who H&M is not communicating their CSR activities to customers in a direct manner. Also, in an interview for The Observer in 2012, Helena Helmersson stated: "You see my dream is to be perceived as a company who can offer all people in the world – even those without much money – the possibility to dress really well and sustainably. That's how I want people to perceive us, not as a brand connected to mass consumption" (Siegle 2012). If this is where H&M wants to end up at in the future, they need to start utilizing different communication strategies in order to better inform and educate the customers about the work they do in terms of sustainability. In the Vogue Panel Discussion Jasmin Malik Chua, managing editor at Ecouterre, mentioned that people will always do the easy thing and by that the companies need to make the sustainable choice the easy choice (H&M – Vogue Panel Discussion video). This is a core potential for H&M. They could make sustainability accessible to a lot more people by not only using sustainable materials in their main clothing collections, and not just in the Conscious Collection, and also by advertising and communicating their CSR activities more actively to the consumers. For H&M this means that they need to make their sustainable clothes more accessible to the consumer, create a larger range of sustainable clothes, advertise that they do indeed have these products and that they are affordable to everyone really.

Du et al states that in order to reach stakeholders in the general public category, such as customers, “a company should use a variety of communication channels or, alternatively, focus on one or two highly relevant channels” (2010: 16). For this, H&M would gain more awareness for their CSR activities if they communicated them more actively and directly to the customers via social media. H&M already have a Facebook page with over 19 million “likers” so communicating CSR messages regularly through their Facebook page would create a lot of awareness of CSR activities. H&M already advertise their Conscious Collection via Facebook but if they do not want to mix the CSR communication with the more fashion related communication they could benefit from adding an H&M Conscious Facebook page to their social media channels. This way they can communicate their CSR activities to customers that are interested without “spamming” those who are not.
In many ways H&M has a strong CSR profile and they seem committed to CSR. They have a strong working relationship with other stakeholder groups such as NGO’s and suppliers but the relationship with the customers are lacking in terms of CSR. They have sponsored and taking key speaker positions at the Copenhagen Fashion Summit, they were named one of the most ethical companies in the world and they just won the CSR award for the 2013 Conscious Collection at this year’s Elle Style Awards. But in the end, as the customers are what drive the company, they need to communicate these achievements to the customers in order to gain recognition and increase their CSR reputation in order to increase the customers’ knowledge of the CSR activities they have. As H&M is slowly gaining recognition for their CSR engagements among the CSR community, they definitely need to start communicating CSR to customers if they want to gain more public awareness. But because H&M does not communicate CSR activities that are not connected to fashion such as the conscious collection or the garment collecting initiative the customers does not perceive H&M as having a strong CSR profile because they only see a very limited part of their CSR engagements. If we think of Morsing and Schultz stakeholder strategies as a step ladder where you have to complete each step before moving up then H&M is just starting to take the first step up the ladder. As the saying goes you need to crawl before you can walk. Because the stakeholder information strategy is associated with awareness H&M need to use this strategy in a much more direct and active way with customers before they can move up the ladder.

As Gupta and Sharma mention one of the most significant trends for CSR in the future will be the increased influence from stakeholders. Whether it will be though engaging in stakeholder dialogue or through stakeholder campaigns “stakeholders will become more strategic and more coordinated, increasingly working together on issues of common concern” (2009: 400). They also state that “the future of CSR lies in the hands of the public” meaning that the public, this includes the customers, need to take a lead when it comes to CSR. The customers play a huge part in creating a sustainable future and they also create an incentive for the companies to focus on CSR. The companies need to make CSR available to the customers but the customers also need to demand not only sustainable products and services but also that the companies act in a responsible manner.
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Links:


H&M – Garment Collecting Video. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41htZRvz9Gg [Accessed 18 July 2014]


Appendix