



# Understanding men's clothing consumption

A contribution to further research on sustainable clothing consumption

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Adam Fast

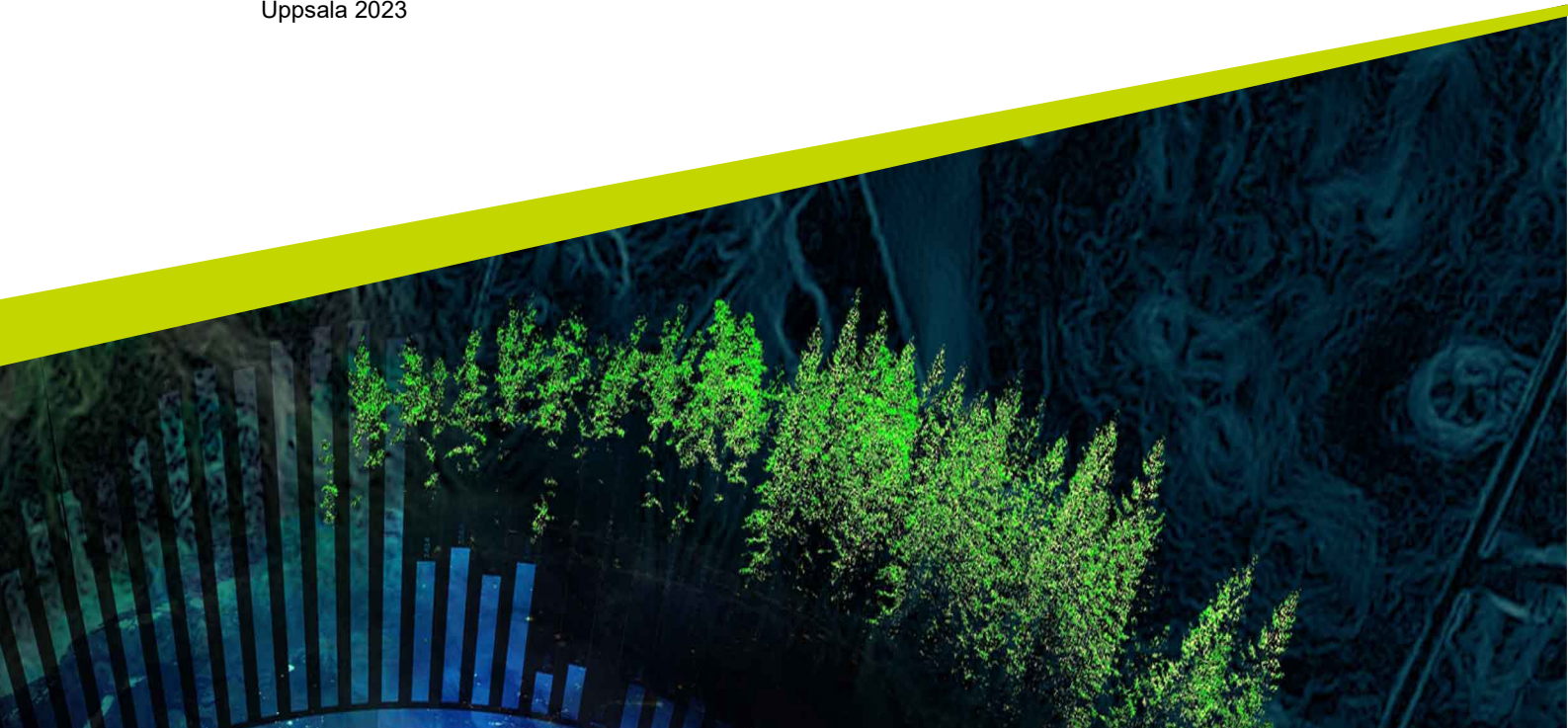
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# Understanding men's clothing consumption. A contribution to further research on sustainable clothing consumption

*Att förstå mäns klädkonsumtion. Ett bidrag till vidare forskning om hållbar klädkonsumtion*

Adam Fast

**Supervisor:** Lotten Westerberg, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Division of Environmental Communication

**Examiner:** Ann Grubbström, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Division of Environmental Communication

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**Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences**  
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences  
Department of Urban and Rural Development  
Division of Environmental Communication

## Abstract

The growing environmental problem of the clothing industry has resulted in trillions of litres of wastewater and nearly a tenth of the world's carbon emissions every year. The Western world's demand for cheap clothes occurs at the expense of the environment and bad working conditions. Due to environmental destruction, people have developed an interest in high quality sustainable garments, called slow fashion, and avoid the production of cheap and low-quality garments, called fast fashion. Researchers argue that the responsibility for pollution from clothes is shared between consumers and the industry. Increasing consumer awareness is therefore argued as a solution to mitigate pollution and increase sales of sustainable garments. As a result, researchers have begun discovering this topic. Several studies have been conducted to understand consumer behaviour and the possibility of increasing consumer awareness. However, the studies focusing on consumer behaviour are towards women due to the norm of shopping being feminine. Men also buy clothes, but traditional male norms may affect men to care less about clothes and have generally a low interest.

Therefore, this thesis explores men's clothing consumption habits and how traditional male norms affect men to refrain from sustainable consumption. As a qualitative study, three focus groups were held, divided into students, young adults, and adults for a broader analysis. Frame analysis was chosen to find diagnoses and corresponding action biases to explain men's consumption habits. Through a thematic analysis, the dominant diagnoses and action biases were selected. The findings displayed various traditional male norms, such as low interest in clothing, in all focus groups, which affected the participants' consumption by not shopping very often. However, personal involvement, i.e., the greater the interest in shopping, the more aware of the clothing industry the participant was and vice versa, was the most evident aspect of their clothing consumption. These findings correspond to previous studies except that men in this study are not afraid of getting their masculinity questioned. The participants did not actively make sustainable choices in their consumption but showed elements of slow fashion through minimal shopping and using the clothes until they become worn out. They argued that expensive clothes have high quality and thus are a sustainable choice, which was acknowledged by previous studies.

This thesis has contributed to a further understanding of men's clothing consumption. I believe that research on personal involvement as a driving aspect could be further studied in future studies to increase our knowledge of consumer behaviour. Awareness is important for sustainable clothing consumption and increased personal involvement can be the key to achieving it.

*Keywords:* Clothing consumption, men's consumption, sustainable consumption, consumer behaviour, consumption habits, fast fashion, slow fashion

# Table of contents

<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 Background - Identifying a Knowledge Gap .....	6
1.2 Aim and Research Questions .....	7
<b>2. Previous Studies</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.1 Studies on Sustainable Clothing Consumption.....	8
2.2 Studies on Gender .....	9
2.3 Studies on Men .....	10
<b>3. Research Design</b> .....	<b>13</b>
3.1 Data Collection.....	13
3.2 Frame Analysis .....	15
3.2.1 Diagnosis and Action Bias .....	15
3.2.2 Applying Frame Analysis .....	16
3.3 Critical Reflection .....	17
<b>4. Identifying Diagnosis and Action Bias - Result and Analysis</b> .....	<b>18</b>
4.1 Students .....	18
4.1.1 Diagnosis .....	18
4.1.2 Action bias .....	19
4.2 Young Adults.....	22
4.2.1 Diagnosis .....	22
4.2.2 Action bias .....	23
4.3 Adults .....	25
4.3.1 Diagnosis .....	25
4.3.2 Action bias .....	26
<b>5. Discussion</b> .....	<b>28</b>
5.1 Habits .....	28
5.2 Traditional Male Norms.....	29
5.3 How the Participants Perceive Sustainable Clothing.....	31
5.4 Future Research on Men's Clothing Consumption .....	33
<b>6. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>7. References</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Popular Science Summary</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Interview Guide (in Swedish)</b> .....	<b>40</b>

# List of Tables

Table 1. The number of participants divided into focus groups and cities. ....	13
Table 2. The diagnosis and action bias of the students. ....	18
Table 3. The diagnosis and action bias of the young adults. ....	22
Table 4. The diagnosis and action bias of the adults. ....	25

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background - Identifying a Knowledge Gap

The clothing industry produces 20 per cent of the world's wastewater (79 trillion litres of water) and eight per cent of all carbon emissions and is considered the second biggest polluter in the world (Bailey et al. 2022). Nearly all the world's clothing production (around 90 per cent) is located in countries with low to middle income where the production cost is low and then being sold at low prices, which has created the term fast fashion (ibid.). The growth of fast fashion has led to increased production of clothes with low quality. The yearly global consumption has been estimated to be 62 million tonnes of garments (Niinimäki et al. 2020), contributing to 85 per cent of textiles thrown away in landfills (Paço et al. 2021). The consumption of fast fashion clothing must be reduced because the industry not only contributes to high water use, use of chemicals and greenhouse gas emissions, but it also contributes to bad working conditions (WWF 2022). In 2013, a garment factory called Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed, resulting in over 1100 fatalities and around 2500 people injured, and is considered “one of the worst industrial accidents in history” (Jacobs & Singhal 2017:52).

Paço et al. (2021) argue that the consumer and the industry share the responsibility for the pollution from clothing. The findings from the study indicated the need for initiatives to raise the consumers' awareness of the clothing industry, which may lead to consumers making more conscious decisions when shopping (ibid.). Studies of shopping behaviour have been conducted to understand how clothing consumption can change to become more sustainable. However, previous studies indicate that there is an uneven focus area in clothing consumption. Shopping is considered a feminine trait and women generally perform this activity (Zhao et al. 2021). When searching for articles about women and consumption, multiple results were found (Gregson & Beale 2004; Nam et al. 2007; Majima 2008; Cervellon et al. 2012; Unal et al. 2012; Ünal & Dirlik 2014; D'Souza & Taghian 2017; Piontek et al. 2019). The studies of clothing consumption connected to men were absent in the scientific search. In this thesis, I argue that we need to understand the consumption of both sexes to create strategies to reach out to every consumer, not just women. Identifying men's consumption can for instance be used for the marketing of sustainable brands that target men.

## 1.2 Aim and Research Questions

This thesis aims to develop an understanding of men's consumption and compare them to previous studies on men, as well as gender studies related to fashion and consumption. This is important to highlight because men tend to be less environmentally aware than women regarding clothing consumption (Zhao et al. 2021). Because of the environmental problems produced by the clothing industry, awareness must increase so that more consumers can make conscious decisions (Paço et al. 2021). The findings will be compared to previous studies and used to discuss possible future studies on the topic. I hope it will contribute to covering some of the knowledge gap in studies of men's behaviour regarding clothing consumption, and to increase their awareness of the industry.

The following research questions to be answered in the thesis are:

- What characterizes men's clothing consumption?
- How are traditional male norms related to their reasoning about clothing consumption?
- How do they take sustainability issues into consideration in their clothing consumption?

## 2. Previous Studies

Here, I present some relevant studies for this thesis.

### 2.1 Studies on Sustainable Clothing Consumption

McNeill & Moore (2015) studied people's behaviour and attitude towards sustainable consumption through an open-ended survey and interviews with 28 individuals in a city in New Zealand. The authors state that the awareness of unethical aspects of clothing production is increasing among consumers but is not acted upon in their consumption. The consumers' desire to be fashionable is often prioritised over considerations about sustainable and ethical products. Other factors that affect consumer behaviour are “price, value, trends and brand image” (McNeill & Moore 2015:212). The awareness of sustainable products tends to be low among fast fashion consumers and they are constantly lured to continue consuming new products. The authors describe that the ones with the least concern for the environment are the ones who consume fast fashion the most. Thus, the key to effective change is an interest in sustainability and an increased knowledge of fast fashion (McNeill & Moore 2015).

People's consumption behaviour was, according to McNeill & Moore (2015) threefold: ‘sacrifice’ consumers, ‘self’ consumers and ‘social’ consumers. The ‘sacrifice’ consumers reduced their consumption to ease the impact on the environment of the clothing industry. The ‘self’ consumers focused on themselves and prioritised speed and price over sustainability. The third group who were categorised as ‘social’ consumers cared about social well-being, which included an environmental concern. This group were identified to have the greatest potential to increase their sustainable consumption through marketing because they had not completely embraced sustainable consumption yet (ibid.). Change in consumption behaviours from fast fashion towards environmentally friendly alternatives could be encouraged if sustainable clothing manufacturers gained the consumers' trust (ibid.).

Jung & Jin (2016) studied people's behaviour towards slow fashion through survey answers from 221 U.S citizens. The authors state that there is a growing demand for slow-fashion garments, which have been produced of higher quality and in a slower process. The garments produced in this production tend to be fewer in number and more expensive than fast fashion garments. To further explain the concept of slow fashion, Jung & Jin (2016) identified five consumer dimensions: *Exclusivity*, they desire exclusive clothes; *Localism*, local materials used; *Equity*,



fair-trade labels; *Authenticity*, handmade clothes being appreciated; and *Functionality*, the clothes need to be versatile and last longer. After the data analysis, the authors could identify four consumer groups: Low-involved in slow fashion; Exclusivity oriented; Conventional; and Highly involved in slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2016).

Lundblad & Davies (2016) studied the motivations and values regarding sustainable clothing consumption through 39 interviews. The authors argue that the understanding of sustainable clothing consumption is low due to few studies have been made on the topic. Sustainable fashion can be described by multiple terms: “organic, green, fair trade, sustainable, slow, eco and so forth [...], each attempting to highlight or correct a variety of perceived wrongs in the fashion industry including animal cruelty, environmental damage and worker exploitation.” (Lundblad & Davies 2016:149). The concept of sustainable fashion can therefore be seen as clothes produced without a negative impact on the environment, animals or workers (ibid.).

## 2.2 Studies on Gender

Zhao et al. (2021) state that “there is a lack of integration of gender differences in green consumption and the underlying mechanism that associates with these disparities” (Zhao et al. 2021:1). The findings presented involved that men tend to have a higher knowledge than women regarding global environmental problems, but men do not act upon this knowledge when it comes to green consumption (ibid.). The behaviour of green consumption is connected to femininity and is therefore generally performed by women. Zhao et al. (2021) describe this as an obstacle for men to become green consumers because that prevents them from acting in a ‘masculine’ way and the gender norms of green consumption may affect their masculinity. Men would for instance refuse to use reusable shopping bags to avoid feminine attributes (ibid.).

Another difference in green consumption between the genders is that women act in a social-altruistic orientation, self-sacrifice and care for others, while men act in an egoistic or self-centred orientation (ibid.). Zhao et al. (2021) mean that men often act environmentally friendly if they can benefit from it and they put their own needs first hand, which has been created from social norms. However, Lundblad & Davis (2016) state that egoistic values, such as ‘value for the money’, ‘better self-esteem’, ‘better health’ and a ‘sense of accomplishment’, may have a more significant impact on sustainable consumption than altruistic values, i.e., ‘social justice’ and ‘protecting the planet’. Sustainable clothing brands could push on egoistic values

to attract new customers instead of having the customers by themselves find information on sustainable clothing (Lundblad & Davies 2016).

## 2.3 Studies on Men

Previous studies on men and consumption discuss how men consume clothing, but not *why* men consume (Barry 2015). Barry (2015) performed a qualitative study to understand why men consume clothing. His findings show that men could express their identity through fashion but felt obstructed due to masculinity norms (ibid.). When researching how young men in New Zealand consume, McNeill & McKay (2015) concluded that the emotional well-being of young men increased through clothing consumption, and it did not compromise their self-identified masculinity. The authors further discussed the lack of studies on men's relationship with clothing consumption compared to studies on women (McNeill & McKay 2016).

Sung & Woo (2019) studied Gen-Y (born between 1977 to 1994) males' attitude towards slow fashion alongside the concept of a 'Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability' (LOHAS). There is a gap in the research on men's attitudes toward slow fashion, but previous studies indicate that Gen-Y male consumers are willing to buy sustainable alternatives and prefer clothing of high quality, which often are produced by slow fashion retailers (Sung & Woo 2019). With an increasing demand for menswear, the authors state that there is a need for more slow-fashion retailers to meet the demand for high-quality products (ibid.). The study indicated that Gen-Y males had a positive attitude towards slow fashion if they were pursuing a LOHAS and enjoyed buying a few high-quality clothes with a longer lifespan than 'regular' clothes. Slow fashion retailers can fulfil the demands of Gen-Y males because the men tend to be brand loyal or have a habit of frequently visiting the same store for convenience. The Gen-Y male group of the study also felt that they would get value for the money and were favourable to higher costs for slow fashion products (ibid.).

How masculinity affects men's consumption is described to be an unexplored topic and may be important to further understand how men express their identity through fashion (Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008). Bertrand & Davidovitsch (2008) studied if masculinity was an obstacle for men to be involved in clothing consumption and how it affects their decision processes. The authors concluded that the consumption by men in the study was not univocal. However, the interviewees feared getting their masculinity questioned if they wore skinny clothes because it is associated with homosexuality (ibid.). The interviewees showed some similarities and differences in their consumption but the main factor affecting the men was their personal involvement in shopping. Depending on the men's involvement, they

could be described as either 'anti-fashion male', 'singular male' or 'grooming male' (ibid.). The 'anti-fashion male' was described as a man who displayed low interest in fashion and only bought clothes when they strongly needed new ones. The price of the clothes was an important aspect, alongside the style of the clothing items (ibid.). The second category, 'singular male', could be identified as a man who has a plan for what to buy before visiting a store and sticking to the plan. The man would try clothes for a long time to be sure of not being in need to return the clothing item later. If he finds multiple clothes that fit, he can buy them all and then he would not need to go back to the store for a while. The 'singular male' can have favourite brands because they are believed to have higher quality than other brands (ibid.). The interviewees who expressed their interest in fashion and enjoyed visiting stores were categorised as a 'grooming male'. Shopping alone and spending a long time in stores are seen as enjoyment for the 'grooming male' instead of an act that must be made, as the 'anti-fashion male'. Masculinity is seen by the 'grooming male' as a well-dressed man who gains respect through fashion (ibid.). The authors end by explaining the results should not be used to generalize men due to the small size of interviewees.

Otnes & McGrath (2001) studied stereotypes of male shopping and if the stereotypes were supported or dismissed through male shopping behaviour. Shopping for clothes has been considered a feminine activity and thus, the understanding of men's shopping is minimal. Three stereotypes were identified and described as 'grab and go', a man buys the first item he sees in a store and leaves as quickly as he went in; 'whine and/or wait', younger men are unhappy and whining and older men are bored and waiting for their partner to finish shopping; and 'fear of the feminine', avoiding feminine shopping behaviours such as frequently shopping and spending a long time in stores (Otnes & McGrath 2001).

The stereotype 'grab and go' was contradicted by evaluation behaviour, browsing behaviour and bargaining. The interviewees evaluated between clothing items before a decision was made and used the internet to find clothes before going to a store. It may therefore appear the shopping behaviour is 'grab and go', but in reality, the men had done research before visiting the store (ibid.). The whining part was contradicted because there was no evidence of any men whining, but the stereotype of men being bored when shopping was supported. The male interviewees could feel bored if they felt unwanted or unneeded when shopping with their partners. However, if the man would be delegated a task such as carrying bags or entertaining the children, his attitude to shopping would become more positive than before (ibid.). Fear of the feminine is contradicted by status and control. The interviewees believe feminine items such as china can become a status symbol if the item is expensive and then displayed. The men tried to become experts in feminine items to control their shopping and strengthen their relationships (ibid.).

Rahman & Navarro (2022) studied the relationship between clothing consumption, heightism, and body image of men. Previous studies on body image focus only on women and a reason for this could be that women are facing stronger sociocultural pressure on their appearance than men (Rahman & Navarro 2022). Because of the limited knowledge of men's body image and height in relation to their shopping, the authors argue that it is important to create a better understanding of this topic (ibid.). For consumers whose measurements do not fit the standard apparel sizing, it could become a challenge to find clothes with a good fitting. Especially for men who are overweight and/or short (ibid.). Based on their findings, short men find shopping for well-fitted clothes to be a daunting task and become frustrated. Short men tend to have a greater problem finding clothes that fit than long men (ibid.).

### 3. Research Design

To understand what characterizes men's clothing consumption, and how it is affected by male norms and if sustainability aspects are considered, I needed to collect information about men's consumption habits. I chose to collect this information by conducting three focus groups with a semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix 1) where men can talk about their clothing consumption. Furthermore, I applied frame analysis to the collected information, to identify and discuss the values and beliefs affecting men's habits.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

I was guided by Robson & McCartan (2016) to conduct a semi-structured interview guide because it let the participant's answers be more flexible than those from a structured interview guide. The order of questions can be modified to fit the conversation and allow follow-up questions to get deeper into the answers that might be of value (Robson & McCartan 2016). A structured interview guide can lead to answers that the participants think I want to hear instead of what they believe in, which I want to avoid. Therefore, I used a semi-structured interview guide for the focus groups.

The groups are seen as 'focus groups', as explained by Robson & McCartan (2016), because a specific topic, men's consumption, will be discussed. Focus groups have the ability to collect qualitative data from different people at once which makes it an effective method for data collection (Robson & McCartan 2016). Other benefits of focus groups are that the participants encourage each other to be active during the session and create an in-depth discussion (ibid.).

The focus groups were assembled through common friends due to convenience and time limits. My personal relationship with the participants was low with the idea of not getting biased answers. There were three different focus groups. The focus groups consisted of three to five people and the groups were divided into students (S), young adults (YA) and adults (A) (Table 1).

*Table 1. The number of participants is divided into focus groups and cities.*

Focus Group	Age range	Total of participants	City
Students	25-28	3	Uppsala
Young adults	30+	3	Stockholm
Adults	50+	5	Uppsala

I wanted the groups to be homogeneous because I believe if the people in the group know each other, they would feel safe expressing themselves, which would increase the exchange of ideas. Robson & McCartan (2016) states that ‘groupthink’, similarity in opinions, could emerge from a homogenous group. My study could benefit from this phenomenon because it could get the participants to discuss their consumption on a deeper level instead of arguing with each other about their different opinions. The chance to deal with power hierarchies and someone dominating the group will be lower than in a heterogeneous group (Robson & McCartan 2016).

To collect information from the focus groups, I used an interview guide. I began by writing down all questions I want answered with inspiration from previous studies. Then I created three broad discussion questions based on the questions I want to be answered. When I had the questions written down, I continued designing the interview guide with a short introduction to the thesis and the purpose of the focus groups. They were presented before the discussion questions alongside the anonymity of the participants and some basic rules. Before the focus group session, the participants got an invitation containing a description to bring two different clothing items to present during the session, one item they consider to be their favourite item and one item they do not like. The clothes were used for a warm-up exercise at the beginning of the session. I did not know how often the participants discuss clothing, and by presenting their most and least valuable items may help them in the right mood of talking about clothes. I ended the discussion by showing a reusable canvas bag and asked for the participant’s opinion because previous studies stated that men do not use reusable bags (Zhao et al. 2021). The session with the students took place in a group room on SLU, whereas the other two sessions were held on Zoom. The sessions lasted around one and a half hours each.

I began recording after an oral agreement from every participant at the beginning of the session. After the session, the recordings were transcribed before the analysis could begin. It is further explained in part 3.2.2.

## 3.2 Frame Analysis

The study aims to develop an understanding of how gender norms influence men's consumption in relation to sustainability and conscious consumption. I find frame analysis suitable because it focuses on a specific phenomenon (Lindekilde 2014), in this case, men's meanings of clothing consumption. Lindekilde (2014) argues that framing happens at many levels in communication and is used to interpret the meanings of phenomena. Frame analysis as a tool can identify the aspects that engage men to consume through their expressed experience during the focus group sessions.

Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) defines framing as “It organizes prior knowledge (including that derived from experience) and values held, and it guides emergent action” (van Hulst & Yanow 2016:98). Framing is a concept used to describe the meaning-making of a situation and interpreting experiences (Müller & Kruse 2021). Goffman (1974) introduced meaning-making as a concept to the concept of frames, but the methodology of frame analysis was first introduced by Mead (1934) and Bateson (1973) (Westin 2019). Frames organize experiences and define how situations are understood (6 2005; van Hulst & Yanow 2016). Entman (1993) describe frames as “[it] determines whether most people notice and how they understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it.” (Entman 1993:54), which means how we process and manage these events. Lindekilde (2014) states that norms, habits, and culture can be aspects that influence frames when studying society and the possibility of social groups sharing similar perceptions.

### 3.2.1 Diagnosis and Action Bias

Framing can be divided into a ‘diagnosis’ with a corresponding ‘action bias’. Entman (1993) uses diagnoses to explain the cause of the problem, how people choose to process and understand it, and whether it leads to action. A behavioural response to the diagnosis can be seen as a bias for action, implying a predetermined decision has already been made (6 2005). Framing can thus be divided into two functions; a diagnosis and an action bias (Entman 1993; van Hulst & Yanow 2016; Westin 2016). Westin (2019) describes that a diagnosis explains actors' actions in a situation and frames highlight these diagnoses. A diagnosis is followed by an action bias to explain the diagnosed situation. It is exemplified by ‘what is going on’ for the diagnosis and ‘what should be done’ for the action bias (Rein & Schön 1996; Westin 2019). Perri 6 (2005) states that there are various ways of interpreting different framing styles, and no style is superior to the other, all have their strength and weaknesses. In this thesis, I use ‘diagnosis’ to identify how men talk about and

explain their consumption of clothes, and ‘action bias’ how they act out their consumption based on what has been told.

### 3.2.2 Applying Frame Analysis

To be able to explain the frames affecting men’s consumption, I must understand how the participants perceive and explain what they find important with their clothing consumption and what kind of consumption habits this leads to. To identify the diagnosis and action bias in the transcribed recordings, a thematic analysis was made.

In my thematic analysis, I was guided by Braun & Clarke (2006). This means that the analysis included five phases: Familiarizing with the data; Generating codes; Searching for themes; Reviewing themes; and Defining and naming themes. I began by transcribing the sessions using the program Trint and then went through the transcripts and corrected the content manually to create a finished product that would reflect the original audio file of the sessions. Afterwards, I read through the finished transcripts to familiarize myself with the content. The transcripts were then uploaded to the program NVivo 12, to three separate NVivo projects, one for each group. They were coded one by one, and the codes were chosen on the relevance of the aim and questions of the thesis, which involved how the participants expressed their thoughts and actions related to their clothing consumption.

When the three projects had been coded, I sorted the codes into overall themes to describe the participant’s consumption patterns. From the themes and codes, multiple diagnoses and action biases were created. To identify the diagnoses, I focused on how the participants talked about and explained what was important for them in their consumption and why. The action biases were based on how they chose to act due to these diagnoses.

The selection of diagnoses and action biases was limited to the dominant ones, which are the ones that were referred to several times in the focus groups and the majority of men agreed upon. The findings are presented in part 4.



### 3.3 Critical Reflection

What I need to have in mind when performing the study is that the results only can be applied to the participants. The size of the study must be bigger if the results would be applied to all men in Sweden. Robson & McCartan (2016) argue that a disadvantage of focus groups is that the results cannot represent a wider population. The study aims only to highlight aspects that correspond to the participant's consumption and get a better understanding of men's consumption, as well as show how a study on this topic can be performed. Another disadvantage of doing focus groups was to facilitate the group and keep the group on track. Only one session was face-to-face which was surprisingly easy to facilitate. The other two sessions were challenging because they were on Zoom and the participants had a hard time concluding a discussion before another could begin. The use of body language was minimal, and I had to manage the groups more actively than in the face-to-face session.

Other data collection methods could have been applied, such as shopping observations. However, I could not follow the same participants to stores because they rarely visit stores. If I had observed random people in stores, I would not be able to get deeper into how they express their consumption as I would in sessions. However, observation would be a good compliment to the thesis to further analyse men's shopping behaviour. Surveys could also be applied to get a wider group of participants, but it would be a quantitative study. Robson & McCartan (2016) argue that a survey study would need at least 200 answers and that a realistic period for data collection is three to four months, so I chose to reject this idea due to time limitations. A survey study would not either provide the depth of understanding which I was looking for. The answers could be altered due to social values and the participants would be biased to what they think the scientist wants to hear (Robson & McCartan 2016).

Lindekilde (2014) argues for the similarities and differences between frame and discourse analysis when studying social movements. The similarity between the two analytical frameworks is their ability to interpret social interactions of phenomena in society but differs in the actual analysis of the data (ibid.). Discourse analysis is used to analyse how a text is produced, distributed, and received through its social context, whilst frame analysis explains the social construction of a phenomenon (ibid.). Frame analysis also has a smaller focus area than discourse analysis when it comes to understanding social constructions. Because of this, I have chosen frame analysis to focus on the social construction of men's clothing consumption which is narrowly studied through focus groups.

## 4. Identifying Diagnosis and Action Bias - Result and Analysis

First, I present the findings from the focus group sessions. The results will be presented through the three focus groups: students, young adults, and adults. Second, the findings from the groups are discussed in part 5 and compared between each other and to relevant literature.

### 4.1 Students

*Table 2. The diagnosis and action bias of the students.*

Diagnosis	Action bias
Sceptical towards the clothing industry and towards big brands.	Avoid shopping for new clothes.
Find buying clothes to sometimes be necessary but boring.	Only buy when there is a need for a new clothing item and never shop for fun.
Find big shopping malls and big stores to be repulsive.	Shop in smaller stores with a limited range and second-hand stores.

#### 4.1.1 Diagnosis

The most dominant diagnosis of consumption habits that I identified in my analysis from the session with the students is their scepticism towards the clothing industry and popular brands such as H&M. They express their basic knowledge of the clothing industry and feel repulsive to the industry due to its environmental impact and the negative effects on the people producing the clothes. The students doubted both cheap and expensive brands but care about the quality of the clothes and are therefore restrictive in their choices. They could agree that clothes of higher quality cost more. Although, because of the huge difference in price between clothes of lower quality and higher quality, they also felt sceptical about premium clothes and if it could be related to greenwashing. Due to the scepticism towards the fashion industry and the students' perceived lack of knowledge, they found it difficult to distinguish between more environmentally friendly brands and less environmentally friendly ones. They also expressed their lack of trust in brands claiming to be environmentally friendly.

According to the students, buying clothes is sometimes necessary but boring, which has been identified as an additional diagnosis. The necessity involves its function or if they have a shortage of certain clothing items. The norm that men do not like shopping (Otnes & McGrath 2001), and only do it when they really need to, is prominent among the students. They refer to their background as biology students to explain why they choose functionality over appearance because they want to move through forests with durable clothes. For example, a student has a pair of work pants that he has used throughout the year because of their functionality.

Another diagnosis identified in the analysis is that the students find big shopping malls and big stores to be repulsive and therefore avoid these stores. They want to spend as little time as possible on their shopping and having a too wide range of clothing makes it harder for them to find the clothing items they are looking for. To find the right clothes, they prefer smaller stores with a limited range. Smaller stores tend to have a higher price but better quality than the bigger stores, which the students prefer.

#### 4.1.2 Action bias

The students expressed their will to make good choices in their shopping but do not trust the clothing industry and therefore, avoid shopping for new clothes. According to my analysis, their action bias to the scepticism is that they only buy when there is a need for a new clothing item and never shop for fun. They prefer to not shop for new clothes rather than to learn more about the clothing industry. By not shopping for new clothes, they avoid supporting the problems caused by the clothing industry.

The choice of shopping in second-hand stores is seen by the students as an alternative to understanding the clothing industry because when they buy clothes from a second-hand store, they save clothes from being destroyed or thrown away. They feel satisfied with themselves by making a sustainable choice when shopping second-hand and do not show any scepticism towards these stores. The students also expressed that they have reflected on the clothing industry for a long time and try to minimise their shopping due to the environmental impact. I interpret that the students justify their lack of knowledge of the industry by only shopping second-hand. The students have a better understanding of the environmental aspects of second-hand stores and could therefore trust the stores more than newly produced items and environmentally friendly brands. One student described the positive outcomes from second-hand stores as: "I go to second-hand stores a lot because it's cheaper and you basically get the same quality, and it feels better environmentally." (S3).

The students argue that quality is the most important aspect when shopping for new clothes because they want to be able to use the clothing item for a long time. The problem stated by the students is finding clothes that fit because of their length. The difficulty for students to find clothes with a good fit could be related to their low interest in clothes. One student considers himself to be shorter than the average Swede and it becomes difficult to find clothes that fit. The other students agree that some clothing items are harder to find a good size on, jeans for instance. They describe it as if the length is good, then the jeans are too wide at the waist, and if the waist is good, then the jeans are too short.

The identified action bias to the students' lack of interest in shopping is that they only buy when there is a need for a new clothing item and never shop for fun. One student described shopping as: "It's not angst-ridden, it's just like a task you could say." (S2), implying it is only a task that needs to be done rather than a recreational activity. The students state that they would never buy clothes on impulse and only go shopping when they are looking for a specific item.

When looking for a specific item, the students try to have a clear image of what they are looking for, whether it is a shirt or a pair of jeans. Sometimes they know what type of clothing item they need without knowing what they are looking for. Visiting a store has a specific purpose and they would rarely go inside and look around without searching for a clothing item. The students state that if they cannot find the item they are looking for, they will not buy something similar to that clothing item. They would instead refrain from shopping than buy something at all. Their need for the clothing item is their motivation to consume and despite not always having a clear search image, they would never buy something impulsively.

The students could not remember the last time they bought something on impulse, which could be related to only visiting stores when they are looking for a specific clothing item. Not enjoying trips to stores could also be an aspect of why they never impulsively buy clothes. This shows the students' lack of interest in clothing consumption and once again, see it only as a task that must be done. Functionality is argued by the students to be important when choosing clothes and its appearance become secondary. They can wear clothes that they consider to be ugly due to a mix of mismatching colours or larger sizes but are continued to be used based on their functionality.

The action bias to the stores and malls being repulsive is the student's choice of stores, which is limited to smaller stores with a limited range and second-hand stores. The student's choice of second-hand stores can be seen as twofold; first, they have a low range of clothes and second, it is good for the environment. The second-hand stores are highly valued by the students due to the stores' limited range and

low environmental impact. According to the students, it is easier to decide and takes a shorter period of time to buy a clothing item if there are fewer clothes to choose from. One student stated: “Then the range is much smaller, so it becomes easier to find instead of you having a whole shop of shirts so maybe you have a shelf with t-shirts that fit, and you have ten choices or something. And then it is much easier to find something that works, instead of running around a store for hours.” (S3). By actively searching for good quality, the students make conscious choices in their consumption. Buying fewer items of clothing and choosing sustainably produced products or second-hand reduces the environmental impact of their consumption.

The smaller range makes it easier to find a clothing item to their liking and where they can pay a bit extra for quality. According to the students, sustainably produced clothing items can hold longer and could have a lower impact on the environment than cheap items. If students buy something for its function, they will use it frequently and it will need to be of high quality. The students seek high quality to minimize the number of visits to stores, which results in fewer clothing items being bought. This is consistent with their low interest in clothing consumption and only shopping when they require new clothes. The students want basic clothing items and are therefore not in need of big stores with a wide range of clothes.

## 4.2 Young Adults

*Table 3. The diagnosis and action bias of the young adults.*

Diagnosis	Action bias
Prefer high quality brands over cheap ones.	Buy clothes less often but multiple items.
Prefer low variation of clothes and few colours.	Only buy neutral, solid-coloured clothing items that are flexible and fit with everything.
High price is good quality.	Buy less often, but preferably many clothing items at the same time.

### 4.2.1 Diagnosis

The central diagnosis during the session with the young adults is that they prefer high quality brands over cheap ones. The young adults said they know from experience that cheap garments would wear out faster than more expensive ones. They consider high-quality clothes to have a longer lifespan than cheap clothes and are therefore worth paying for. All clothes have, according to the young adults, a price range worth buying them for. The most expensive clothing item has the same quality as the second most expensive one. The quality of clothes can only reach a limited quality of the material. The young adults argued that the premium clothes only cost more due to other aspects such as organic material or produced by a popular brand. However, they feel tricked if the price is too good and will not buy clothes below the price range, they think the garment should cost to be of high quality. The young adults expressed their interest in quality rather than how environmentally sustainable the clothing was. They, therefore, measure quality through price.

A second diagnosis that I identified was the young adult's low variation of clothes they own and of few colours. The young adults prefer clothes with colours that do not stand out and have a flexible use. It is important for the young adults that the new clothing item can match the old ones because it will be continuously used. They argued that the choice of neutral colours, such as black and beige, will always be in fashion and fit alongside other clothing items. The young adults described the use of only basic colours as a male norm, and they see themselves as fitting into that norm. They are aware of male norms, but according to them, this is the way they like to dress. For instance, one young adult said: "In terms of colour, I think I follow that norm in any case. With neutral, non-flashy colours." (YA3). The colour is not the only important aspect for a clothing item to be flexible, what kind of

clothing item is also essential. Pants and shirts are discussed as flexible clothes because they are the most used items by the young adults, thus being described as their most favoured clothing items.

The young adults' perception of sustainable clothing is that high price is good quality, which is another diagnosis I have identified in the analysis. According to the young adults, expensive clothes tend to be made of environmentally friendly materials and produced during good working conditions, thus being a sustainable choice. They argued that expensive brands offer both good quality and are trustworthy, in contrast to cheap brands which are unreliable and consist of worse quality than the expensive clothing items. The young adults create a strong trust towards expensive brands to fulfil the expectations of being more environmentally friendly than cheaper brands. The young adults describe expensive brands as being interlinked with good quality but should not cost a fortune. They believe all clothes have a price limit where to quality will not get better and they try to find brands at this quality limit because they do not want to overpay.

#### 4.2.2 Action bias

The action bias from the consumption habits revolved around buying clothes less often but multiple items. When they are searching through sales online, they tend to buy multiple items because of good prices on clothes of high quality. The young adult explained that when they are shopping, it must be effective because they do not want to put too much time into it. One young adult stated: “You look at a lot of pants and you find several. Maybe three pairs of pants.” (YA2). When looking for a specific clothing item, they could find multiple items and buy them all if they all fit, thus making shopping more time efficient.

Before a new season begins, the young adults were more prone to buy new clothes and could buy multiple items. During the switch in season, the young adults could donate the previous seasons' clothes because they argued that some clothes were too daring or had a bad fit. Their old clothes were often in good condition because of high quality and were donated to the nearest second-hand store. One young adult argued that the old clothes had only been used a few times and were still in good condition when donated: “No, they are in excellent condition. They are often only used a few times as well. Either it was perhaps an attempt to branch out in a new style or something like that.” (YA2). The young adults stated that they would never throw away clothes unless it is in a condition beyond repair.

The young adults argued that there is rarely a need to buy new clothes. They have all the clothes they need but would not abstain from sales. The reasons for the young adults consume premium clothes at a good price are through emails and advertisements from social media informing them of sales. When they get sales

advertisements, they tend to tell themselves they need some new clothes and look for brands which they know have a good fit and are of high quality. By creating a consumption pattern of only buying the same brands, their phones have learned this and provided them with advertisements to their liking. One young adult was speculating on this matter: “But also social media, they have learned which brands I like, I guess.” (YA3).

The action bias to owning clothes of few colours is that the young adult's consumption consists of neutral, solid-coloured clothing items that are flexible and fit with everything. As mentioned in the diagnosis, flexibility is important for the young adults and therefore, their consumption is directed towards basic coloured clothing items. They rotate similar clothes all the time and will therefore search for similar clothes when shopping. The young adults describe the norm of working clothes as an aspect that may have affected their style. They believe their style has stopped changing since they got their jobs due to the identified norms in their workplace.

The traditional male norm of favouring a store or a brand (Sung & Woo 2019) is visible in the young adults. Due to shopping online and not wanting to send the clothes back, the young adults choose few brands which they know fit. One young adult argued: “If you assume from how I usually shop, it's [...] from the same brands all the time and then you buy their trendiest variants.” (YA2).

The action bias to the young adult's perception of expensive clothes being of high quality is that they take a long time when shopping and buy less often, but multiple clothing items can be bought at the same time. They never buy on impulse and think carefully about when they consume and try to do it during sales. The willingness to pay for premium clothes is most evident in items used every day and need to be of higher quality, such as jackets and shoes. Some clothing items are therefore argued to be worth spending more money on because they will be used for a long time. One young adult stated: “But I'm still willing to pay more to get something that lasts a long time.” (YA2). By buying clothing items of high quality, they will not need to buy multiple shoes or jackets often, which mitigates the use of resources.

The time spent searching for a clothing item increases with the price of the item. The young adults take a long time to decide on what clothing item they need to buy because they strive for quality. As mentioned earlier, the young adults believe high price is interlinked with high quality and are therefore willing to pay extra for premium clothes. One young adult thought that: “The price always affects the quality. [...] If you buy something that is more expensive, the quality is better, I suppose.” (YA3).



## 4.3 Adults

*Table 4. The diagnosis and action bias of the adults.*

Diagnosis	Action bias
Once you have found your style, there is no need to change it.	Go to a few selected stores that can offer favourite brands.
Lack of interest in clothes and fashion.	Make sure the shopping to be quick.
Clothes of high price last longer, and environmentally friendly certifications are a plus.	Only shop when needed, do not actively search for environmentally friendly certifications.

### 4.3.1 Diagnosis

The diagnosis of the adult's consumption habits involved that once you have found your style, there is no need to change it. They express that they feel satisfied with the brands, colours, and stores they started to appreciate long ago and they have no interest in fashion. Similar colours on the clothes were therefore often used because the adults only favour a few colours.

Another diagnosis identified in the analysis is the adults' lack of interest in clothes and fashion. One adult compared his feeling of shopping with sitting in a car queue. The service is important to the men due to their lack of interest. The staff can help them find clothes that fit, and the store is never crowded, which means they can get a lot of help. The adults wanted natural materials in their clothes without having been mixed with synthetic materials. They feel comfortable in these clothes and are a part of the adults' style. One adult stated: "I always want to have natural materials, cotton, linen, and wool. With a relatively little mixture of synthetic materials." (A1). The adults believe that clothes with synthetic materials have worse quality than those without and therefore search for clothes with natural fibres. According to the adults, expensive clothes of natural materials tend to have higher quality.

A third diagnosis identified in the analysis was that the adults perceive clothes of a high price to last longer. The adults conclude that expensive clothes have a longer lifespan and do not wear out as fast as cheap clothes. The adults were sceptical about the link between high price and high quality but from their experience, the two aspects are interrelated. The adults want to use the clothes for a long time because they do not buy new clothes very often. Clothes of higher quality were argued to have a better production line than cheap clothes, as an argument as to why they choose to buy more expensive clothing items.

### 4.3.2 Action bias

The action bias to finding their style is that they go to a few selected stores that can offer their favourite brands. The adults prefer a local store that only sells menswear where they can find everything they need, and the staff offer great service. When they like a clothing item, they will continue to buy it because of its quality and fit. They change clothes depending on the season but will only buy similar clothes to the ones they already own.

The adults have found clothes of high quality and thus, they do not want to change their shopping for other brands or in other stores. If they do not favour a store but a brand, they can buy the same brand in different stores. They do not expand their search for clothing items because they have already found them in their most visited stores and in popular brands. The adults just add the same clothing items when they need new clothes. One adult argued: “You have your style, which you add the same clothes to when they are worn out.” (A4). The choice of more expensive stores has been favoured by most men. Having clothes of high quality means that they do not need to buy clothes that often because the material does not get worn out too fast and the fitting continue to be good.

The action bias to the adults' lack of interest is that the adults want the shopping to be quick. The adults describe their shopping to be quick and efficient. They do not want to test too many clothes but only try the clothes they think they will buy. One adult argued: “And it should preferably be fast. I can't bear to keep trying one thing and the other, but I see something that I like, and if it fits, I buy it.” (A2). The only man who expressed that he liked shopping shared the same feeling of not wanting the shopping to take too much time. The adults become easily tired when shopping but sometimes appreciated it if they only spend half an hour in a store. The adults use the opportunity to shop when their wives want to because the men do not take the initiative to go shopping. The adults are aware of male norms and could see themselves fitting the norm of not being interested in clothing. They try to find alternative ways of shopping. If it is joining your wife or avoiding going with your wife, they have found their ways to shop without liking it.

It is often difficult to find colours that fit and as a result, they rarely try new colours. For instance, one adult stated: “I've probably had a hundred such [blue] shirts over the years that look pretty much the same.” (A4). Due to their lack of interest in clothing, they choose the clothes they feel comfortable in because they do not want to spend time on shopping. Finding fit clothes has also become a problem for some of the adults who do not fit the average male size. For the short adults, the arms of shirts tend to be too long because the ratio between the length of the arms and the length of the body does not fit the normal sizes. The long adults have the opposite

problem: their arms are too short. By having difficulties finding clothes that fit, they tend to give up on their search.

The action bias to the adult's perception of longer lifespan on expensive clothes is that they emphasised that they only buy new clothes when they see a need. Limiting their consumption to expensive stores and their old clothes last for a long time means they do not need to buy new clothes very often. Having a higher income now than they had when they were younger has contributed to the ability to buy expensive clothing. They tend to buy clothes made of organic material and labelled fair-trade because certifications are expressed to be highly valued, but they do not actively search for them. One adult search for environmentally friendly labels because the labels are associated with high quality and thicker material. The other adults agreed that the labels were desirable, but they did not actively look for them. If they found a clothing item to their liking and it had an environmentally friendly label, they would be happy about it. For instance, one adult stated: "And if I see one [garment] with environmental certification [...], I'm extra happy with that, of course." (A4). The adults want to make conscious choices when they buy clothes, and the labels guide them towards environmentally friendly garments. The environmental awareness of clothes was not evident in the group but was included indirectly when they choose to buy fewer clothes but of high quality and with sustainable labels.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the thesis is to understand men's consumption patterns in relation to clothing and what affects their consumption. In this section, I discuss the focus groups' similarities and differences through three themes; 'habits', 'traditional male norms' and 'how the participants perceive sustainable clothing'. The theme 'habits' is used to discuss the participant's consumption habits and the other two themes are used to discuss how norms and sustainable thinking affect these habits. The themes will also be compared to previous literature to reflect the similarities and differences in previous studies on men. I end the discussion by highlighting possible future research on the topic to further understand men's consumption behaviour.

### 5.1 Habits

The process of finding and buying new clothes was described by the focus groups as a long and boring process, which corresponds with a male stereotype explained by Otnes & McGrath (2001). The young adults explained to have solved this issue by only buying new clothes online and from known brands to get a guaranteed good fit. Then they would not need to test every clothing item and it is easier to find clothes on sale. This led to the young adults being able to buy multiple items without spending too much time shopping. The adult's solution was to find a good clothing store where they can buy all the clothes they need. They describe their style as fixed and will not change, thus not having to expand to new stores. The stores provide clothes that the adults become familiar with and can find clothing items that have a good fit. Then the adults put a similar amount of time as the young adults into their shopping because they learned their sizes. The young adults discussed their style to be fixed too as a result of getting a full-time job. The students, on the other hand, instead try to avoid clothing consumption due to their scepticism towards the fashion industry. The huge price gap between cheap and expensive clothing made students sceptical of premium brands as well. All three groups are willing to pay for better quality but because 'quality' is, according to the students, difficult to define, the students instead turn to second-hand stores. The adults and young adults consider expensive clothes to be of high quality and therefore avoid shopping for cheap brands.

Sung & Woo (2019) describe gen-Y males choosing to buy expensive clothes because they know they will get value for the money. Other aspects mentioned by the authors to distinguish the consumption of gen-Y males are favoured stores and to be brand loyal. This matches the idea behind the young adults' consumption

behaviour. Zhao et al. (2021) also mentioned the egoistic orientation of value for the money is an aspect of men's desire, which the focus group of adults also expressed to be important. This trait is characterised as 'singular male' and is explained by Bertrand & Davidovitsch (2008) as a man who is brand loyal and seeks out quality. Other traits involve having a fixed plan of what to buy, buying multiple items and caring for others' opinions (ibid.). The other characteristic traits were presented as 'grooming male', feeling happiness for shopping, and 'anti-fashion male', only buying when they need to (ibid.). Most of the young adults and adults in my study match the description of being a 'singular male', except one adult matching the 'grooming male' and the students who match the 'anti-fashion male'. The conclusion by Bertrand & Davidovitsch (2008) of men not being univocal in their shopping can therefore be applied to the three focus groups in this study. The idea of personal involvement to be the driving factor (Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008) can be used to explain how the participants discuss their consumption. For instance, the students expressed their low personal involvement, thus being categorised as the 'anti-fashion male' and the adult with high personal involvement being categorised as the 'grooming male'. The young adults showed a level of personal involvement where they search for expensive clothes but do not regularly shop for new clothes. They are aware that the premium clothes they buy have a better production line than cheap clothes and therefore do not spend more time reading about the brands.

## 5.2 Traditional Male Norms

The three stereotypes of 'grab and go', 'whine and/or wait', and 'fear of the feminine' (Otnes & McGrath 2001) were also refuted in the focus groups. However, a traditional male norm, based on Otnes & McGrath (2001), shown by the three groups was their lack of interest in buying clothes and a short time spent buying clothes, even though some participants expressed an interest in clothing. Due to their lack of interest in buying clothes, shopping must be quick. The students could not even remember the last time they bought new clothes. The process of buying new clothes was disliked by the two other focus groups as well and could be related to the challenge of finding clothes that fit. Rahman & Navarro (2022) explained the challenge for consumers who do not fit the standard sizes and the frustration that arises when shopping, which was visible in the focus groups. Participants in both focus groups of students and adults expressed difficulties finding the right size on clothes due to not fitting the standard clothing sizes.

Clothes were not important for the students, and they preferred function over appearance. Examples of clothes involving mismatching colours and sizes were discussed by the students when the function of the clothes was prioritised. Their

typical clothing items being frequently used were chequered shirts. The students only found shopping important when they had a strong need for a new clothing item. Shopping is deprioritized because the students do not find shopping to be fun and prioritise other activities instead. The adults shared this perception of shopping but not the young adults. The young adults expressed that shopping is easy due to only buying basic clothes of neutral colours, such as t-shirts and shirts.

The flexibility of clothes, which can match multiple outfits and be used in different occasions, can also be seen as a function of the clothes. However, it is not clearly expressed as a function by the young adults as it is by the students. It is more a theme of the young adults' clothes than just a function because they care about how their clothes look, which the students do not always do. The adults also care about their looks and find neutral colours to fit them and will continue using the same colour for many years. It is related to the adults' lack of interest in clothes and having a fixed style and may therefore not try as many new colours as the younger focus groups expressed. The young adults are trying to test different colours and patterns but will donate these clothes after realising it was not their style. This could be seen in how the young adults try to express their identity. When they feel that their clothes are old and do not match the ongoing trend, they donate them and buy new ones that better fit their style. Only one participant from all focus groups explicitly said to express his identity through his clothes. The absence of identity expression has been discussed as obstructed by masculinity norms (Barry 2015; Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008) but was not brought up by the participants during the sessions.

The traditional male norm of bargaining (Otnes & McGrath 2001) can be seen in the participant's habit of buying expensive clothes because they strive for value for money (Sung & Woo 2019; Zhao et al. 2021). Continuing the egoistic orientation stated by Zhao et al. (2021), they feel satisfied with a sense of accomplishment when they have made a good bargain and bought a premium clothing item, whether it was for full price, on sale or second-hand.

Studies involving men's consumption discussed if men were worried about getting their masculinity questioned (Barry 2015; Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008; McNeill & Moore 2015; Zhao et al. 2021), but it was not the case in these focus groups. When asked about their masculinity, no one cared about getting their masculinity questioned and some found it amusing to provoke other men with 'feminine' items, such as reusable bags and clothes with flower prints. Zhao et al. (2021) mentioned that men tend to avoid reusable bags because of their connection to femininity, but all participants found reusable bags practical and used frequently. The participants' backgrounds as either students or as highly educated could be related to their openness to feminine traits. There could be a low macho culture in their workplace

and among their friends that have shaped their opinions. Increasing gender equality could also be related to men's behaviour as is becoming more accepted by society to let men be interested in fashion.

### 5.3 How the Participants Perceive Sustainable Clothing

The use of the same clothes for a long period can be seen as sustainable because they are used until they are worn out (Jung & Jin 2016). Both the students and the adults are inclined to wear the clothes as long as possible, meanwhile, the young adults can easily be tired of their clothes and change them often. The adults describe the quality of clothes as withstanding multiple washes without losing colour or fit. It indicates the adult's intention to use the clothing items for a long time, which corresponds to the functionality dimension of slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2016). Defining the quality of clothes was difficult for all three groups, but the high price was the only explicit aspect that the groups stated. The explanation for this connection was the participant's assumption of expensive clothes being produced better and using environmentally friendly materials. Because the adults and young adults want to buy expensive clothes, they take a long time to decide and buy new clothes less often.

The adults were the only focus group to explicitly say that they appreciated environmentally friendly labels on their clothes, but none of the participants in this group actively searched for those labels. They describe it as a good choice and feel good about themselves for making a more sustainable choice, implying that they are aware of their clothing consumption. The students argued that because they almost buy everything second-hand, they did not need to search for these labels. Nevertheless, they also expressed satisfaction when making a sustainable choice. Personal satisfaction can be tied to the egoistic values explained by Lundblad & Davis (2016) as strong motivation for continuing sustainable shopping.

A problem that has risen from their lack of interest in clothes is that they lent the shopping to someone else. The students describe not being a part of the consumption behaviour, but they let others be a part of the behaviour for them. They do not actually avoid the problem as they explain. The consequences of handing over the responsibility to another person, in this case, their parents, could be that the students do not have to engage in and learn more about the complexity of the clothing industry. Some adults also explain that family members, mainly their wives, buy clothes for them, thus giving the responsibility of being aware of the clothing industry over to someone else.

Two of the three students' main source of new clothes is second-hand stores or clothes given by family and friends. The students describe the benefits of second-hand stores to be environmentally friendly because the consumer does not contribute to the production of new clothes. However, when the students accept new clothes given to them, they are not consistent in their avoidance of the clothing industry. They just let another person buy clothes for them and therefore, the students are still a part of the problem of the clothing industry, which they argue to avoid. They see themselves as individuals who avoid consuming new clothes because of their environmental impact but do not express reflection on other people contributing to the consumption of newly produced clothes for them.

Based on McNeill & Moore (2015), the three focus groups can reflect the described groups as 'sacrifice', 'self', and 'social' consumers. The students do not want to be a part of consuming newly produced products and therefore 'sacrifice' their consumption for the planet. The 'self' consumers are seen in the adults because they prioritise speed and price instead of sustainable alternatives. However, the adults were the only focus group mentioning environmentally friendly labels. The young adults display 'social' consumption because they want to fit into society and social norms of clothing. When the trend becomes slow fashion clothes of high quality, the social consumers follow the trend, which is seen in the young adults. Young adults in previous studies have shown a positive attitude towards slow fashion as a sustainable alternative (Sung & Woo 2019). McNeill & Moore (2015) state that 'social' consumers have the potential to increase their consumption of sustainable clothing alternatives and the young adults have already begun to buy these clothes. For this focus group, there is an opportunity for sustainable brands to reach out to them through social media and by email as these were the main aspects for the young adults' consumption. The students could also be of interest in sustainable brand if they gained the students' trust. According to McNeill & Moore (2015), gaining trust could encourage consumers to choose sustainable clothing and should be prioritised by these brands.



## 5.4 Future Research on Men's Clothing Consumption

As shown from previous studies, the absence of studies concerning men's consumption makes it difficult to study men in a bigger context. The effect of gender norms (Zhao et al. 2021), as well as personal involvement, stated by (Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008), are focus areas I believe should continue to be explored to better understand men's consumption behaviour. The focus groups in this study have touched on these areas and were evident explanations for their consumption behaviour.

If men should be able to reflect on their consumption, their awareness must increase. One solution could be through personal involvement. The participants in this study with high personal involvement displayed higher awareness than those with low personal involvement. Future studies could for instance examine different commercials directed at men's apparel and analyse which ones get the men's attention. The results could be used to explain why some men are sceptical of the clothing industry and how they could change their perception to trust slow fashion brands. This information could be valuable for sustainable brands to gain male customers.

The men in the study have shown an indirectly slow fashion behaviour by not shopping regularly and searching for clothes of high quality. I believe that if they were to be aware of their actions, their positive feeling about making a sustainable choice would increase and make them continue to buy sustainable clothing items. The participants in this study did not discuss how they express their identity through clothes but were brought up by Barry (2015) and Bertrand & Davidovitsch (2008). Studying men's feelings regarding clothing consumption in relation to identity expression could also be a possible direction towards understanding men's consumption behaviour.

## 6. Conclusion

The focus groups and the literature have shown that men's consumption is not univocal which means that there can be no generalization of the findings.

In summary, men's consumption in the study is characterized as less frequent and monotonous compared to women. The participants express low engagement in their shopping and do not enjoy it. The choices of what to buy are controlled by known brands and stores. The colours are similar to previously owned clothes because they have a fixed style and rarely leave their comfort zone. Personal involvement, as described by Bertrand & Davidovitsch (2008), can be used to explain their different clothing interests as well as the choice of material in clothes. Men in the study are prepared to pay for expensive clothes if they think the clothes are of high quality. Male norms, based on Otnes & McGrath (2001), affecting the participants' clothing consumption is their low interest in clothes and the shopping process must be quick. They get easily frustrated by clothes that do not fit and want to avoid testing multiple clothes. When a clothing item with a good fit is found, the same item will continuously be bought to make shopping more time efficient. The flexibility of clothes, which can match the rest of their clothes, was important to minimize the number of visits to stores. The men prioritise simplicity in clothes at the expense of their identity expression, which could be a result of male norms (Barry 2015; Bertrand & Davidovitsch 2008). Sustainability issues had a low involvement in the clothing consumption of the participating men. The only evident involvement was the students who bought most of their clothes second-hand and the adults who saw environmentally friendly labels as positive. However, buying high quality clothes with the intention of using them frequently correlates to the functionality dimension in the concept of slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2016). It can be seen as an indirect action towards sustainable clothing consumption. Following trends of environmentally friendly brands as 'social' consumers, explained by McNeill & Moore (2015), could also contribute to sustainable consumption.

To conclude, I argue that there is a need for more studies regarding the consumption behaviour of men to balance consumption studies and increase consumer awareness. Personal involvement was the most evident consumption aspect in this thesis, which can be used to understand how both women and men consume clothes for a sustainable future.

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# Popular Science Summary

The clothing industry is the world's second biggest polluter. A solution is to change from buying so-called 'fast fashion' from cheap brands, into buying clothes with better production with less pollution called 'slow fashion'. The industry and consumers share the responsibility for the pollution from clothing. Thus, consumer awareness must increase if a change can be made.

As a man with a clothing interest, I wanted to know how other men perceived their clothing consumption and if they consider sustainable aspects because there have only been a few studies on the topic. Due to social norms, shopping is seen as an activity performed by women and not men. Previous studies suggest that traditional male norms stop men from expressing their identity through their clothes and that men who are different from the standard sizes struggle to buy clothes with a good fit. To understand how other men think about their shopping, I invited students, young adults (age 30+) and adults (age 50+) to three focus group sessions to find out how they perceive their shopping. The method of frame analysis was used to analyse the men's shopping behaviour by looking into how they talked about and explained what was important for them in their consumption, called 'diagnosis', and how they proceeded with their shopping based on what was told, called 'action bias'. Diagnoses explain how the participants chose to process and understand their consumption, and a behavioural response to the diagnosis can be seen as an action bias, implying a predetermined decision has already been made.

The men in this study lacked interest in clothing and wanted quality over quantity, so they rarely bought new clothes. They searched for expensive brands they felt familiar with because these clothes have a good fit and can last through many washes. This behaviour fits the slow fashion concept and therefore, the men can be seen as role models for sustainable shopping. Personal involvement was seen as the most dominant aspect of the participants' consumption behaviour, which corresponded with previous studies. Participants with high personal involvement had a good understanding of the clothing industry and enjoyed shopping. In contrast, participants with low personal involvement had a low interest in both shopping and the industry.

The findings showed the complexity of men's consumption and highlighted its importance for sustainable consumption. For instance, identifying men's consumption can be used for the marketing of sustainable brands that target men. However, there is a further need for more studies regarding the consumption behaviour of men to balance consumption studies and increase consumer awareness.

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# Appendix 1 Interview Guide (in Swedish)

## **Tacka för att de ställer upp**

- samtycke om inspelning

## **Anledningen till intervjun**

- Skriver uppsats om mäns konsumtionsvanor
- Förstå mäns konsumtion bättre
- Lyfta fram mäns konsumtion, brist i vetenskapliga litteraturen
- Datainsamling för uppsats
- Oika fokusgrupper; studenter, unga vuxna och vuxna

## **Målet med intervjun**

- Förstå deras konsumtionsvanor
- Inget dömande, bara informerande

## **Bestäm en tidslängd på intervjun**

- ca 1 - 1,5 h

## **Anonymitet**

- Inga namn kommer ges
- Kommer inte publiceras nåstans
- Ljudfilen kommer raderas efter utfört arbete

Låter en person prata i taget, trevligare och enklare för transkribering

Finns inga dåliga svar

Har ni frågor före intervjun börjar?

## **Inledningsfråga/Uppvärmning:**

Berätta om ert favoritplagg samt ert minst omtyckta plagg

längre inledning för att de ska känna sig bekväma

## **Fråga 1: Kan ni berätta om hur ni går till väga när ni är behov av nya kläder, vad ni har för vanor när det gäller klädköp?**

Vilken är den vanligaste anledningen till att ni köper nya kläder?

Vilket är det senaste plagg du köpte? Varför valde du just det plagget?

Vad är viktigt för er när ni köper ett nytt plagg?

Hur ofta köper ni spontant kläder?

Upplever ni en fröjd av att köpa kläder? / Anser ni att köpa kläder ger er rekreationell glädje?

Brukar ni leta/vara på jakt efter specifika plagg?

Är det du själv som köper kläderna eller gör er partner/vän/förälder det åt dig?



Är vissa plagg enklare att hitta än andra? T.ex. byxor.

**Fråga 2: Vad är det som påverkar era val när ni köper kläder? Är det priset på plagget, kvalitet, vad som är trendigt, specifika märken och/eller något annat?**

Är ni villiga att betala lite mer för kläder av högre kvalitet?

Anser ni att ni tar medvetna beslut när ni köper kläder?

Vet du vart plaggen du köper kommer ifrån?

Vad vet ni om termerna 'fast fashion' och 'slow fashion'?

Vet du hur klädindustrin ser ut idag?

Vet du hur klädesplaggen produceras?

Känner du till den förening som klädindustrin skapar?

Vet du om arbetsförhållanden som sömmerskor har?

Utgår från prislappen?

Definera kvalitet?

**Fråga 3: Vilka normer tror ni finns om män och kläder/klädkonsumtion?**

Känner ni igen er själva i de beskrivna normerna?

Reagerar ni på män som går i blommigt, rosa, eller annat som uppfattas som feminint? Hur i så fall?

Går ni själva klädda i sådant som betraktas som feminint? Varför, varför inte?

Är kläder och klädstil en viktig fråga bland era manliga vänner?

Hur ser ni på män som verkar bry sig om hur de är klädda?

Pratar ni om kläder med andra män?

Är du rädd att ses som feminin om du är klädintresserad?

Är du rädd att klädkonsumtion ska påverka din maskulinitet?

Är det pinsamt/obekvämt att prata om kläder med andra män?

Om du ska prata om kläder med någon, vem/vilka vänder du dig till?

Är du rädd över att få din sexualitet ifrågasatt om du är klädintresserad?

Frågar ni om vart personen har köpt sina kläder om ni tycker att den har fina kläder?

Använder ni en sån här? (tygkasse)

**Fråga 4: Något ni själva vill tillägga?**

Klädvård? T.ex. fyller maskinen

Vem tvättar kläderna i hushållet? → följer klädernas rekommendationer för ökad hållbarhet

Vad gör du om ett plagg slits/går sönder? Lagas/slängs/fortsätter användas?

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