



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

*Jönköping International  
Business School*

# Factors influencing the intention to perform in-store recycling

A qualitative study applying the Theory of Planned  
Behaviour to the Swedish fashion industry

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# Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Factors influencing the intention to perform in-store recycling: A qualitative study applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour to the Swedish fashion industry  
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## Abstract

**Background:** Due to the fashion industry being one of the most polluting industries in the world with more clothing than ever being thrown away, attention has been brought to the need for more sustainable clothing behaviours. Therefore, the in-store recycling boxes have been introduced as an alternative for recycling. Previous literature has focused mainly on companies' perspectives or consumers purchasing behaviours, hence there is a gap for literature on consumers' disposal and recycling behaviours.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine what factors influence consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes. This will be done by applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991).

**Method:** A qualitative approach in terms of two focus groups and two individual interviews was applied. The study was made on the consumers' perspectives, and therefore the participants were 11 Swedish female students.

**Conclusion:** The empirical findings and analysis toward previous literature and theoretical framework revealed that the main factors influencing consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes are lack of information about the recycling process, the possibility to drop off damaged clothing, and the developing possibility to make new clothing out of recycled materials. The lack of information had the greatest impact, which was unfavourable toward the intention to perform the behaviour and hence obstructed the participants from using in-store recycling boxes.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and problem formulation

It is the second most polluting industry in the world constantly threatening the nature and the people on this planet, and obstructing a sustainable environment. The industry referred to is of course the fashion industry (Qutab, 2017). Still, we are buying more clothes than ever, and consequently throwing away more clothes than ever (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016). The industry is already producing over a billion clothes every year, and this is predicted to grow with 63 percent by 2030 (Campione, 2017). With this pace the fashion industry will be using a quarter of the planet's carbon budget by 2050 (Shepherd et al., 2017). When looking closer into the Swedish market, a report confirms that the trend is similar with sales that rose with seven percent during 2015 (Sternö & Nielsén, 2016). This rise in consumption in the clothing industry is especially because of the concept of fast fashion, which means that clothes nowadays are cheap and made to be worn only for a few times, and are then thrown away to be replaced by new ones (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). It is estimated that 95 percent of the clothes purchased are thrown away, even though they could have in fact been re-worn, reused or recycled instead, and less than one percent of the materials used to produce these clothes are coming back to the loop (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016; Shepherd et al., 2017). To put this in another way, it is also estimated that an entire garbage truck of textiles is wasted every second (Shepherd et al., 2017). So, what does this imply for the environment? Firstly, it is an enormous waste of the world's resources. Secondly, when the clothing that is thrown away ends up in incinerator stacks or landfills, it emissions hazardous chemicals and greenhouse gasses that contributes to the polluting of this planet. And if this is not enough, most of the pollution is not even emitted in the end of this supply chain, but during the production of the clothes (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016). For example, polyester that is now used in 60 percent of the clothing pieces contributes negatively by polluting the ocean with microfibers (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016), as much as to be equalled with the amount of 50 billion plastic bottles (Shepherd et al., 2017). The fact that so much pollution is emitted during the production stage means that getting more clothes back to the loop would prevent us from having to produce as many new clothes and use up even more of the world's scarce resources.

Due to the massive impact on pollution in the fashion industry, more and more clothing companies are starting to close the loop (Chow & Li, 2018) by maximizing value creation over the entire life cycle of the product, including customer returns and what happens with the products when they come back to the company (Govindan & Soleimani, 2017). In Sweden, only 20 percent of the textiles bought are being collected when they are no longer used (Elander, 2016), and without clothes being brought back to the loop the new systems of reusing the materials that are currently being developed and improved will be useless. For instance, the company re:newcell focuses on sustainable fashion and in 2014 produced their first dress made from jeans that had been recycled. Last year re:newcell constructed a demo plant with the capacity to produce 7000 tons of pulp that can be turned into new textile fibers (Re:newcell, 2018). This implies that there is a lot of work done on making it possible to reuse the materials from the collected clothing pieces, and when this really takes off the companies will need as much used clothing as possible to fully make use of this possibility. In many of the most popular clothing stores here in Sweden, for example at H&M, they now give their customers the opportunity to drop off old clothes in the store as an in-store recycling option. And at H&M, it is not exclusively their own clothes that could be dropped off for rewear, reuse, or recycling, instead any textiles without regard to condition or brand (H&M Gruppen, 2018). This makes it comparable to traditional second hand stores which can be found across Sweden where one can, among other things, drop off any types of clothes that one owns. The difference is, however, that stores like H&M do not only offer a drop off service, but instead a trade in service, which means the consumer receives a voucher in reward for trading in unwanted clothing (H&M Gruppen, 2018).

This in-store recycling alternative does not matter if people will still not drop off or trade in their clothes, and with less than one percent of the clothing staying within the loop (Shepherd et al., 2017) it raises the important question of how to incentivize customers to use this in-store recycling option. A lot of focus today on how to make the fashion industry more sustainable lays within how to reuse the materials or create and produce the clothing pieces in a more sustainable way. Accordingly, the research already done is from the companies' perspective and how they can and should work with sustainability. Although this is extremely important too, there is a gap in previous research on how to get the clothes back in the first place; that is, research done from the consumers'

perspectives. Yet the results might be more useful for companies or organizations that manage the in-store recycling boxes. With more stores joining the idea of in-store recycling, the availability for consumers is higher than ever; nonetheless, the amount of clothes being thrown away is still very high and therefore, this is in need to be reviewed.

## **1.2 Purpose and research question**

According to Barr (2007), the waste problem could be resolved through the understanding of what factors that influence intentions and behaviour. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine what factors influence consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes; this will be done by reviewing if and why or why not consumers use the in-store recycling boxes and what their opinions on these boxes are. Therefore, our research aims to answer the following research question:

*RQ: What factors influence consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes?*

This will be examined by applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB); this theory is suitable because we want to examine the factors that influence the intention to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Waste culture in the fast fashion industry**

The pieces of clothing sold in the world in 2015 compared to year 2000 has doubled from 50 billion to over 100 billion (Shepherd et al., 2017). This can be explained by the phenomena of fast fashion. Already 25 years ago, Bailey (1993) concluded that there was a transformation within the apparel industry when companies started to transform from the old fashioned mass production to quicker production systems. When the more traditional systems were still in use in the fashion industry, it took a lot longer for the clothing to be produced. However, the transformation from these to the quick response systems made fast fashion feasible, which changed the entire industry (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). Fast fashion has made apparel easily substitutional (Shepherd et al., 2017); with more retailers focusing on speed to market (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010), new styles are coming out all the time (Shepherd et al., 2017) and an increased number of fashion seasons have been introduced to the market. Today, it is only a six week waiting time from catwalk to store, compared to the previous six months (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Consequently, impulsive buying has become more common (Mcneill & Moore, 2015) with fashion being available for everyone and part of the daily life. But to be able to produce new trends this rapidly, both quality and costs have gone down (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2017). In addition, the knowledge on how to clean stains and perform basic sewing is diminishing nowadays, which is an issue when trying to push for more sustainable consumption (Norum, 2013). According to a survey made in the UK, 59 percent of the people are not able to sew at all (British Heart Foundation, 2017), showing that it is a skill lost by today's generations.

As presented, fast fashion has led to significant problems for the environment. With the increased popularity of fast fashion retailers, the waste has increased as well (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012; Bukhari, Carrasco-Gallego, & Ponce-Cueto, 2018; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). This is due to the high supply of cheap clothing being sold and the encouragement of the existing throwaway culture. The problem that fast fashion is creating is that the standard and quality of the products are poor and therefore cannot be resold, many times not even good enough to be donated (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010). This has led to clothing pieces being worn less than ten times before they are thrown in

the garbage and replaced by new clothing (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). And even if a customer would want to use the clothing pieces for longer, the reason that they would lose lustre or go out of fashion would obstruct them from doing so anyway (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang, & Chan, 2012). A study made by Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) that surveyed students regarding their decisions on clothing disposal options concluded that the two main reasons to a behaviour were economic or environmental. Therefore, donation is more likely if a person has an environmental focus and resell is more likely if a person has an economic focus. However, fast fashion is reducing the probability of any of these options to be chosen by encouraging people to throw away the clothing due to low quality. So, the problem remains; the quality of clothing nowadays, due to fast fashion, is at a point where consumers feel like they cannot give used clothing away due to its bad condition, and therefore throw them in the garbage instead.

Yet the fashion industry today has experienced an advancement toward sustainability, but is still behind other industries in this matter (Yang, Song, & Tong, 2017). For instance, there is a lack of providing details regarding sustainable products, and consumers have showed a low interest in material sustainability. Data is suggesting that younger consumers separate fashion from sustainability, and therefore also take part in the trend of buying new clothing more often (Joy et al., 2012). Furthermore, another issue concerns the materials nowadays, which creates issues with recycling and reuse due to the mix of fibre blends in textiles (Bukhari et al., 2018). Also, demand for reuse of clothing is decreasing in Africa and Asia; however, France, as the only country in the world, has implemented an extended producer responsibility policy which has tripled the collection and recycling rates of textiles and shoes since 2006 (Bukhari et al., 2018). This consequently proves that it is possible to make the fashion industry more sustainable, but there is a lot left to be done.

## **2.2 In-store recycling**

With the recent focus on sustainability in the fashion industry, many companies have started to focus more and more on becoming environmentally friendly (Yang et al., 2017). Therefore, many companies, such as H&M, have now incorporated sustainability as a key priority (Shen, Li, Dong, & Perry, 2017). Consequently, many companies are now working with how the clothing is made, used, and later disposed, and the idea of clothing

collection boxes were therefore established. Many Swedish clothing companies such as H&M and Kappahl are currently using a take back system managed by the German company I:Collect (I:CO). I:CO focuses on closing the loop in the textile industry by offering retailers the entire take back system (I:CO, 2018b); this includes placing out the in-store recycling boxes, sorting the textiles and handling the materials depending on the quality. The I:CO boxes are situated at retailers where new products are being purchased, currently with a reward system in form of a voucher to draw attention to recycling due to its low demand (I:CO, 2018a). After the clothing has been collected in the boxes, it is sent away for manual sorting based on the quality and then placed as either reusable or for recycling. Wearable clothing is sold as second hand merchandises and the unwearable is staying in the loop by the collaboration with other organizations to recover the fibres and create new yarn that can be used for new products. This system was created to save resources and create a circularity (I:CO, 2018b). Other companies use similar systems, but the clothing is sent to other organizations. A non-profit organization used for instance by Gina Tricot is Human Bridge. However, Human Bridge does not run these boxes, but act instead as the location where the company turns with the products collected. Human Bridge is a professional organization focusing mainly on medical supply and distributing it in African and Eastern European countries, but they also collect textiles for direct aid in those same areas (Human Bridge, 2018). A similar organization is Myrorna, which the clothing store Lindex in Sweden sends all their collected clothing to (Lindex, 2018). Myrorna is the largest second hand store and collects amongst other things clothing that can be reused, while the revenue is given to Frälsningsarmén (Myrorna, 2018) in order to support their social work with issues relating to addiction, children and unemployment (Frälsningsarmén, 2018).

In addition to how the recycling boxes are managed, they also could differ in the rewarding schemes. With most businesses today focusing on sustainability, these types of take back systems have increased rapidly and can be found in many clothing chains. However, the companies use different approaches to incentivize people to drop off or trade in unwanted clothing. Kappahl has for instance an I:CO box where a customer gets 50 SEK off their next purchase when they drop off a bag of textiles (Kappahl, 2018). Another company is H&M Group that uses the same type of I:CO garment collection box for their different brands, also giving a voucher such as 10 percent given by & Other

Stories (H&M Gruppen, 2018). In addition, there is Gina Tricot who donates the clothing received to Human Bridge, but does not actively show that they give anything in return (Gina Tricot, 2014a). Consequently, the process for the consumer is the same for all companies, requiring the customer to bring a bag of textiles and either give it to a sales representative or leave it by the cashier where the recycling boxes are usually placed. All companies collect clothing from other brands than their own, as long as it is a clean and dry textile; yet stains or holes in the textile is no issue since the textiles go to both reuse and recycling (Gina Tricot, 2014a; H&M Gruppen, 2018; Kappahl, 2018; Lindex, 2018). However, companies like H&M have received criticism regarding the incineration of clothing, which contradicts the recycling schemes presented (Brodde, 2017); companies are often blamed for not doing enough for the environment (Culiberg, 2014). In 2017, clothing companies in Sweden were on the news for secretly burning brand new clothing (Andersson Åkerblom & Fegan, 2017a, 2017b). The H&M Group published a statement claiming the only products incinerated were clothing that did not meet the requirements regarding chemicals, or clothing that were mould infested (H&M Gruppen, 2017). But people became sceptical as to why the clothing contained that much chemicals from the start, and the scepticism sustained as H&M were contradicting its sustainable focus (Andersson Åkerblom & Fegan, 2017a).

The closest substitute to in-store recycling has in previous literature so far been drop-off sites or centres, which is defined by Sidique, Lupi, & Joshi (2010, p. 163) as “[...] a recycling program where designated sites are established to collect a range of recyclables and usually recyclers themselves are required to deposit the sorted recyclables in specially marked containers”. This is similar to the in-store recycling boxes; however, the drop off sites are not placed in the clothing stores and do not offer anything in return. Hence, we believe that the attitudes toward the drop-off sites can be somewhat comparable to the attitudes toward in-store recycling boxes. Research shows that factors that affect the usage of drop-off recycling programs are location, socioeconomic variables such as household size and income, convenience, familiarity with the availability, and social pressure (Sidique et al., 2010). Also, site-specific factors of convenience such as site opening hours, and the number and mix of recyclables accepted have an effect on the probability of visiting a drop-off site (Sidique, Lupi, & Joshi, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that to increase the usage of drop-off sites, we

need to raise awareness through communication and education; social norms should be promoted rather than environmental protection (Sidique et al., 2010).

### **2.3 Attitudes toward recycling**

Previous literature on attitudes in the fashion industry have focused mainly on overall disposal methods (Laitala, 2014; Weber, Lynes, & Young, 2017), and not on recycling specifically. However, research have been done on attitudes toward overall recycling and household recycling (e.g. McCarty & Shrum, 2001; Barr, 2007; Culiberg, 2014; Schill & Shaw, 2016), which can be applicable to the fashion industry as well. It is evident that lack of information, also expressed as lack of knowledge or lack of awareness, is one of the main obstructs to recycling (Barr, 2007; Barr, Gilg, & Ford, 2001; Izagirre-Olaizola, Fernández-Sainz, & Vicente-Molina, 2015; Ramayah, Lee, & Lim, 2012; Schill & Shaw, 2016). Yet, the opinion about what type of lacking information that can obstruct a recycling behaviour is diverse among researchers. Barr et al. (2001) highlights that environmental values does not impact the behaviour. General knowledge about the environment and environmental issues do not have a significant impact; however, awareness of sustainable development and knowledge about what and where to recycle can have a significant impact on the recycling behaviour (Barr, 2007; Barr et al., 2001). On the other hand, it was found that knowledge and awareness of environmental benefits and issues would in fact encourage a recycling behaviour (Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015; McCarty & Shrum, 2001; Ramayah et al., 2012); however, only for collectivistic people with a concern about the good for others (McCarty & Shrum, 2001). Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016, p. 316) emphasized that “*sustainability alone will not drive the necessary changes in consumers’ clothing purchase, care and disposal behaviour*”, which implies that customers might want something more than the feeling of doing something good for the environment. For individualistic people, only concerns about convenience had an impact on the tendency to recycle; individualistic people can thus not be reached through the same strategies, because the promotion of how important the environment is would not affect their recycling behaviour. Instead, these could be reached through promotion of factors of convenience, rewards, or benefits (McCarty & Shrum, 2001); examples of factors of convenience could be distance to recycling site, time to recycle, or space to store recyclables (Barr et al., 2001; Sidique et al., 2010).

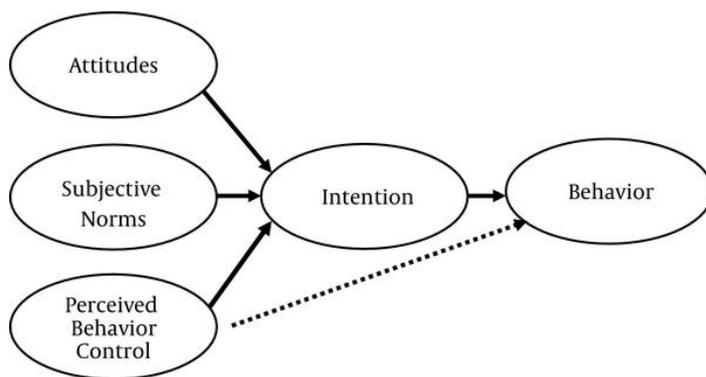
Another factor that has been presented to have an impact on attitudes toward recycling is the norm to recycle. It is suggested that people feel more encouraged to recycle when they are aware of that people in their surroundings, such as family and friends, recycle too; both the behaviour of others and acceptance of the own behaviour was proven to influence the recycling behaviour (Barr et al., 2001). Also, social pressure (Sidique et al., 2010), companies, and politicians can influence the recycling behaviour (Culiberg, 2014). A study made by Joung & Park-Poaps (2013) suggest that students are influenced by their families but not their friends, so the childhood recycling behaviours are more important for future recycling behaviour. However, Barr (2007) found that experience had a larger effect on the reducing and reusing of waste, than it had on recycling behaviour. It has also been argued that if people perceive recycling to be good and beneficial, the likelihood to engage in a recycling behaviour will increase (Culiberg, 2014); furthermore, it will increase if people feel responsible or concerned about recycling and waste (Barr et al., 2001; Culiberg, 2014). Here it is important that people believe that recycling can make an actual difference for the society at large; if they believe this, they will be more likely to recycle (Culiberg, 2014; Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015; Sidique et al., 2010). Nonetheless, people seem to have different opinions about what makes recycling good and beneficial, which makes it essential to identify diverse groups of people when doing research on recycling behaviour. For instance, it was found that college students tend to act more individualistic, which means that it is important to have convenient recycling options available to them in order to encourage a recycling behaviour (McCarty & Shrum, 1994). Another recent study confirms the view that people are more likely to donate if they feel concern toward the environment and others, yet it also states that it could be for self-oriented reasons (Park, Cho, Johnson, & Yurchisin, 2017).

## **2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour**

To study the incentives that customers have toward the in-store recycling boxes, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen have been used. This theory proposes that an individual's intention to perform a certain behaviour is predicted by three factors: the attitude toward the behaviour, the subjective norms, and the perceived behavioural control (PBC). The relationship between the factors of TPB can be seen in Figure 1. The first two build upon the previous Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Ajzen and Fishbein (Ajzen, 1991). The intention is defined as the motivation to decide to put effort

in performing a certain behaviour (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010) and considered the best predictor of behaviour (Paul, Modi, & Patel, 2016). Individuals that intend to perform a behaviour tend to do so (Conner & Armitage, 1988) since they according to the TRA have volitional control over their own decisions. Nevertheless, it was later found that there are non-volitional factors that affect an individual's decision to perform a behaviour as well, so PBC was added to the TPB (Han et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2016).

Figure 1 Theory of Planned Behaviour



Source: Adapted from “The Theory of Planned Behavior” by Ajzen, I. (1991), *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.

#### 2.4.1 Attitude toward the behaviour

Attitude toward the behaviour is what a person thinks or feels about the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This is a function of the personal belief of what outcome that will most likely result from performing a certain behaviour, and the evaluation of how desirable that outcome is (Chang, 1998; Conner & Armitage, 1988; Mathieson, 1991; Paul et al., 2016; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992); this will then decide if the behaviour is favourable or not (Chang, 1998; Zhou, Thøgersen, Ruan, & Huang, 2013). The greatest impact on attitude would therefore be when the individual believe that a certain behaviour will result in a desirable outcome that is important to the individual (Mathieson, 1991).

#### 2.4.2 Subjective norms

Subjective norms are the support or pressure given by referent others to perform or not perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); the referent other is an important person or a group with beliefs that are important to the individual (Mathieson, 1991; Paul et al.,

2016). The subjective norms are a function of the personal belief that a referent other think that the individual should or should not perform a behaviour, and the extent to which the individual is motivated to act in accordance with the opinion of the referent other (Chang, 1998; Conner & Armitage, 1988; Mathieson, 1991; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). The greatest impact on attitude would therefore be when the individual cares about both the people and the opinions about the behaviour (Conner & Armitage, 1988; Mathieson, 1991).

#### 2.4.3 Perceived behavioural control

The third factor was added when the TRA was extended to what we now refer to as the TPB, to account for behaviours that people have incomplete control over (Ajzen, 1991). PBC refer to an individual's capability and confidence level to perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); this factor is a function of how much perceived control the individual has regarding the availability of personal or situational resources and opportunities, and how important the individual perceive these resources and opportunities to be to reach a certain outcome (Chang, 1998; Mathieson, 1991). Hence, you are more likely to engage in behaviours that you have control over (Conner & Armitage, 1988), so even though you have a favourable attitude and/or subjective norms toward the outcome, you might still not perform the behaviour due to lack of resources and opportunities (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992; Mathieson, 1991); this could for example be the lack of time, money, skills and/or cooperation of others (Ajzen, 2011).

The indirect effect on the level of PBC is the intention to act on a certain behaviour, referred to as motivation in the TPB. The stronger the intentions, the more likely someone is to perform a certain behaviour. The direct effect on the level of PBC is the actual control over a behaviour, referred to as ability in the TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Zhou et al., 2013). However, it should be emphasized that the focus is on the perceived ability to perform a certain behaviour, which could in fact differ from the actual ability depending on the accuracy of perceptions (Ajzen, 1991).

#### 2.4.4 Intention and behaviour

When connecting all the factors to each other, it is evident that the strongest intention to perform a behaviour would be when the attitude and subjective norms are as much in

favour of the behaviour as possible, and the individual is perceived to have as much behavioural control as possible (Ajzen, 1991).

#### 2.4.5 Theory of Planned Behaviour and consumer behaviour

Some previous research has been done on the TPB in relation to consumer behaviour. When focusing on the fashion industry, this research has primarily been on consumer purchasing behaviour and what motivates people to purchase fashion (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017) or sustainable fashion (Cowan & Kinley, 2014; Onel, 2017; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) state that the factors that influence ethical consumer behaviour in the fashion industry are price, access to information, and access to sustainable options. Similarly, Valaei & Nikhashemi (2017) state that the factors that predict consumer behaviour in the fashion industry are brand, price, style, country of origin, social identity, and self-identity; social identity refers to the influences from the consumer's social references, and self-identity refers to the ability to express the own identity without being influenced by social references. Cowan and Kinley (2014) state that the intent to purchase environmental fashion is linked to environmental concern, perceived environmental knowledge and attitudes toward the purchase. Onel (2017) states that a pro-environmental purchasing behaviour is possible with communication through marketing strategies; this could be done by communicating favourable or harmful consequences that result from sustainable versus non-sustainable purchasing. Moreover, one of the main findings is that consumers do not feel like their behaviour of purchasing sustainable fashion can make any significant difference (Cowan & Kinley, 2014; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Onel (2017) proposed a solution to this by emphasising the power of individual actions through marketing; one way to induce a sustainable purchasing behaviour is to inform consumers about their responsibility and capability to affect the environment.

#### 2.4.6 Theory of Planned Behaviour and recycling

Some previous research has also been done on the TPB in relation to recycling; because not much has been done on recycling in the fashion industry so far, research on household recycling is discussed here as well. It has been found that the reason for people to reuse or resale is to save money; hence, the recycling behaviour would be supported by offering some discount. Donation, however, was mainly done for charity reasons, and more

connected to the attitude toward the environment (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013); it has been shown that people are willing to recycle for the societal benefit, and do not necessarily need any personal advantages from doing so (O'Reilly & Kumar, 2016; Taylor & Todd, 1995). However, the recycling behaviour is impacted by obstructs such as the change of routine, finding the time, the lack of availability, and the lack of information (O'Reilly & Kumar, 2016). In the fashion industry too, disposal of clothing is related to convenience (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013). Consequently, the reduction of these effort-related costs could reduce the obstructs for performing recycling (Onel & Mukherjee, 2017). It is therefore important to focus on societal benefits and how to enhance consumers PBC when communicating a waste reduction behaviour (Onel & Mukherjee, 2017; Taylor & Todd, 1995). Furthermore, subjective norm and PBC may be more important in situations where waste reduction behaviour is not as deep-rooted (Taylor & Todd, 1995), as people tend to rely on others when they have no prior experience of the behaviour themselves (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013). Hence, the importance of behavioural norms during the early stages of the life cycle have been emphasized, as well as the fact that family has a significant influence on the recycling behaviour, whereas friends have not (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013).

## **3 Methodology and Method**

### **3.1 Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 Research purpose**

The research purpose of this paper is to study the relationship between the in-store recycling boxes and the participants' intentions to behave in a certain way. A descriptive approach will be applied as the in-store recycling boxes have barely been researched before, so there is a need for describing and making research on this topic (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Also, as mentioned previously, the clothing industry is one of the most polluting industries (Qutab, 2017), which is why it is so important to research this area. It is also confirmed that recycling and reusing can improve this industry (Chow & Li, 2018; Govindan & Soleimani, 2017), which is why we want to research this topic. By understanding the incentives on why and how people use the in-store recycling boxes, we believe that we can contribute to existing literature with recommendations on how to make the fashion industry more sustainable. Furthermore, the TPB will be used because of its applicability to recycling behaviours that has been proven in several studies (e.g. Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; O'Reilly & Kumar, 2016; Onel & Mukherjee, 2017; Taylor & Todd, 1995) and that it connects to our research purpose in that it provides factors affecting the intention to perform a behaviour.

#### **3.1.2 Research approach**

To describe the topic, an abductive research approach will be used, which is comparable to a combination of the inductive and deductive approaches; deductive in the sense that we began with developing a theoretical framework on which we based our interview questions and then will test our data collection toward (Saunders et al., 2009), yet inductive in the sense that we will collect qualitative data (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Shank, 2008). What distinguishes the abductive approach is that you constantly move back and forth between reading literature and collecting data, and then the data is matched with the theory to provide an explanation (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In this paper, the explanation will be on the intentions to perform in-store recycling, which is based on previous literature on the TPB matched with data collected from focus groups and individual interviews.

### 3.1.3 Research philosophy

The research philosophy that will guide us in this paper is interpretivism. This is because people interpret things in their own way and acts accordingly (Saunders et al., 2009), and we want to research how people make sense of experiences and the world around them (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Also, we want to build this research on in-depth small samples rather than highly structured large samples; this will enable us to discover subjective meanings and incentivizing behaviours (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). It will be of value to this research to focus also on the underlying subjective opinions about the in-store recycling boxes, as sustainability tends to be a subject that people are not always straightforward about. This can be assumed by comparing what consumers think of themselves to their actions. Research shows that 84 percent of Swedes view themselves as climate conscious (Naturvårdsverket, 2018a), however by comparing it to the statistics that only 20 percent of the clothing is being brought back (Elander, 2016), then it is possible to conclude that people describe themselves as more conscious than they might be.

### 3.1.4 Research design

The interpretivist study is suitable with a qualitative research design, which will be used because we want to collect non-numerical data through in-depth and semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews, and primarily ask questions starting with “how” and “why”. When doing a qualitative research, a lot of data will be collected; however, only the parts relevant to the research purpose will be included in the study. This is an appropriate research design since we want to make sense of the reasons for the participants feelings and attitudes (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

### 3.1.5 Research strategy

The qualitative research strategy applied is the thematic analysis, which is to discover, analyse, and report repeated patterns of meaning from the primary data collection, referred to as themes. The coding technique that will be used is the theoretical thematic analysis, because the coding will be done based on the research and interview questions, which in turn are based on the theoretical framework. This analysis is done in six steps: 1) familiarising yourself with the data by transcribing, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, 6) producing

the report by connecting the final themes back to the research question and previous literature reviewed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **3.2 Method**

### 3.2.1 Data collection

#### 3.2.1.1 Journal articles and secondary data

Previous literature was examined to identify a research gap to focus the study on (Saunders et al., 2009). This literature of peer-reviewed articles was found through databases such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Primo. Keywords that we used alone or in combination with each other were fast fashion, recycling, reuse, waste, consumer, behaviour, attitudes, in-store recycling, recycling box, and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). We were also directed toward other interesting journal articles from the ones read first, and had to make use of some secondary data from company websites to access the information needed about the fashion industry and in-store recycling boxes. Since not much research had been done on recycling or the TPB in relation to the fashion industry, we sometimes had to rely on articles from another field or with a lower impact factor; however, when the supply was greater, we selected articles with an impact factor of at least 1.00. We believe that the articles from other fields about behaviour and attitudes can still be applicable in the fashion industry, and that the low amount of previous research only demonstrates that it is important to do further research on it.

#### 3.2.1.2 Primary data

For our primary data, we arranged semi-structured focus groups and interviews to examine if and how in-store recycling boxes are being used. That both the group and individual interviews were semi-structured implies that we made room for the possibility to build on and explain responses further; this also made it possible for us to adjust the questions between the groups and the individual interviews to make the best fit, to ask some additional questions, and to change the order of them when needed. Normally, focus group interviews consists of between four to eight participants depending on the topic; however, when having semi-structured interviews, it may be beneficial with less interviewees (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, we wanted to arrange three focus groups with four to six participants in each group. However, because of many last-minute cancellations, we ended up with only two focus groups, one with four participants and

one with five participants; yet instead of trying to organize a third one, we decided to add two individual interviews instead, as we believe that this would add more to the richness of our data. This is mainly because we got very similar responses during the group interviews so we were not sure about how much more information a third similar group would give us (Saunders et al., 2009), and therefore wanted to try a different approach to enrich the primary data, by interviewing two younger women as well. The details about the participants and the interviews can be found in Table 1.

*Table 1 Participants*

	Number of participants	Name of participants	Age of participants	Length of interview
Focus Group 1	4	Participant 1 Participant 2 Participant 3 Participant 4	22 24 21 24	65 min
Focus Group 2	5	Participant 1 Participant 2 Participant 3 Participant 4 Participant 5	21 22 22 22 23	48 min
Individual Interview 1	1	Participant 1	14	27 min
Individual Interview 2	1	Participant 1	16	18 min

### 3.2.2 Data analysis

As previously mentioned, the strategy used were the thematic analysis. During the first step of familiarizing yourself with the data, we both listened to the audio recordings from the interviews and transcribed them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcribing was done in the same language as the interviews were held (Collis & Hussey, 2014); it was done the same day as the interviews were done to make sure that we would remember important implicit meanings and reactions from the interviewees that were important to our findings. This also helped us to remember who said what at times when it was difficult to hear

everything as clear (Saunders et al., 2009). The second step of generating initial codes were done during the interviews as well as during the transcribing, as we already here had some broad ideas of what themes we had identified; these themes were theory-based as the questions were based on the theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The third step was done after the transcribing was completed, and we read through the transcribed data and selected the most interesting parts and broad themes for our research. The first three steps were done individually before coming together to discuss the findings, in contrast to the fourth to sixth steps that were done together. During the fourth step, we reviewed the themes to make sure that they were relevant and contributed to our research, and narrowed these down. The fifth step were about formulating and re-formulating the names of the broad and narrow themes to make sure that they were clear and relevant; also, the information relevant to each theme were scrutinized and translated from Swedish to English; examples of translations can be found in Appendix D to reassure that these were made with sufficient thought and skill. The sixth and last step were about putting the themes together in the report and making sure that the relevant information were under the right theme; quotes from the interviews were used to assure a clear, logic and interesting presentation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.2.3 Sampling

#### 3.2.3.1 Focus group

A recent report from Sweden on behalf of the government points out that young women is the group that buys the most clothing (Naturvårdsverket, 2018b), and another study confirms that women in Sweden buy more unnecessary clothes compared to men (Avfall Sverige, 2018). In addition, many of the fast fashion clothing stores that offers an in-store recycling box are positioned toward women only (Gina Tricot, 2014b; Lindex, 2018; Monki, 2018). Therefore, we made use of purposive homogenous sampling (Saunders et al., 2009), in which all members are similar, and contacted eight female students in the ages 21 to 24 that all had experience from at least one store that now has an in-store recycling box, for instance H&M.

Trust and hierarchal positions have been established to be important factors when it comes to participants willingness to talk and speak their minds freely (Saunders et al., 2009). In order to prevent the participants from feeling restricted, we decided to recruit friendship

clusters; this will help members to feel comfortable, which in turn leads to a better conversation (Wong, 2010) when the topic discussed is not a sensitive one (Jones et al., 2018). Therefore, the initially contacted participants were instructed to bring one or two friends under the same criteria's. However, we ended up with only nine participants, of which four were the ones we initially contacted; only one of these did not bring one or two friends to the focus group because of a last-minute cancellation. Because we could not gather as many participants as planned, friendship groups that were acquainted had to be put in the same group; nonetheless, this group turned out to be the one that were most talkative, so we did not see this as a problem. In the end, we could make use of the benefits both from having participants knowing each other, and from having participants that do not know each other; friendship groups can offer a more open and honest discussion, while traditional focus groups can offer a broader range of perspectives (Jones et al., 2018).

#### 3.2.3.2 Individual interview

As mentioned previously, we decided to conduct two additional interviews to enrich our research. During both focus groups, it was briefly mentioned that the result may have been different if one were to ask someone younger, as they might be more used to the idea of in-store recycling boxes from growing up with them. Therefore, we decided to contact younger women as well to conduct interviews. We contacted three young women in the ages 14, 16 and 18, but got one cancellation. The 14- and 16-year old were relatives to one of the researchers, and the 18-year old were a relative of one of the participants from the focus groups. Because of the cancellation, we ended up having one interview with the 14-year old who is in the lower secondary school and one interview with the 16-year old who is in the upper secondary school; they were selected because we knew that they had experience from at least one store that now has an in-store recycling box. The two interviews were conducted at two different locations, a coffee shop and at one participant's home; the locations were chosen according to the interviewees' preferences.

#### 3.2.4 Interview design

##### 3.2.4.1 Focus group

All the women that were contacted were acquaints or friends with one of the researchers, and were selected because they are all studying at Jönköping University, which increased the chances of being able to get that many people together at the same time and place.

Hence, to create a neutral and familiar setting we chose to execute our focus groups in a group room at Jönköping University and in Swedish, as all participants are also Swedish students. The focus groups were audio recorded on three different devices after the consent of each participant, and both of us researchers were present; this enabled us to have one acting as moderator, while the other one observed and took notes in addition to the audio recordings (Saunders et al., 2009).

#### 3.2.4.2 Individual interview

The individual interviews took place in Borås at one of the interviewee's home and at a café respectively, because these were natural settings for the interviewees; also, they were conducted in Swedish as these younger students were Swedish as well. Only one of the researchers could participate during the interviews, but they were recorded on two different devices.

#### 3.2.4.3 Interview questions

The same questions were used for both the focus groups and the interviews, and were derived from the three factors of the TPB; the TPB will be used to examine consumers' incentives to use in-store recycling boxes, more specifically if and how they use them and what the attitudes are toward them. First, we asked two closed questions (Saunders et al., 2009) about if the interviewees knew anything about the in-store recycling boxes and if they had ever used one. At this stage, we also presented them with a short explanation about what an in-store recycling box is, as none of the participants or interviewees had ever used one, and showed three pictures of examples on how the recycling box could be placed in a store. Then, we asked open questions to let the interviewees define and describe situations and events, and probing questions to put focus on certain directions and to clarify responses (Saunders et al., 2009); we asked questions on the attitudes toward in-store recycling boxes and questions related to subjective norms, and then we asked questions on PBC. We ended the group interviews by letting the interviewees read a short piece of our background about the fashion industry and how harmful it is for the environment, and let the interviewees share their thoughts on this by asking a last closed question. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, and the short piece from the background can be found in Appendix C. However, regarding the factors of the TPB that the questions were based on, it is not always the case that all three factors will contribute to incentivize a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); this is why we

want to study if and how each of these factors in the TPB can be connected to the customers' incentives of using the in-store recycling boxes. The TPB will assist us in the attempt to try to understand the different aspects of the behaviour of incentives toward in-store recycling boxes, including both personal opinions and the potential influences of surroundings. Also, it might give important insights on how one could change the behaviour into a more sustainable one, thus making the fashion industry more sustainable.

### 3.2.5 Data quality

The relevant measurements used to assure data quality of the analysis in a qualitative study is credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Guba, 1981). In addition to this, some ethical aspects will be discussed below.

#### 3.2.5.1 Credibility

Some decisions were made to assure the credibility of this study. Empirical data was collected by two different methods (Guba, 1981): group interviews and individual interviews. This was done to add insights and gain as much understanding as possible from the selected sample. We believe that the reason that we decided to interview people that we knew, that were similar to us in that they were students and around the same ages, and that they were interviewed in familiar settings enhanced the credibility of the discussions during the interviews. Furthermore, five of the participants from the focus groups agreed to read the empirical findings section to confirm that we had interpreted their statements and the overall findings in the same way as they did (Guba, 1981). To ensure that the interpretations were correct, we also asked a lot of follow-up questions during the interviews so that the participants had the opportunity to fully explain their answers, and to encourage them to elaborate on topics that seemed important to them. Lastly, we found that our empirical data is comparable to previous similar research (Guba, 1981), even though not much have been done on this exact topic.

#### 3.2.5.2 Transferability

A qualitative study is not intended to be representative for a population, because this is not possible as social behaviours make all situations unique (Guba, 1981). Instead, we used purposive sampling to best being able to collect the relevant information for our research purpose. The data that we collected was focused and descriptive, yet the study had some limitations that will be discussed later in the discussion. Because we found that

we could generalize from previous literature done on similar contexts, we also believe that our study could be generalized to other contexts (Guba, 1981).

#### 3.2.5.3 Dependability

Dependability is assured through a systematic and well documented process; we have provided the reader with documentation that clearly shows the entire process of this research (Guba, 1981). We have done this by explaining the decisions and steps made in this research. Furthermore, the interview questions and examples of citation translations can be found under Appendix.

#### 3.2.5.4 Confirmability

Objectivity cannot be assumed in a qualitative study, hence we consider confirmability instead (Guba, 1981). To assure the confirmability of data in our study we used two methods for data collection. The individual interviews were added to the initial plan to gain more perspectives that we believed could add valuable insights. Also, we used many sources, and more than one for each statement when possible, to reinforce our claims. We have been able to confirm most of our empirical findings with previous literature, even though the topic is scarcely researched so far. Furthermore, the identified themes in the empirical findings section are supported by providing quotations from the interviews.

#### 3.2.5.5 Ethical issues

For the participants and the sake of our study, we have considered some ethical aspects. To ensure that the participants felt comfortable with being part of the study and an interview, we held the interviews in familiar settings and explained what would be asked of the participants during the interview beforehand. We also informed them that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable with, but that they were free to share as much thoughts as they wanted around the questions we asked. We believe that this, and the fact that we knew the participants and they took part in the study voluntarily, contributed to honest answers. This was also proven when they admitted that they could throw away clothes even if they perceived this as a wrong behaviour. Additionally, we made sure that all the participants were okay with being recorded and that their citations would be included in the empirical findings, as well as the fact that more people than us would have access to the paper. We decided to not use any names of the participants since it would not have added anything to the findings, and it was furthermore a way to reassure the participants that no one would be able to know what

exactly that certain participant was saying. We also offered them the opportunity to read through the thesis before the submission of it.

## 4 Empirical Findings

Three main themes were identified during the transcription of the interviews. These were *lack of information about the recycling process*, *attitudes toward clothing stores*, and *social and personal norms*. Therefore, the empirical findings will be presented in connection to these main themes and their subthemes below.

### 4.1 Lack of information about the recycling process

After reading the short information from the background section (see Appendix C), most of the participants expressed how shocked they were about how much clothing waste there is and how it affects the environment. It was clear that a main theme with in-store recycling during the interviews was lack of information, which will be presented in four subsections.

#### 4.1.1 What is in-store recycling?

It was clear that no one of the participants had much previous knowledge about the in-store recycling boxes, and they all agreed that they have received too little information about the boxes from the clothing stores. Throughout the focus groups comments like “*I do not really know...*” or “*I have not really known...*” were mentioned many times by multiple participants; it was clear that the participants were surprised by a lot of information that came up during the interview and that they had not really considered the alternative of using in-store recycling boxes because of the lack of information about them. During the second individual interview the participant said that “*The reason I have not done it is because I have not been thinking about it, or known that it exists*”. During the first individual interview the participant said that “*It feels like they are barely seen and then I do not even think about their existence*”. Instead, they were more prone to use the more traditional second hand stores or recycling centres when recycling their clothes; however, if the clothing pieces were broken, they were more likely to throw them away. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 in focus group 2 all agreed that the stores should promote the opportunity to drop of unwanted clothing more, for example by advertising inside and outside the stores, on websites, and in connection to bus stations where stores usually put advertisements. Even though the participants had been in some of the stores that offer an in-store recycling box, they had not seen any as they are not placed where people would pay attention to them. Participant 3 in focus group 2 said that “*Because there is not*

*something that they promote, [...] then maybe it is not something they feel that they have to do, or that they want that much”.*

#### 4.1.2 How to use in-store recycling boxes?

The participants did not have any knowledge about what clothes they could leave in the boxes. Firstly, they did not know that you could drop off clothes that were not purchased in the store where the in-store recycling box is placed, and secondly, they did not know that the stores collected broken clothing pieces as well. During focus group 1, participant 4 said that *“One prejudice that I have had is that the clothes must be in a great condition to drop them off. I would not, I believe, think that I would be able to drop off something that is broken”*. During focus group 2, participant 4 said that *“I had no idea that it was broken clothes as well just because one has always heard that it should be intact and clean clothes, so now that I know that you can drop off broken clothes there as well, then that is an alternative”*. This clearly shows that the lack of knowledge is an obstacle in the process of recycling in the fashion industry, and that more information would in fact influence the intentions to use them; the fact that you can drop off or trade in broken clothing as well was a turning point for the participants. However, the participants did not know how to drop off or trade in their unwanted clothes; for example, if they can just drop it off in the box or if they must talk to someone working in the store to receive a voucher, or how much clothes they must have in their bag to be able to drop it off or trade it in. All this acts as obstructions to people that want to recycle unwanted clothing, and in summary, all participants agreed that the stores need to inform consumers on how to use the in-store recycling boxes to increase the usage of them.

#### 4.1.3 What happens to the clothing in the in-store recycling box?

Another issue that was stressed during both group and individual interviews was the lack of knowledge on what happens with the clothes after dropping them off or trading them in through the in-store recycling boxes. In focus group 1, participant 2 even stated that *“I believe that the most important is to know where it will go”*. The same participant was also dissatisfied with the information on the boxes that only states that it will be reused or recycled, yet not what this implies for the consumers that do not have any information on how the reusing or recycling process works in that specific store. The participant during the first individual interview said that *“This is partly why I have not used the boxes,*

*because I do not really know what they do with the clothes*". With more traditional alternatives, such as the second hand stores, many of the participants seemed to have knowledge about what would happen if they dropped off their unwanted clothes there; in contrast, no one of the participants were sure about what would happen with their unwanted clothing if they were to use an in-store recycling box. Participant 1 from focus group 2 said that *"If you drop off to for example Erikshjälpen you know exactly what will happen to the clothes, but you do not know that here"*. Participant 5 in focus group 2 expressed this as *"A disadvantage is that if you leave your clothing to Erikshjälpen, then it is often in connection to a store where they have old clothing so you can see where it goes, but to drop off in a box at Kappahl where it will not be a rack of old clothes that you could buy, instead you do not know where it will end up"*. Hence, there seem to be a need for the stores to provide consumers with more information on what happens with the clothes after collecting them to increase the usage of them. For example, if the participants knew that companies could use recycled materials to make new clothing, then they would better understand the motives and could accept the reason. In focus group 2, participant 3 said regarding creating new clothes, *"But then that would benefit them too, since then they get textiles that they can sell again and then I feel like that would benefit them more, and then it is not just to sell what they already have"*. In focus group 2, participant 1 said *"I would have felt that this was better, or maybe not better, but more innovative. More like I would have wanted to see what happens with these clothes and how it becomes a new piece of clothing"*. Additionally, in the same focus group participant 3 expressed concern about the fact that too much clothing has been shipped off to foreign countries at times, and therefore believed that the recycling in-store could be a great alternative if they were to make new clothing from the collected pieces.

#### 4.1.4 Full disclosure of the recycling process

The participants agreed that full disclosure of the recycling process and given motives would make them less suspicious and more accepting toward the in-store recycling boxes. For instance, in focus group 2, participant 5 expressed that *"I think like this, companies let's say donates this, that they in some way makes insulation and donates this to construction companies. Then I want to know which construction company"*. In addition, participant 2 in the same group said that *"But something we have talked about is like*

*bringing in a third-party that actually says it is correct*". For clothing stores to gain more trust, the participants want proof that the handling of the boxes is at a certain standard.

## **4.2 Attitudes toward clothing stores**

The participants doubted the degree to which clothing stores can be trusted regarding their motives for having in-store recycling boxes, hence the second main theme on attitudes toward clothing stores evolved. The empirical findings from this theme will be presented in three subsections.

### **4.2.1 Scepticism toward clothing stores**

Due to previous controversy and mistrust regarding companies, especially H&M, the participants felt a dislike toward supporting those businesses. For instance, in focus group 1, participant 2 said "*Perhaps Lindex does the exact same thing, I mean they for sure have the same factories. But H&M has got so much negativity*" and participant 1 said "*Like H&M, [...] I don't know if Lindex or Kappahl would have done it, I might not have thought in the same way*". This shows that a company's reputation affects the consumers a lot in the way they perceive their actions. The main issue seemed to be that companies are profit driven and therefore the participants wanted to know what the profit from these boxes would be, and more specifically what exactly they are gaining from having them there. In focus group 2, participant 5 said "*But it is hard to think that H&M would give me a voucher when I drop off something there without them gaining from it in some way*". This statement proves the scepticism that exist between the participants toward clothing stores and what their hidden agenda is. In focus group 1, participant 2 also said that "*It cannot just be a CSR thing they put on their website*" and participant 3 added "*But that is why it feels a little like the stores do this to perhaps gain from it*". However, the younger participants that were interviewed did not seem to experience the same amount of scepticism toward companies. During the second interview, the participant just said that "*I hope they do what they say*". The scepticism toward the companies never became a topic here, whereas during the focus groups it kept reoccurring during the entire discussions; the groups questioned whether the gain could come from being perceived as more ethical and environmental in the customers' eyes, or if they even profit from the entire process by persuading consumers to shop more with the vouchers given. The scepticism is there, yet they are not sure about how companies are gaining from the boxes,

but just that they must be. In contrast, there seemed to be no criticism toward the traditional second hand stores; participant 2 in focus group 1 said that *“You know where it goes, because if you give to Myrorna then you know, okay this will be in their store or given to some orphanage”*. Participant 5 in focus group 2 confirmed this by saying that *“Essentially, I am more suspicious toward large companies than toward small organizations, because then it feels like they have an ulterior motive. Even though it might not be, I still think about what their gain is”*.

#### 4.2.2 Using incentives to encourage in-store recycling

Some participants expressed concern about the encouragement to even more consumption. In focus group 1, participant 3 said that *“I believe that it is wrong, because they encourage even more consumption when you get a voucher [...] and that does not feel good at all”*. In focus group 2, participant 3 said that *“Then there is almost like a double standard, like I recycle my clothes because it is a huge problem and then I buy even more clothes”*, which implies that the incentives that companies seem to give out to encourage a recycling behaviour could in fact undermine the intention to do so. When discussing the value of these vouchers, the focus group participants expressed that 10 percent or 50 SEK did not seem like much and therefore would probably not be enough of an incentive for them; yet they did not believe that it would be feasible to offer more. The younger interview participants expressed that a voucher is completely unnecessary for them to recycle. During the first interview the participant said that *“It is always a discount everywhere and then I feel like the voucher is not of importance, instead I just want to get rid of my clothes, and think that something good comes out from it or that someone else can use it and then it does not matter if I have a voucher or not”*. This was clear also during the second interview when the participant said *“To me it does not matter if I receive something in return. I do it by pure will”*. Even though the participants from the focus groups confirmed this to some extent, they still expressed that they would want the voucher. In focus group 1, participant 4 said that *“I feel like it is probably needed that I really get a voucher if I would go to one of those [in-store recycling boxes] instead of a recycling centre”*. In the same group, participant 2 said that *“The difference between leaving them at the recycling centre and leaving them in a store, I feel like it does not personally [...] give me any more than this 50 SEK voucher”*. This implies that the participants in the focus groups expected something in return from clothing stores, as

opposed to other recycling alternatives. In focus group 1 participant 1 said that *“If I help you [the clothing store], then you should help me in some way. If I give it to an organization that only works with charity, then it is a different thing”*.

#### 4.2.3 The feeling of doing good

The participants seemed to be satisfied with the goodwill feeling when it came to other recycling alternatives than in-store recycling boxes. The participant in the second individual interview said that *“Every single time I donate to this box at the recycling centre, it has made me feel like I am doing something good. Like I feel like I am doing something for charity [...] it makes me feel good in a way. Like it feels good on the inside”*. In focus group 2, participant 2 said *“But what I think feels a bit better with [...] those voluntary organizations are that they are voluntary. Like I want to support that work a bit”*. In focus group 1, participant 1 said that *“When you go to the recycling centre, you only get the goodwill feeling”*. The participants from the focus groups seemed to believe that if you get something in return you do it for yourself, whereas if you do not get anything in return you do it for the environment or other people. In focus group 1, participant 4 also expressed it as *“Recycling may be one way to ease the conscience”*, and the other participants agreed with her. Even when the participants from the focus groups were told that the clothing collected in-store often end up at the same place as the clothing collected in second hand stores, they still believed that they would feel better from donating than if they would get something in return. The difference here is that the younger participants did not only connect the feeling of doing good to charity organizations, but instead the feeling was connected to the action of giving in general, no matter if it was to a store, charity, or recycling centre.

#### 4.3 Social and personal norms

We found that the participants were affected by habits, pressure and inconvenience to recycle. These are connected to social and personal norms in that they are influenced by the participants own values, as well as the values of the people in their surroundings. The three subthemes will be presented below.

#### 4.3.1 Recycling habits

Some participants expressed that it seemed unnatural to bring unwanted clothing when you go for shopping, and that recycling and shopping were not concepts that they connected to each other. The fact that all the participants already knew where to get rid of unwanted clothing has obstructed them for searching for and being open to newer alternatives. In focus group 1, participant 1 said that *“I also believe that because I am raised with going to the recycling centre to drop off your clothes, that is still so deep-rooted as to go to a store”*. In the same focus group, participant 2 said that *“When I was younger it was like now we are cleaning out the closet and then we are going to the recycling centre, and then I have thrown them away there and I have done this for 24 years now. [...] That it is so rooted in your mind that it is where you go”*. In focus group 2, participant 1 said that *“I believe that it is like we have said before that you go with it to the recycling centre as you have always done; it is a part of your routine. So here you have to change the mindset”*. Hence, an obstacle for going to the store and using the in-store recycling box seem connected to old and deep-rooted routines. However, for people that do not visit recycling centres or second hand stores, the participants believed that the in-store recycling boxes could contribute to more recycling. In focus group 2, participant 5 explained *“I can think of people that would never buy clothes at second hand for instance, [...] but when you see that perhaps H&M does this [...] then maybe we can reach a different acceptance around this too”*. This statement was confirmed during the second individual interview when the participant said that *“It is easier for me to drop off clothing somewhere I go often compared to a second hand store that I usually do not visit”*. This shows that even though there are many obstacles against using these in-store recycling boxes, there might be benefits when it comes to changing the attitudes of people that are not used to any previous options of recycling. But the participants still seemed to think that the mindset could be changed for those that are used to other recycling alternatives, especially for younger people. Participant 2 in focus group 2 expressed that *“Then there are the parents that go, but maybe now they [younger people] can actually return it by themselves”*. This statement was only partly confirmed during the second interview when the participant said that *“I would do it with my friends. All my friends want to protect the environment in every way and we think about it a lot”*, but the participant in the first interview would not go with her friends, which implies that it may not be easier to change the mindset of younger people after all.

#### 4.3.2 Pressure to recycle

The most pressure to recycle was stated to come from themselves. It was a collective opinion among all participants that throwing away clothes were bad, and they would be ashamed to admit doing so, unless the clothing was broken. In focus group 1, participant 4 said that *“If I would throw a lot [of clothes] in the garbage I would be ashamed, that would not be okay. I would not tell anyone about that”*. In focus group 2, participant 1 said that *“I would not have been able to throw away my clothes just like that if they were fully functional, I would not feel good about that. No, because it also feels like people would judge you in some weird way”*. The focus group participants emphasized that they were aware about the importance to recycle and felt some overall pressure from society about it; the most pressure came from family, and less from friends and the society at large. However, during the second individual interview the participant said that *“I think that if I would start using it then it would be an eye opener to my friends, then they might do it too. Then people would find out in a completely different way, since my main problem was that I did not know the boxes existed and then if I used them it would be more visible for others as well”* and that *“It is more like a duty, that you have to recycle in today’s society”*. Consequently, the younger participants seemed to believe that friends and society at large had a greater impact, in contrast to the participants of the focus groups. All participants agreed that they could make a difference and affect the environment in some way, even though they believed that not all people would think like that. They also seemed to some extent concerned about the environment, yet they had not considered what effect the recycling of clothing could have. During focus group 2, however, participant 1 said that *“Still I can go and throw away clothes sometimes when they are broke, because I know that it is just one piece of clothing”*.

#### 4.3.3 Inconvenience of recycling in-store

Participants in both focus groups believed that it required more effort to donate in the in-store recycling boxes. In focus group 2, participant 3 said *“Because it is a bit inconvenient. [...] Like if you go and drop off your clothes at these recycling centres then you do it when you leave everything else, so it is simpler to bring them then”*. The same statement came up during the individual interviews, with the participant from the second interview saying *“The benefit of having it located by the recycling centre is that if you think about throwing something then maybe you go through the clothes as well. [...] Then*

*go to the recycling centre and throw things away and at the same time drop off the clothes*". Participants from both focus group 1 and 2 emphasized that they would want to be sure that there was an in-store recycling box in the store that they are going to, so they do not have to bring their unwanted clothes back home again if they are unable to find one. As this has not been promoted enough, the participants believed that people would not want to take that risk. Furthermore, it appeared as if going to a store needed more preparation. In focus group 1, participant 2 said *"The mindset to go to the city, then you must get ready and..."* with participant 1 adding *"Exactly, you have to fix your hair and everything and then it feels more exhausting to go to the store"*. This shows the obstruct that the participants experience when recycling in-store; mainly people feel like walking around in a city centre puts pressure on them to look put together. This pressure does not exist if they would go to a recycling centre.

Participants also found it to be shameful that someone might have to see the clothing inside the bag to be able to receive a voucher. In focus group 1, participant 2 said *"And then it feels embarrassing to walk there with a bag of my old ugly clothes"* and participant 4 said *"But I also think that when you throw things, sometimes it is nice to be a bit anonymous. Like if it is an ugly t-shirt then instead of going to H&M and giving it. Not because someone might be looking, but it is the feeling"*. This proves that there is something shameful about giving away old or unwanted clothing and that the participants want to do it as discrete as possible. They feel that their unwanted clothing is old and ugly, so therefore they do not want to be connected to their garbage. In focus group 1, participant 4 also said *"It feels like disgusting that they would, like look at her bag here, then the staff would open and like look. It does not feel good"*. There is a feeling of being judged when donating the clothing and therefore also a view that the pieces had to meet a certain standard to not disappoint the staff. The participant from the first individual interview said that *"It is this with the social and groups and all that. Then I would rather go by myself or with my family"* and *"[...] it feels a bit embarrassing to give"*. During the second interview, another perspective came up when the participant said that *"I think it is this openness that you, by yourself, can do something, that you can lay it down without telling anyone is easier than that you have to tell someone. Some people find it difficult to tell another person that they do not know, therefore I think it is easier if you could just drop it off by yourself."* This implies that it is not only an embarrassment regarding

someone seeing the clothes being donated that exists, but also the embarrassment of having to find and ask a stranger for help. All of this contributes to a resistance to go there as it feels embarrassing and shameful.

## 5 Analysis

In the empirical findings, factors influencing consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes were found. Some of them were favourable in that they contributed to an intention to perform in-store recycling, but most of them were unfavourable in that they obstructed the participants from having intentions to perform in-store recycling. These factors were analysed toward the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which will be presented below in Table 2 and then analysed further with connection to previous literature.

*Table 2 Favourable and unfavourable factors toward TPB*

	Favourable factors	Unfavourable factors
Attitudes toward the behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive a voucher</li> <li>- Make new clothing from recycled materials</li> <li>- Drop off broken clothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voucher undermining the motivation to recycle</li> <li>- Unwillingness to support clothing companies</li> <li>- Unwillingness to support more consumption</li> <li>- Inconvenience and required effort</li> </ul>
Subjective norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pressure from society to recycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No pressure from family or friends to recycle in-store</li> <li>- Shameful and embarrassing to recycle in-store</li> </ul>
Perceived behavioural control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Everyone can make difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of information about in-store recycling</li> </ul>

### 5.1 Attitude toward the behaviour

As explained by Ajzen (1991), attitude toward the behaviour encompasses what a person thinks or feels about the behaviour; to engage in that behaviour the individual must

perceive the expected outcome as desirable (Chang, 1998; Conner & Armitage, 1988; Mathieson, 1991; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). We identified some attitudes regarding the in-store recycling behaviour that were significant for the participants in this study.

#### 5.1.1 Attitude toward receiving a voucher

In previous literature, it has been emphasized on the one hand that people need something in return to engage in recycling (Harris et al., 2016), but on the other hand that people are willing to recycle without getting anything in return (Taylor & Todd, 1995). This confirms our findings in that the attitudes about vouchers are conflicting. The participants claimed that they would want a voucher if they were to use an in-store recycling box. Yet if they went to a second hand store or recycling centre they did not have any expectations of receiving anything; instead, this behaviour resulted only in the feeling of doing good because they knew that they did something good for society or the environment. This is in accordance to what Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) stated about clothing donations being done mainly because of social and environmental reasons. As the previous recycling alternatives do not have a reward system, this newer in-store recycling option contain new implications for the consumer that has not been analysed before. But we identified a problem with this reward system in that it creates a conflict within the consumer; the incentive undermines the motivation to perform the behaviour. The participants said that the voucher removed the feeling of doing good and that the voucher was unnecessary due to the already existing discounts and reward programs provided by the stores. This rather contradicts what Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) stated about being able to encourage recycling behaviour by offering a discount. However, there was a difference between the younger interviewees and the focus group participants, as the younger stated the voucher to be completely unnecessary for them, while the focus group participants wanted the voucher if they were to use an in-store recycling box. Hence, it is favourable to receive a voucher if they were to perform in-store recycling, but it is not desirable enough to encourage them to change their intention to perform the behaviour. This is aligned with what Harris et al. (2016) said about sustainability not being able to alone change a consumer's disposal behaviour. Especially as the participants in the focus groups believed that the clothing companies would gain from it, because then they wanted to gain something as well. Therefore, we believe that something else than a voucher should be offered to the consumers to encourage them to use in-store recycling boxes. The outcome

of receiving a voucher when performing in-store recycling is somewhat desirable; yet it is not important enough for the participants to receive the voucher, so it does not impact their intentions to perform the behaviour. It is evident that they need something to encourage them, but the voucher is not desirable enough.

#### 5.1.2 Attitude toward the perceived support of clothing companies

The sceptical view of the clothing companies obstructed the participants from intending to use the in-store recycling boxes. The scepticism was mainly discussed during the focus groups, and not as much during the individual interviews; this may be due to the different level of studies and that younger people might not have experienced as much negativity regarding companies if it were on the news some years ago. The participants did not find it desirable to support the companies, which they perceived to be the outcome if they would use the in-store recycling box. Thus, the findings confirmed what Culiberg (2014) stated about companies being able to influence the recycling behaviour. Even after we informed the participants that it was not the specific store that owned the recycling box, they did not change their mindset about wanting to use them. We believe that this could be because the box is still positioned in the store, so that the participants associate the performance of in-store recycling to the support of that specific company. The scepticism was also related to the fact that companies are profit driven and therefore perceived to gain something from having the boxes; consequently, the participants wanted to know what they were gaining and asked for full disclosure. Without this explanation from companies, the view of them giving out vouchers were considered an encouragement to consume more after recycling, which were perceived as a contradictory message. Because the outcomes of supporting companies and being encouraged to more consumption were not desirable, the behaviour seemed unfavourable and so the participants had no intentions to perform in-store recycling.

#### 5.1.3 Attitude toward the impression of in-store recycling

The participants experienced that the usage of in-store recycling boxes seemed rather inconvenient and required effort. The problem was that they did not find the outcome desirable enough to put this effort in in-store recycling. The fact that recycling and shopping was not connected in the minds of the participants was one main obstacle, as opposed to going to the recycling centre that was only connected to recycling; then

dropping off the clothes would happen at the same time as throwing away other items. As mentioned, this lack of connection made the participants in the focus group question the sustainability focus because it only encouraged more consumption and hence did not solve the problem of a highly polluting fashion industry. So, the participants did not find it desirable to recycle when the main reason to go to the store was to shop, and therefore they did not find the in-store recycling favourable enough to engage in it. Sidique et al. (2010) also emphasized the effect of convenience when going to a drop-off site; however, it seemed to be much less convenient to go to a store than a recycling centre. The participants believed that it required effort to walk to the city, even if the stores might be closer in distance than the recycling centre, with a bag in their hands. Especially as they were not even sure where to find these boxes, so they were worried that they would have to carry the bag around and eventually bring it back home again.

If it would be possible to use recycled clothing to make new textiles, which is currently under development (Re:newcell, 2018), then that changes everything for the participants. They were very positive toward the possibility to make new clothing from recycled materials and the fact that they could drop off broken clothing. The participants all said they would not throw away a fully functional shirt in the garbage, yet if it had holes or stains then they had not known before what else they could have done with it. This implies that even though they already use other recycling alternatives that they are satisfied with, this is a turning point for them considering what to do with damaged clothing; hence, the in-store recycling boxes seem to fill a gap. This changed the minds of some of the participants and made the outcome of in-store recycling more desirable to them. They believed that it was an important evolution in the fashion industry to be able to handle broken clothing and make new clothing from recycled one; therefore, the participants perceived the in-store recycling behaviour more favourable regarding this. In addition, the idea of turning recycled clothing into new materials also creates a motive for the companies that the participants perceived as logical and therefore also accepted, which then also removes the scepticism. The scepticism toward companies is a new finding in this area that arose at the same time as the in-store recycling boxes, since this scepticism did not seem to exist toward recycling centres or second hand stores. The participants in the focus groups said that they would rather support voluntary work than companies, because of the feeling of doing good that is more present when donating to voluntary

organizations. This difference in mindset might be because the other alternatives are not profit driven, because they are more established, and because the outcome is known and perceived as more desirable by the participants.

## **5.2 Subjective norms**

The subjective norm as explained by Ajzen (1991) in the TPB is referring to the support or pressure given by others to perform or not perform a certain behaviour, so individuals are more prone to perform behaviours that people they care about have a positive opinion about (Conner & Armitage, 1988; Mathieson, 1991). We found some subjective norms that influenced the participants' intentions to engage in an in-store recycling behaviour.

### **5.2.1 Pressure from society to recycle**

The participants in our study claimed that pressure mainly came from within themselves and not from the surroundings, since no one directly asked them for a certain behaviour. However, we found that when discussing this inner pressure, the participants came with explanations such as the feeling of being judged, ashamed and embarrassed. For instance, they felt that they would be judged if they would throw something away that could instead have been recycled, so they would never tell anyone about it if they would do this to avoid feeling ashamed and embarrassed. These feelings are conversely initiated from their surroundings and as the participants find these opinions important, they are motivated to act accordingly. This implies that there is a pressure or support in society to recycle, which one participant even referred to as a duty. Yet this pressure or support does not necessarily have to be something bad, but instead a way to encourage the participants that felt that they were expected to recycle, and therefore do something good for the environment. So, the participants expressed a strong positive feeling toward recycling and stated that they were doing it. They also experienced a general concern about the environment and the importance to recycle instead of contributing to more waste; according to Barr et al. (2001) and Culiberg (2014), people would recycle more if they felt concerned about recycling and waste. This was confirmed in our study in relation to general recycling and waste, however, the recycling of clothing did not seem as important to the participants as for example household recycling. Consequently, even if the opinion toward overall recycling is favourable, the participants do not yet consider recycling of clothing as part of the general recycling.

### 5.2.2 No pressure from family or friends to recycle

The main obstacle for the participants regarding subjective norms was that no one around them seemed to know about the in-store recycling boxes, and therefore did not use them; as Barr et al. (2001) concluded, people are more encouraged to engage in a recycling behaviour if they know that people in their surroundings are recycling. In accordance with the subjective norms, to get people to use the in-store recycling boxes it would require them to see someone that they care about uses the box, and that it would matter to them that this person uses the box. We found that the participants' family and friends had an impact on their intention to perform in-store recycling, but that did not act in favour of the in-store recycling behaviour here; when there is no pressure from surroundings to use in-store recycling boxes, the participants do not use them either. One reason for the lack of usage of in-store recycling boxes were believed to be deep-rooted routines taught by family members. All the participants had used other sources for recycling, and because they were familiar with these and knew how they worked, they did not experience any need to change these ways of recycling their unwanted clothing. Nonetheless, as it was mentioned that people lacking this deep-rooted routine might do it, the idea of having in-store recycling boxes might still be beneficial for the environment. Even if not all people use them, there might be someone that use them instead of throwing their clothes away, and then it has still made a difference for the environment.

### 5.2.3 In-store recycling considered as shameful and embarrassing

A surprising finding was as mentioned above that the participants even believed that it would feel shameful and embarrassing to drop off or trade in clothes in a store. This was not as general, however, because only a few of the participants said that they felt this way. Yet, it was an interesting finding that had not been mentioned in previous literature related to this topic. This shame was mainly directed toward the people working in the store; on the one hand the fact that they would have to see what one of the participants expressed as her ugly clothes, and on the other hand in that you might have to ask someone for help to find the box or to get a voucher. Hence, there is a feeling that they would be judged for the clothes that they have once bought or the activity of recycling in-store. Furthermore, some participants expressed that it would be shameful to go there with family and friends, and would therefore rather go there on their own; this also shows that there is something shameful and embarrassing about showing someone that you recycle in-store. Yet we

believe that this is something highly individual who people consider to be a referent other, that is, someone that they care about their beliefs that can have an impact on their intention to perform a behaviour (Mathieson, 1991; Paul et al., 2016). Additionally, it appeared to be a general opinion that the society put pressure to look put together when going to a store, as opposed to dropping off clothes at a recycling centre or in a second hand store. We assume that this could depend on the fact that it overall would be more likely to meet someone with a noteworthy opinion in the city than at the recycling centre, yet this pressure to look put together is also assumed to be highly individual and depends on how much one cares about appearances in public. It seemed to be more acceptable not to look put together at a recycling centre, compared to when going to the city.

### **5.3 Perceived behavioural control**

Ajzen (1991) defines the PBC as an individual's capability and confidence level to perform a certain behaviour; the lack of PBC could result in the individual not performing the behaviour even with favourable attitudes and subjective norms. This would happen if the individual perceive that it lacks the important resources and opportunities to perform the behaviour (Madden et al., 1992; Mathieson, 1991). We found resources and opportunities that were important to the participants; depending on if they had access to these or not, it led to perceived control or the lack of perceived control over the in-store recycling behaviour.

#### **5.3.1 Everyone can make a difference**

As mentioned, there are some PBC factors that suggests a favourable intention toward in-store recycling. The main point increasing the PBC is that all the participants believed that one person could encompass the relevant resources and opportunities to make a difference, and that recycling could make a significant difference. The importance of this can be found in previous literature where the claim is that if people believe that recycling makes a difference, it will increase the likeliness of them recycling (Culiberg, 2014; Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015; Sidique et al., 2010). Consequently, they would be assumed to perform this behaviour because of the perceived control of resources and opportunities, which was confirmed by the participants that all said that they engaged in recycling.

### 5.3.2 Lack of information

It was clear during the interviews that the main obstacle for our participants regarding the usage of in-store recycling boxes was connected to lack of information, which was also found to be an obstacle to recycling in many previous studies (e.g. Barr, 2007; Barr et al., 2001; Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015; Ramayah et al., 2012; Schill & Shaw, 2016). The participants experienced a knowledge gap when it came to the in-store recycling boxes; none of the participants knew which stores that currently had the boxes, what you could leave in the boxes, where in the stores the boxes were located and hence how to use them. Previous research states that awareness of what and where to recycle can have a significant impact on recycling behaviour (Barr, 2007; Barr et al., 2001); the knowledge gap could be filled if the companies provided more information about in-store recycling. Even though the option was available to them so they had actual control, they did not have any intention to use the boxes because of the lack of perceived control. For instance, as analysed under attitude toward the impression of in-store recycling, the participants did not know that they could drop off broken clothing because they thought that everything had to be in good condition. As this turned out to be a differentiating factor that could get the participants to recycle in-store, it highlights the importance of receiving this information; especially because there is currently no other alternative for broken clothing than to throw them away, and as the participants already recycled at other locations this was the one thing that would enable them to recycle more of their unwanted clothing than they already did. Furthermore, it was mentioned that for people that currently not recycle any clothing at all, the in-store boxes could increase the capability for these people do to so. This is supported by previous literature by Sidique et al. (2010) stating that there is a need to raise awareness to increase the usage of recycling sites. The implementation of in-store recycling boxes could be a step toward reaching awareness among the ones that have not yet been reached, and give more people the opportunity to recycle with more options available at locations where they might spend more time.

In addition to this, the participants felt that they had no control of what would happen to their unwanted clothing since the companies do not provide any clear information or proof about what would happen. The participants did therefore not want to leave their clothes where they were not sure it would make any difference. So, to enhance the PBC, the participants asked for fuller disclosure; they wanted to know more in what way they

helped by dropping off or trading in their clothes and it seemed as their disposal behaviour could be altered by communicating information about in-store recycling. The PBC were also low regarding the fashion industry in general; some of the participants did not feel like they had enough information about the industry to really be able to comprehend the importance of recycling clothes. This all resulted in a reduced feeling of control and undermining of the PBC; the participants have the actual ability to perform the behaviour, yet not the perceived ability and hence intentions to do so because of the lack of information. Yet after providing them with information during the interviews they began to consider in-store recycling a good alternative, which proves the impact that information has on the intention to perform in-store recycling.

## **6 Conclusion**

The factors that influence consumers' intentions to use in-store recycling boxes were found to be primarily unfavourable and therefore obstructing them from performing this behaviour. The most prominent one was the lack of information about in-store recycling and its process; because the participants already used other recycling alternatives it was understood that they did not feel the need to look for another one, hence the fact that in-store recycling have not been sufficiently promoted obstructed the participants from intending to perform it. The significant difference between in-store recycling and the other recycling alternatives was found to be the possibility to drop off or trade in broken clothing, and the fact that being able to make new clothing from recycled materials is under development; these were also the two that resulted in the most favourable intentions toward the behaviour and the ones that could clearly contribute to the reduction of waste. Consequently, the fact that broken clothing can be dropped off or traded in and that the ability to make new clothing from recycled materials is under development should be communicated to the consumers to reinforce their intentions to use in-store recycling boxes. It is therefore concluded that the attitudes toward the behaviour and the PBC have the most impact on the participants' intentions to perform in-store recycling in this study.

## 7 Discussion

Today, we throw away more clothes than ever (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016); it is estimated that a whole garbage truck of textiles is wasted every second (Shepherd et al., 2017). Yet it has been proved that there are ways to tackle this issue; for instance, France confirmed that by implementing an extended producer responsibility policy for end of use textiles, they were able to reduce the amount of clothing waste (Bukhari et al., 2018). But this is just one way to reduce the waste; there are also other alternatives to prevent clothing from being thrown away in the garbage, such as the in-store recycling boxes implemented in, among other countries, Sweden. This research has examined the factors that could influence a consumer's intentions to use the in-store recycling boxes and in that way, reduce the amount of clothing that is being wasted today.

Previous literature has highlighted that knowledge about the environment would encourage recycling behaviours (Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015; McCarty & Shrum, 2001; Ramayah et al., 2012); but other researchers have found that general knowledge about the environment will not increase recycling (Barr, 2007; Barr et al., 2001). The empirical findings in this study confirms that knowledge about the environment and the effect of recycling can encourage recycling, but is not enough to make the participants engage in in-store recycling. Instead there are other issues that impacted the participants' intentions to perform in-store recycling, like having enough information about the specific recycling process and finding it convenient enough to change old routines; these impacts has been found to have an impact on other types of recycling as well (Barr, 2007; Barr et al., 2001; Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; O'Reilly & Kumar, 2016; Sidique et al., 2010). The intention to perform the behaviour could be gained through sufficient information about the in-store recycling process, because it would not make any difference in the participants' intentions to perform the behaviour if they knew that it was important to recycle, yet did not know how to recycle. This confirms the TPB in that people need to have perceived control over the important resources required to perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The problem here, however, is that the participants did not connect the recycling of clothes to overall recycling. Researchers have proposed that recycling would be more likely to be performed if people believed that it was important to recycle and that it could make a difference for the environment (Culiberg, 2014; Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015;

Sidique et al., 2010). This was confirmed for general recycling but not recycling in the fashion industry. The TPB justify this by proposing that a behaviour is more likely to occur when the individual perceive it to be important (Chang, 1998; Mathieson, 1991). Hence, it suggests that even if the participants believed that recycling could contribute to a more sustainable environment, they could still occasionally throw away clothing because they did not consider this an important part of recycling. This confirms what Joy et al. (2012) concluded about consumers separating fashion from sustainability.

One reason for the huge amount of wasted clothing (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016; Shepherd et al., 2017) is the increased production and consumption of low quality clothing that the fast fashion industry has led to (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2017); much of the clothing is not even good enough to be donated today (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010). The belief that some clothing was not good enough to be donated was confirmed during the research. Hence, even though the participants normally recycled or donated their unwanted clothing, they admitted that much was thrown in the garbage because it was broken or stained; this could explain why only 20 percent of the unwanted clothing in Sweden is coming back to the loop (Elander, 2016), since no other alternatives have existed before that accepts the broken or stained clothing. However, there is now an available solution to this critical problem, yet this information does not seem to have reached the consumers. Sidique et al. (2013) acknowledged some years ago that the acceptance of mixed recyclables would increase the probability to use a drop off site, which is confirmed in this study as the fact that one could drop off or trade in damaged clothing was a turning point for the participants in their intention to use in-store recycling boxes. This aligns with the TPB in that a favourable attitude toward an important behaviour would enhance the intention to perform that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This finding adds to previous literature that there is a need for available recycling channels that accept damaged clothing. Also, it supports the importance of in-store recycling boxes as they now seem to be the only alternative providing the opportunity to recycle damaged clothing, which could contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry.

### **7.1 Practical implications**

The empirical findings have some implications that could impact clothing disposal behaviour, more specifically the in-store recycling behaviour. Since the participants

already claim to be using alternatives when disposing clothing in good condition, in-store recycling could be introduced as an alternative focused on collecting stained or broken clothing pieces. However, it was discovered that there was no knowledge about the possibility to recycle damaged clothing. This lack of knowledge could be reduced if the clothing stores promoted the in-store recycling boxes, essentially by making them visible to the consumers in the store and providing information on how to use them. Without the knowledge of what would happen to the collected clothing the consumer experienced scepticism toward the idea behind. Companies could easily minimize the scepticism associated with them by giving full disclosure, because clearly communicated information would have made the participants more supportive of the companies. Also, it appears like the companies do not utilise the in-store recycling boxes to their potential, because the boxes could be used to prove that they work with sustainability and make consumers more satisfied by simply showing and communicating the idea of recycling boxes better.

With the introduction of in-store recycling boxes a new opportunity emerged – the opportunity to gain something in return for engaging in recycling. The problem that was discovered was that the participants wanted the voucher, yet it undermined the motivation to perform in-store recycling. When comparing this to other alternatives for recycling, the participants also said that it reduced the feeling of doing good to receive something in return, yet again they still wanted the voucher. Hence, the findings confirm that consumers would need something in return to perform in-store recycling, but not to perform other alternatives of recycling. Nonetheless, it does not confirm that consumers would specifically need a voucher. The companies should engage in research to find out if the vouchers are worth keeping, or if they should come up with another system for encouraging consumers to recycle in-store. Because the participants wanted the feeling of doing good that was removed with the voucher, it is suggested that a societal reward could be more appealing than a personal reward. Therefore, we suggest that the companies could instead offer to send money to charities or specific organizations when consumers drop off their clothing. They could also arrange campaigns that focus on societal or environmental issues, which further proves that the company cares and in turn gives consumers more favourable attitudes toward the company and the in-store recycling

boxes. This would not reduce the feeling of doing good, but instead enhance it and inspire to help others. This could in turn improve the image of the companies.

One of the main obstructs in using the in-store recycling boxes was the fact that they were positioned within stores; it was found that the participants cared about what store or organization in which they dropped off or traded in their clothing. The recycling was more associated with the store than the act of doing something good for the environment, and instead of perceiving it as an additional spot in which to recycle the participants perceived it as supporting a company and encourage more consumption. Due to this, we would suggest a change of location of these boxes to a more convenient place for the consumer. We believe that this could be possible because most of the companies do not own the boxes themselves, but instead hire companies as I:CO to manage them. Since the participants do not connect purchasing with recycling, it is suggested that to achieve a reduction of overall clothing waste and hence doing what is best for the environment, the boxes might gain more attention if they were placed in connection to other recycling activities. Hence, one alternative might be for companies like I:CO to relocate their boxes to recycling centres instead; and if the clothing companies would still like to be part of the initiative, then another suggestion would be for the stores within an area to work together to generate awareness and increased usage either in-store or at a more convenient location. Recycling centres appear to be the most convenient according to our participants, however another alternative could be to put the box or boxes next to larger grocery stores or similar places that people often visit.

## **7.2 Future research**

The research in this area has so far been very limited, due to that the in-store recycling boxes were quite recently implemented. This study has made several important contributions to the application of in-store recycling boxes as a recycling alternative, yet because our findings cannot be applicable to the entire population there is still a need for more research on this topic. We suggest that further research could be done on:

- Why the vouchers as incentives undermines the behaviour to perform in-store recycling. It would benefit the clothing stores and companies like I:CO to know

what consumers would want in return for performing this behaviour, which could then increase the usage and have a positive environmental impact.

- Why the companies have not provided more information about the in-store recycling boxes. This research could aim to examine the companies' attitudes on in-store recycling boxes, essentially what their agenda is for implementing them. For instance, if they want to have them to help the environment or for more self-interested reasons like being perceived as more sustainable by the consumers.
- People that have used the in-store recycling boxes before. By examining the factors that influenced these people in their decision to perform in-store recycling and their experience regarding this, valuable insights can be added on this topic; especially, which ones of these factors that can be applicable to people that have not used it in the attempt to increase usage.
- Comparisons between countries. The participants emphasized the routines of going to recycling centres and second hand stores, yet this might not be as common in other countries. As this study present that clothing waste is a global issue, it demonstrates the importance of research on recycling alternatives in more countries.

### **7.3 Limitations**

It was decided to sample participants due to desired age and gender, and that they had been in a store that has implemented an in-store recycling box. These factors limit the results because different findings might have evolved if the research would have been done on heterogeneous people, that might have been able to provide us with more diverse insights. For instance, interviewing consumers that has used the in-store recycling box before might lead to interesting findings. A limiting aspect of this is that we only interviewed people that had never used the box, and barely had any information about them. The findings would have been more valuable if the research was done on both people that have used it, and people that have not used it. However, for the scope of this research, we were not able to do this due to the difficulty in finding the people that had done it. A suggestion to be able to find people that does this could have been to make observations; by observing people in stores we could have attempted to recruit them as participants to the study. This might provide insights of the actual behaviour of in-store recycling, such as if the consumers pay attention to the box and how they act around it.

Nonetheless, we did not believe that the benefit of observing the in-store recycling boxes would outweigh the time consumption, due to the assumption that was confirmed in the study about people not using the boxes. During the focus groups that were instead conducted, one aspect that might affect the findings was the fact that it seemed like some of the participants assumed that we as researchers expected some answers from them; they seemed to believe that we were pro in-store recycling and wanted them to confirm our beliefs. However, when we realized this, we explained to the participants that the research was neutral toward the usage of in-store recycling boxes. Furthermore, one shortcoming of the study is that the research does not have the companies' perspectives and is hence relying only on secondary data regarding this; therefore, a full understanding of how the clothing stores work with companies, like I:CO or charities, is missing. This would have been able to provide a us with more background for the interviews, and more data to match the empirical findings toward.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Interview questions in English

- Do you know anything about in-store recycling boxes?

This description was read to the participants while showing three pictures of in-store recycling boxes:

Nowadays, many retailers offer the possibility to hand in or exchange clothing that one wants to get rid of, instead of throwing them away. This is done in in-store recycling boxes that are located on the floor in the stores or by the cash register, and as a thank you the stores offer a voucher in return. What happens to the clothing depends on their condition, some is reused by being sold as second hand products, some are remade into other products such as cleaning wipes, and the rest is recycled into textile fibres that can be used to for example insulation. It looks a bit different between stores, however, the main idea is that the clothing is being recycled instead of thrown away.

- Have you ever used one?
- For what reason would you use it (why)? For what reason would you not use it (why not)? (*For example: information, location, time, availability, the feeling of doing something good*)
- How does it make you feel, or how do you think that it would make you feel to use the in-store recycling box? (*What would you personally gain from doing so?*)
- Does it matter if you would get anything in return? For example, a lot of clothing stores offer vouchers of 10 – 15 % or 50 SEK when you return clothes. Would it change your opinion if the in-store recycling boxes if you got less or more in exchange, or if you would not get anything at all, or something completely different?

- Does it matter where the in-store recycling box is placed in the store? For example, if you can just leave it in the box yourselves or if you must go to the cashier.
- What do you believe are the pros and/or cons with in-store recycling boxes, if you compare to for example the more traditional second hand stores?
- Do you know anyone else that has used an in-store recycling box? Why do you believe that they did it, or haven't done it?
- Do you feel that you should use the in-store recycling box? Do you feel any pressure from family, friends, or society to do so?
- Does it matter to you what the clothing stores do to the clothes after you have left them in the in-store recycling box?
- How much do you feel in control over the recycling process and what happens to your clothes after you have left them in the in-store recycling box?
- Do you believe that it makes any difference for the society or world if you use the in-store recycling box instead of throwing away your clothes?

Information from background (see Appendix C)

- Does this information change your opinion about the in-store recycling boxes?

## Appendix B: Interview questions in Swedish

- Vet ni något om insamlingsboxarna som numera finns i flera klädbutiker?

Denna beskrivning lästes för deltagarna samtidigt som tre bilder visades på insamlingsboxar:

Numera erbjuder många klädbutiker möjligheten att lämna eller byta in kläder som man vill bli av med, istället för att slänga dem. Detta görs i insamlingsboxar som finns utsatta i butiken eller i kassan och som tack erbjuder butikerna en värdekupong. Det som händer med kläderna beror på vilket skick de är i, en del används igen genom att säljas som second hand, en del görs om till andra produkter så som städtrasor, och resten blir till textilfiber som används till exempel som isolering. Det ser lite olika ut från butik till butik, men huvudidén är att kläderna återvinns istället för att slängas.

- Har ni någon gång använt er av en insamlingsbox i en klädbutik?
- Av vilken anledning skulle ni göra det? Av vilken anledning skulle ni inte göra det? (*Till exempel: information, plats, tid, tillgänglighet, känslan av att göra något bra*)
- Hur får det er att känna eller hur tror ni att det skulle få er att känna att använda insamlingsboxen? (*Vad får ni personligen ut från att göra det?*)
- Spelar det någon roll om ni får något i utbyte? Till exempel, många klädbutiker erbjuder värdekuponger på 10–15% eller 50 KR när du lämnar in kläder. Hade det ändrat er uppfattning om insamlingsboxarna om du fick mindre eller mer i utbyte, om ni inte hade fått något alls, eller något helt annat?
- Spelar det någon roll vart i butiken insamlingsboxen finns? Till exempel, om ni bara kan lägga det i boxen själva eller om ni måste gå fram till kassan.
- Vad tror ni fördelarna och/eller nackdelarna är med insamlingsboxar i butikerna, om ni jämför med t ex mer traditionella second hand butiker?

- Vet ni någon annan som har använt sig av insamlingsboxarna? Varför tror ni att de gjorde det, eller inte har gjort det?
- Känner ni att ni borde använda er av insamlingsboxen? Känner ni någon press från familj, vänner eller samhället på att göra det?
- Spelar det någon roll för er vad klädbutikerna gör med kläderna efter att ni har lagt dem i insamlingsboxen?
- Hur mycket kontroll känner ni att ni har över återvinningsprocessen och vad som händer med era kläder efter ni har lagt dem i insamlingsboxen?
- Tror ni att det gör någon skillnad för samhället eller världen om ni använder insamlingsboxen istället för att slänga era kläder?

#### Information från bakgrund (se Appendix C)

- Ändrar den här informationen er uppfattning om insamlingsboxarna?

## **Appendix C: Information from background**

The participants in the focus groups were given this text to read individually in the end of the interview:

“It is the second most polluting industry in the world constantly threatening the nature and the people on this planet, and obstructing a sustainable environment. The industry referred to is of course the fashion industry (Qutab, 2017). Still, we are buying more clothes than ever, and consequently throwing away more clothes than ever (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016). The industry is already producing over a billion clothes every year, and this is predicted to grow with 63 percent by 2030 (Campione, 2017). With this pace the fashion industry will be using a quarter of the planet’s carbon budget by 2050 (Shepherd et al., 2017). When looking closer into the Swedish market, a report confirms that the trend is similar with sales that rose with seven percent during 2015 (Sternö & Nielsén, 2016). This rise in consumption in the clothing industry is especially because of the concept of fast fashion, which means that clothes nowadays are cheap and made to be worn only for a few times, and are then thrown away to be replaced by new ones (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). It is estimated that 95 percent of the clothes purchased are thrown away, even though it could have in fact been re-worn, reused or recycled instead, and less than one percent of the materials used to produce these clothes are coming back to the loop (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016; Shepherd et al., 2017). To put this in another way, it is also estimated that a whole garbage truck of textiles is wasted every second (Shepherd et al., 2017).”

## **Appendix D: Translation examples**

Due to that the focus groups were conducted in Swedish, all quotes have been translated into English by the authors. Therefore, we have included some examples of the translations made to give an idea of the process.

Focus group 1, participant 4: En fördom jag har haft, att kläderna måste vara i bra skick för att lämna in dem. Skulle ju inte tror jag tänka på att jag skulle kunna lämna in något trasigt.

Translated to: One prejudice that I have had is that the clothes must be in a great condition to drop them off. I would not, I believe, think that I would be able to drop off something that is broken.

Focus group 1, participant 1: Jag tror också lite i och med att jag ändå är uppväxt med att man går till återvinningscentralen och lämnar sina kläder, så sitter det fortfarande så hårt i en att man skulle gå in i en butik.

Translated to: I also believe that because I am raised with going to the recycling centre to drop off your clothes, that is still so deep-rooted as to go to a store.

Focus group 2, participant 1: Jag hade ju inte kunnat gå och slänga mina kläder sådär vanligt alltså om det är helt funktionella kläder, alltså då hade ju inte jag mått bra. Nej, för det känns ju typ som att folk dömer en då också på något konstigt sätt.

Translated to: I would not have been able to throw away my clothes just like that if they were fully functional, I would not feel good about that. No, because it also feels like people would judge you in some weird way.

Focus group 1, participant 2: Och då känns det så här pinsamt att gå dit med en kasse med sina gamla fula kläder typ.

Translated to: And then it feels embarrassing to walk there with a bag of my old ugly clothes.

Focus group 2, participant 5: Men det är svårt att tänka att H&M skulle ge mig en check när jag lämnar in någonting där utan att dom tjänar på det på något sätt.

Translated to: But it is hard to think that H&M would give me a voucher when I drop off something there without them gaining from it in some way.