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The Norwegian Textile and Apparel Industry: The Emergence  
of a New Ethics Law

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of an ethics law on consumer attitude and how it will influence the consumer information seeking process.

**Design/method/approach:** In depth interviews will be conducted with textile and apparel companies operating in Norway, followed by an exploratory survey collected from a representative consumer panel by email and online.

**Findings:** The authors strongly believe the results will show that the emergence of an ethics law will in fact affect the information seeking process of consumers, and generate change by means of transparency.

**Practical implications:** The findings might be useful for the Norwegian Government in regards to the new ethics law, and Norwegian textile and apparel brands in regards to transparency. Especially, brands that have factory list disclosure and lack of transparency might consider becoming more open regarding their sustainability initiatives.

**Originality/value:** This paper contributes to research by introducing an empirical phenomenon that has not yet been studied, in terms of how the consumer information seeking process is influenced by law requirements from standardised authority. Limitations and directions for future research are also presented in the paper.

**Keywords:** Textile Industry, Apparel Industry, Transparency, Ethics, Information Seeking, Sustainability

**Paper type:** Master Thesis

## **1.0 Background**

**Study Programme:** Master of Science in Strategic Marketing Management

**Title:** The Norwegian Textile and Apparel Industry: The Emergence of a New Ethics Law

**Supervisor:** Line Lervik Olsen

The worldwide issues in the textile and apparel industry have been of interest for the authors for a long period of time. As the Norwegian government is currently developing a new law, it is of great importance to investigate if it will affect consumer's information seeking process. However, as this matter appears to be challenging to measure, the authors find it important to bring awareness to this issue, which is why this topic was chosen. Due to the awareness of sustainable development, socially responsibility has to a greater extent become more visible and important during the past decade.

The next section provides a brief review of relevant background information for the study. An overview of the textile and apparel industry in the Norwegian market is first presented. Next, the key research question that will guide this research is presented, followed by a description of the objective of this study.

### ***1.1 Norwegian Textile and Apparel Industry***

The textile and apparel industry accounts for almost one-third of the world's employment (James & Montgomery, 2017). The industry represents a great part of production, trade, and employment in different parts of the world, and is largely located in developing countries. The industry is considered an important contributor for these nations as it presents a range of opportunities in terms of export, growth, low-entry jobs, and incomes (Keane, 2008). The exploitation of the low labour cost advantage, allows apparel companies to meet the changing consumer demand and produce short product life cycle clothes.

In Norway alone, the apparel industry was said to be worth over 32,3 billion Norwegian kroner in 2015, with a weak growth of 1.6 per cent from 2014. An increase in the area of industry fragmentation and online shopping are proven indicators for the slow growth. Furthermore, an emerging consumer trend is

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related to an increase of investment in the home textiles sector, and less of what is inside the consumers' wardrobe (Virke, 2016).

Economic globalisation has changed the process of firm operations across the globe (Ha-Brookshire & Dyer, 2009). The Norwegian industry takes part of this globalisation, where the value of apparel import reached 19,4 billion NOK in 2015, an increase of 12.6 per cent from the previous year (Virke, 2015).

Moreover, based on import statistics for apparels, Klepp and Laitala (2016) estimated that about 67 garments per person were imported in 2013, which corresponds to an average consumer owning approximately 359 garments.

Regardless of the industry's extensive level of popularity, the average consumer remains unknowledgeable and uninformed about the origin of the garments they purchase, fabric, and under what conditions it was produced. Nowadays, many consumers are searching for information that facilitates an informed choice, in order to avoid unethical consumption of products. Currently, a new ethics law is under development by the Norwegian government to improve the consumers' information seeking process for production information.

### ***1.2 Research Gap***

Worldwide organisations and consumers have realised the importance of social responsibility in today's society. As the consumer plays a major role in the textile and apparel sector, it is important for the organisations to maintain a positive reputation and good relationship with the consumers. This may include providing demanding consumer with information related to the company's sustainable initiatives and production processes. However, research demonstrates that some textile and apparel firms may be reluctant to provide additional information, regardless of pressure from consumers. Nevertheless, the emergence of an ethics law, issued by the government, establishes an empirical phenomenon that has not yet been studied. As the objective of the new ethics law is to generate change by means of transparency, it is thus of great importance for companies within this sector to be aware of the effect the new law will have on consumers' attitude and information seeking process.

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### ***1.3 Research Question***

As mentioned, questions remain regarding how a new ethics law, issued by the government, will affect consumers' information seeking process in regards to the textile and apparel industry. Although a limited number of studies have examined the effect of information disclosure in the textile and apparel industry (Doorey, 2011), the author identified a gap related to the consumers information seeking process in support of law requirements from standardised authority is present. This is an important research gap due to importance of transparency and corporate disclosure, and lack of theory towards information seeking process within the textile and apparel industry. With that in mind, the authors conceptualize the following research question:

**RQ1:** *What is the impact of an ethics law on consumer attitude and will it influence consumers' information seeking process?*

The authors presume that consumers attitude (*independent*) will be significantly moderated under the circumstances of an ethics law, and thus again influence consumers' information seeking process (*dependent variable*) in the expected direction.

### ***1.4 The Objective***

Based on the review of existing literature, the main objectives of this paper are twofold: (1) to investigate if a new ethics law, issued by the government, will motivate consumers to seek for information in regards to Norwegian textile and apparel companies sustainability initiatives and product production processes, and (2) to provide insights and better understanding for how companies can deliver sustainability efforts and product production information to consumers in order to increase the level of trust and interest. Thus, the research paper proposes a theoretical framework that describes and hypothesizes the concepts of consumers' attitude and ethics law, and how it affects information seeking. Further, the review includes a variety of literature including academic journals, industry reviews, and governmental statistics. In addition, the study will provide some background information about a new ethics law, in progress by the Norwegian government, and investigate if the law will influence consumers' information seeking process.

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The authors then use interviews and questionnaires to measure consumers' information seeking process conducted within one year.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Sustainable Initiatives***

Sustainability initiatives include organisational economic developments that seek to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). The concept is characterised by terms such as “environmental”, “social”, and “economic” elements (Høgevold & Svensson, 2016; Polonsky, Daub, & Ergenzinger, 2005; Simpson & Radford, 2014; Vos, 2007), where the diverse terms represent the comprehensive responsibility of a business towards its stakeholders and the society as a whole (Polonsky, Daub, & Ergenzinger, 2005).

#### *Environmental Aspect*

Environmental efforts are being developed and implemented to reduce the impact of business practices on the environmental impacts of textile and apparel production (Curwen, Park, & Sarkar, 2013; Høgevold & Svensson, 2016). Also, as efforts to increase production of more eco-friendly and greener products is currently on the rise, a future including environmental elements appear to be possible (Fulton & Lee, 2013).

#### *Social Aspect*

The social component is considered an innovative approach to social change, as it considers organisational impact on society improvement, such as individual's well-being and ensuring a quality workplace environment (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013; Polonsky et al., 2005; Simpson & Radford, 2014)

#### *Economic Aspect*

Economic sustainability refers to value creation and financial performance, and is operated for employing resources optimally in order to achieve a beneficial balance and responsibility over a longer period of time (Simpson & Radford, 2014). However, as explained by Simpson and Radford (2014), companies these

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days are less concerned with social and economic sustainability aspects, and their attention appears to be more focused on the environmental sustainability elements.

The textile and apparel industry are now under pressure from government regulations, marketplace demands, and competitors' actions to demonstrate sustainable initiatives. The pressure arise on the grounds as some companies have not yet developed any coherent sustainability strategy (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014), or need to further develop their initial CSR programs, as many firms have a tendency to adopt initiatives that only address one or few specific issues (Meixell & Luoma, 2015). It is shown that sustainability efforts in the industry are insignificantly less effective when solely dealing with one single point alone (Argandoña & von Weltzien Hoivik, 2009; Choi & Gray, 2008; Markley & Davis, 2007). Moreover, McPhee (2014) explains that an effective business model should implement several new actions and new behavioural changes that adjust how the firm interacts within the industry.

In recent years, the authors have observed a gradual shift in regards to how companies operate and the importance of becoming more sustainable (Choi et al., 2012; McPhee, 2014). Textile and apparel companies are currently seeking a more holistic and multidimensional approach towards sustainable initiatives, and as the recognition of sustainable business practices continues to grow, what kinds of initiatives to include is becoming increasingly important (Fulton & Lee, 2013). This has led to the introduction of corporate codes of conducts and firms joining multi-stakeholder initiatives for social responsibility, such as fair wear, ethical trading initiative, united nation environmental programme, and fair labour associations, which mainly involves governments, civil society organisations, and the private sectors (Fulton & Lee, 2013; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). When joining such initiatives, companies commits to provide a wider platform for addressing issues of poor labour condition, human right, and environmental matter than individual corporate code alone can achieve (Yu, 2008), and at the same time allowing corporations to take greater responsibility in terms of ensuring an improvement of sustainability challenges.



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## *2.2 Consumers Attitude*

Over the years, consumers are shown to have positive attitudes towards ethical consumption, but it has also been acknowledged that there is a lack of knowledge and trust concerning sustainability of textile and apparel sector (Hill & Lee, 2012; Niinimäki, 2010). Moreover, Niinimäki (2010) demonstrates an attitude-behaviour gap in consumer's ethical attitudes, more specific, their interest attitudes in the clothing field. Research has shown that attitude is an effective predictor of behaviour, and allows the researchers to recognize differences in consumer attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Dickson, 2000; Hustvedt & Bernard, 2008). However, De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) state that overall attitude alone are usually a poor predictor of behaviour, and should include other relevant variables to strengthen the relationship. Hence, the authors will further review two categories of important variables; trust and interest.

### *Lack of Trust*

Moreover, brand trust is an important factor for consumers when making purchase decisions, and when a brand is trustworthy, consumers perceive less risk and gather less information prior to the decision-making process. As noted by (Hiscock, 2001), brand trust is critical when building and maintaining relationships between consumers and brands as the ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond with the consumers. Supporting this, Kang and Hustvedt (2014) describes that brand trust is significant in forming consumers' attitude and brand attachment, which can in turn, lead to brand equity. Moreover, transparency, communication, and CSR engagement all play important roles in the brand-consumer trust relationship (Willmott, 2003), and determines consumers' perception of organisation's sustainability efforts.

Nevertheless, literature demonstrate that consumers are increasingly concerned about the sustainability of apparel companies as they may in fact appear to be untrustworthy (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014; Lam & Postle, 2006). Park and Kim (2016) argues that the sustainability approach taken by apparel brands may be more focused on being perceived sustainable by its consumers, than truly focusing on fulfilling their commitment. Supporting this,

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Kang and Hustvedt (2014) argue that the sustainability initiatives taken by multiple fashion brands is fundamentally different from companies that operate with the three terms previously described, environmental, social, and economical. This indicates a lack of trust in businesses that claims to be sustainable and a result of this is that consumers remain largely unaware of the trail of harm that led to the production of their clothes.

#### *Level of interest*

Research has shown that an individuals' environmental concern, knowledge, and interest are major drivers towards consumers' sustainable purchase behaviour (Jin Gam, 2011; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). The authors have detected that consumers have over the years begun to realize their responsibility to be concerned about their purchases, while at the same time recognizing the power of their objections to make a positive difference for both the textile and apparel workers and the environment. More and more consumers tend to identify themselves as conscious consumers (Dickson, 2000; Jin Gam, 2011; Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001), and are currently seeking to purchase products and services produced responsibly with social and environmental considerations in mind.

Further, studies indicate that consumers with sufficient knowledge about the ethical conditions are more willing to support and reward ethical business practices through their purchases (Dickson, 2000; Khan, Rodrigues, & Balasubramanian, 2016; Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that consumers are more likely to act and pursue a sustainable behaviour when they feel that their decisions will make a difference (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014), and the majority of consumers have currently a strong interest of this issue (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). Therefore, an important part of conscious consumerism is being able to educate themselves about the hidden cost of production, businesses sustainable practices, and how their purchases can help to shape more sustainable business practices and a responsible economy as a whole.

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However, as explained by James and Montgomery (2017), consumer knowledge of the textile and apparel supply chain remains minimal, with the majority of customers having little knowledge of the origin of the products they buy. Supporting this, Dickson (2000) describes that consumers have insufficient knowledge of the problems related to manufacturing, and as a result, concern for workers, support for socially sustainable businesses, and intention to purchase from companies with such initiatives may be lacking.

In addition to the knowledge barrier, an increased lack of transparency is explained to be influencing consumer's attitude towards the textile and apparel industry. Supporting this, James and Montgomery (2017) explain that obtaining information about production processes, and companies' level of sustainability remains a problem. Moreover, Shaw and Shiu (2003) discovered positive attitudes towards ethics in consumer choice, but also showed a substantial amount of scepticism, a results which affected their fair trade buying behaviour. Hence, as companies are continuously trying to avoid providing consumers with this information, consumers are unable to make informed purchasing decisions and thus, making their consumer power meaningless.

### ***2.3 Information Barrier***

Participating in ethical buying practices presupposes that consumers have enough information that allows them to make better ethical judgments. Moreover, if ethical values are to be considered in purchase decisions, consumers need to be able to compare the ethical stands of different firms. However, Shaw et al. (2006) discovered that although consumers wanted to act ethically, it was difficult to do so. The reason for this was according to four constraints; lack of information, difficulties in accessing ethical retailers, limited range offered, and the nature of ethically produced clothing (Shaw et al., 2006). When consumers lack information relating to the origins of the product, consumers are not able to avoid potential unethical purchases (Shaw et al., 2006). Consequently, although consumers might be willing to make ethical purchases, there is no guarantee that they actually do so.

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Research regarding fair trade buying behaviour have often been conceptualized and tested in several models with measurement constructs such as knowledge, attitudes, and buying intentions (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Shaw & Shiu, 2002, 2003; Vitell, Singhapakdi, & Thomas, 2001). The role of information, on the other hand, has not been incorporated in empirically tested models (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). The concept of information has nonetheless been highlighted in many studies.

Shaw and Shiu (2003) discovered that beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour are determined by the processing of information about an ethical issue (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). Ethical issues are often characterized by low levels of credibility, lack of available and accessible information, too much wrong information and not enough high-quality information, which might create confusion in the mind of consumers (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Nilsson, Tunçer, & Thidell, 2004; Roberts, 1996; Wessells, Johnston, & Donath, 1999). Previous research has stated that lack of information and the quality of it, makes consumers less interested and more sceptical about fair trade issues. Moreover, it made fair trade product seem less attractive and more expensive, resulting in negative attitudes and decreased probability of consumers buying these products (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007)

De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007)'s study offer insight into the important role of fair trade information in the buying process, and the perceived quality and quantity of the information. Nonetheless, the study focused on a relatively small sample of Belgian consumers, which could affect the representativeness of the research. The marketing relevance of the study might thus be improved, by applying the theory to other European countries and other subgroups of the population (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007).

Purchasing fair trade products implies a more complicated choice process, as consumers have to devote a large amount of time and effort to searching external information (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004). In order to make ethical decisions, consumers are dependent upon accessible and accurate information, which are conveyed in a manner that is easily reachable and do not cause any inconvenience

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for the consumers. Seeking information bring benefits in terms of cost savings and satisfaction with the choice, while possible costs involve time, money and effort. As consumers are currently seeking for additional information and there is an increasing level of demand of companies operating in a sustainable way, clothing companies worldwide are forced to acknowledge this matter. Hence, the authors have recognised that it is increasingly important for organizations to understand how to communicate their initial sustainable initiatives.

However, most companies worldwide still remain secretive about their foreign labour practices, with increased lack of transparency. This barrier to information is in turn influencing consumers socially responsible behaviour, as it becomes increasingly difficult to obtain information about ethical issues and corporations' supply chains (James & Montgomery, 2017). Thus, it becomes essential to develop governmental regulation of corporate disclosure and subsequently increase the information availability (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004).

#### ***2.4 Factory List Disclosure***

As the globalisation of the apparel industry has emerged, issues regarding the management of supply chains have received significantly greater attention. Consequently, corporations have experienced greater demands and public pressure by their customers and shareholders to disclose the names and addresses of their factories and suppliers. Yet, the majority of businesses worldwide refuse to increase the transparency of their global labour practices and subsequently disclose factory list information (Doorey, 2005). In the last decade, a vast number of Norwegian and foreign companies has in fact released their global factory list to the public. However, to this date, the majority of the clothing companies worldwide have a strict secrecy around suppliers and production facilities.

Information disclosure is a regulatory tool designed to influence business behaviour, with the potential of leading to greater accountability by corporations (Doorey, 2011). The idea behind factory list disclosure is that clothing companies will alter their behaviour in order to manage the risk associated with a non-transparent supply chain (Doorey, 2011). The concept of transparency has normally been used in areas such as securities and environmental law, as an

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attempt to influence company behaviour, while it has been downplayed in the governance of labour practices (Doorey, 2011). In recent years, however, transparency of information has been promoted, in order to encourage businesses to have a better management of supply chain labour practices.

Transparency allows unions in production countries to link factories to specific brands. If reprehensible actions take place at one factory, unions can contact the clothing chain directly and request that corporations ensure the safeguarding of workers' rights. A lack of transparency, on the other hand, makes it difficult to verify the company's assurances regarding the alleged ethically and environmentally production (Steindal & Leffler, 2011). Virtually all studies on information disclosure take the corporation's perspective and combine it with an explorative approach; in order to investigate the developments that have led businesses to publish their global supplier lists. While crucial for understanding the effect it has on corporate behaviour, the current literature (Doorey, 2005, 2011; Steindal & Leffler, 2011) on the subject has limited managerial relevance, in part because the link to consumer behaviour may be weak.

Thus, even though several articles have examined fashion brands and the contribution of factory list disclosure, the effects in terms of the consumer perspective has been neglected (Doorey, 2011). While improved transparency might make consumers more willing to buy the products, it is not certain that consumers will actually use the disclosed information to check corporate conduct. Hence, rather than examining how companies respond to mandatory factory disclosure, the authors will incorporate the notion of transparency and factory list disclosure, in order to investigate the effect on customer behaviour and consumers' information seeking process.

### ***2.5 The Norwegian Ethics Law***

Norwegian consumers have few rights in terms of access to and knowledge of how goods are produced. Many consumers call for information that facilitates an informed choice, in order to avoid contributing to unacceptable working conditions, such as low wages and an unsafe working environment, and environmental harm.

To date, there are several labelling schemes in Norway that imposes requirements relating to CSR, in addition to strict environmental standards (Stortinget, 2016) “Svanemarket” and the “European EU-Ecolabel” are two examples of effective instruments for companies who want to demonstrate their social and environmental commitment. However, companies in Norway are not required to fully disclose its entire supply chain, on the basis of competitive conditions. Political measures are therefore a necessity, in order to make information more accessible for consumers.

In 2015, “Framtiden i Våre Hender” initiated a petition for an ethics law, before it got support from the government in June 2016 where it is being developed further (Stortinget, 2016). Members of the Norwegian government believe that the ethics law should be based upon transparency and information in regards to how companies work with CSR and the supply chains. The goal is to create change through transparency, and to ensure consumers right to information. However, in order to ensure that the ethics law have the intended effect in regards to both products and consumers, the transparency requirement need to apply to the whole production chain and not just one link back (Stortinget, 2016).

Targeted use of environmental- and ethical labelling on items classified as high-risk products, such as textiles, clothes and shoes, in combination with increased information from corporations, will contribute in meeting the requirements of the intended ethics law (Stortinget, 2016). Consequently, consumers will be able to receive information in the moment of purchase, making it easier to opt out unlabelled products and goods.

Once an industry leader commits to disclose its supply chain to public scrutiny, it becomes increasingly challenging for other corporations to resist without a good reason. Thus, the introduction of a potential ethics law is unquestionably to be at the forefront of the political arena, which have created great commitment among consumers in Norway, as well as the rest of the world, for the last decade. As consumers have been found to have a positive attitude about increased governmental regulations (Dickson, 1999), implementing regulations in

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conjunction with voluntary actions by the apparel industry should thus receive consumer support.

To this date, there are presently no laws worldwide that require disclosure of the identity of the factories within the global supply chain (Doorey, 2011).

Consequently, there is a lack of data available in this area and future research is therefore necessary in order to address this issue. More specifically, further research is needed to determine whether and how factory list disclosure and governmental regulation is likely to affect consumer behaviour.

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework**

#### ***3.1 Attitude towards Information Seeking Process***

In recent years, the global supply chains of companies have received greater attention from external stakeholders and consumers, pressuring corporations to disclose information that exceeds what the companies are obliged to unveil. However, most corporations worldwide still remain secretive in regards to their foreign labour practices. This contributes to an information barrier, which makes it problematic for consumers to obtain information about corporations' ethical issues, and a re-evaluation of the supply chain information disclosure strategy is thus needed for a large amount of companies worldwide (James & Montgomery, 2017). Consumers have been found to have a more positive attitude towards corporations that are increasingly transparent in terms of their supply chain (Choi et al., 2012). The authors expect that the consumers who express a lack of trust, as well as the consumers who holds a substantial amount of scepticism towards textile and apparel companies, will positively influence consumers' intention to seek information. Thus, the authors hypothesize the following:

*H1: Consumers' lack of trust attitude towards sustainability will affect consumers' information seeking process.*

*H2: Consumers' level of interest attitude towards sustainability will affect consumers' information seeking process.*



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### ***3.2 Norwegian Ethics Law***

To this date, Norwegian consumers have few rights in terms of access to and knowledge of how goods are produced. Responding to this, Framtiden i Våre Hender initiated a petition for an ethics law in 2015, based upon transparency and information disclosure in regards to corporations' global supply chains (Stortinget, 2016). As consumers are becoming increasingly aware of sustainable issues, they are seeking to purchase products that are produced in an environmentally and socially way. However, there are presently no laws worldwide that require supply chain disclosure from corporations (Doorey, 2011). Hence, as a Norwegian ethics law are under development by the government, this introduced an area the authors would like to further explore. In conjunction with Dickson's study (1999, 53), which states that consumers are found to have positive attitudes towards governmental regulations, the authors believe that an ethics law will increase consumers' level of trust and interest, and positively influence consumers' intention to seek information. This is of great importance to this study, and therefore the following hypothesis have been conceptualized:

*H3: The effect of consumers' lack of trust attitude towards sustainability on consumers' information seeking process is moderated by the ethics law*

*H4: The effect of consumers' level of interest attitude towards sustainability on consumers' information seeking process is moderated by the ethics law*

### ***3.3 Conceptual Model***

In order to deepen the "sustainable information seeking" literature, a model has been developed (see figure 3.3.1). The model examines the role of consumers' attitude, more specifically, their lack of trust and level of interest on consumers' information seeking process, which allow the model to incorporate both the negative and positive component of consumers' general attitude towards sustainability. The individual concepts of consumers' general attitudes, including trust and interest, and the information seeking process have relatively well developed testing traditions. However, the concepts have yet not been integrated within a conceptual model, including an ethics law issued by the government, as the authors are proposing.

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The operationalization of the model proposed, offers insight and strategic direction for marketing managers attempting to establish whether to become more transparent or continue with having disclosed factory lists.

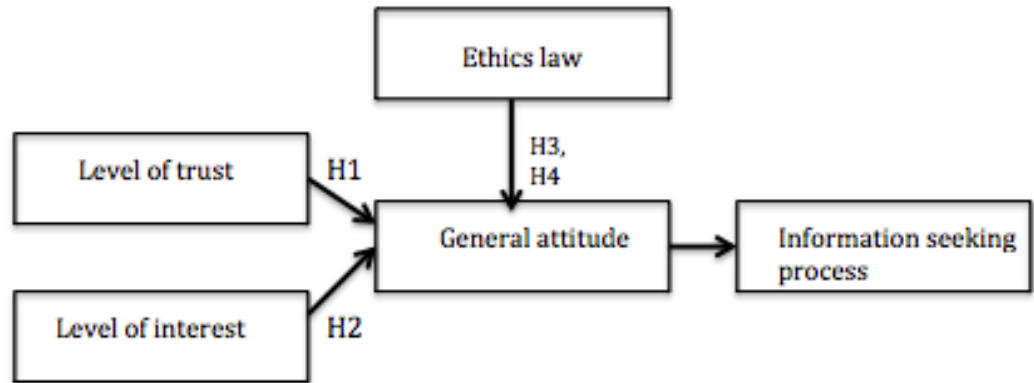


Figure 3.3.1. A conceptual model for sustainable information seeking. Level of trust and level of interest will significantly affect consumers' information seeking process in the expected direction, and be moderated by the ethics law. The two attitude constructs are modelled to load on the general attitude constructs, as well as on the information seeking process directly.

## 4.0 Methodology

In order to evaluate the underlying hypothesis, the authors will first be conducting interviews with textile and apparel organisations, followed by an exploratory survey. The interview process will be utilised to collect information about textile and apparel firms' sustainable operations in the Norwegian marketplace, while the questionnaires will be conducted in order to understand the attitude of trust and interest of the participants. In addition, both the interviews and the survey will be highly focused on the new ethics law. The difference in the methods is due to the different objectives of this study.

### 4.1 Interviews

In order to provide good validity for reviewing a variety of current issues, such as firms' sustainability operations, level of transparency, open/closed factory lists etc., the authors will conduct in depth interviews with textile and apparel companies operating in Norway.

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## **4.2 Questionnaire**

In order to collect data from a representative consumer panel, a requirement for the survey is that the sample is proportionally distributed by geographical area, gender, age, and level of income and education. Also, to get a valid result, the survey will be emailed to 1000 consumers where the authors expect that approximately 500 will respond and distributed online. The first section of the survey will measure consumers' information seeking process, where the ethics law will be specified, which is the primary focus of the research. In the second part of the questionnaire, the authors will measure participants' general attitudes to discover if their level of trust and interest are influencing consumers' information seeking process.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The present research wants to establish whether a new ethics law, issued by the government, will affect consumers' information seeking process in regards to the textile and apparel industry. This will be done by testing four new hypotheses regarding consumers' information seeking process, contributing to several implications for theory.

Although a limited number of studies have examined the effect of information disclosure in the textile and apparel industry, the authors believe that the identified gap related to the consumers' information seeking process, in support of law requirements, is presenting a significant research opportunity.

The authors strongly believe that the emergence of an ethics law will in fact affect the information seeking process of consumers, and generate change by means of transparency. The results the authors expect to discover, is thus of great importance within the textile and apparel sector, as corporations need to be aware of the effect the new law will have on consumers' attitude and information seeking process. Furthermore, the present research will enable managers and governments to optimise their marketing and information effort and the findings might be useful for the Norwegian Government in regards to the new ethics law.

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The current study presents some limitations that might affect the results. The main limitation is related to the information seeking process, since the authors only measure intention to seek and not the actual process. Generalisations are another limitation, as the sample size might be too small, and therefore not representative of the population in total. Also, the use of a Norwegian audience might create some deviations from results found in other research articles about information disclosure in the textile and apparel industry. The study proposed also sets some limitations in regards to the method that will be used, as there are different types of response biases that might reduce the accuracy of the results. For instance, the respondents in the interview could alter their response or be discouraged to answer the questionnaire in an honest manner.

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## 7.0 Appendix

### *Appendix A: Progress Plan*

| <b>Date</b>         | <b>Tasks</b>      |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| January to February | Review feedback   |
| February to March   | Literature review |
| March to April      | Literature review |
| April to May        | Data collection   |
| May to June         | Data collection   |
| June to July        | Analysis          |
| July to August      | Revision          |
| August to September | Revision          |