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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

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## **Factors Influencing Consumers' Purchase Intention of Co-branded Products with Eco-labels**

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# Abstract

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that influence consumers' purchase intention of co-branded products with eco-labels in the clothing industry and to what extent these factors affect consumers' purchase intention. The study fills in a research gap by also investigating the result of the co-branding on the purchase intentions of the consumers. The aim is to explore how the original clothing brand and eco-label brand influence purchase intention both directly and through several mediators such as perceived fit, ease of transfer and product evaluation.

## Methodology

A quantitative research method was performed on two clothing and eco-label brands to test the model that we have created in this study. An online survey was created and delivered to 630 the students in the Master Programs of the School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg in 2020. The collected data was processed in SPSS and AMOS.

## Results and Findings

Our research shows that the model we have built to explain how the eco-labelling of clothes influences the customers' intentions to purchase them is valid. Our findings indicate that the current theory cannot completely explain the roles played in the eco-labelling by the different analyzed factors. A significant part of the previous theory could not be confirmed in the context of our study. The research also demonstrates that all the analyzed factors have a positive influence on the purchase intentions. The influence of the product evaluation on the customers' intentions to purchase eco-labelled clothes is moderate and twice as big as the weak influence of the other four factors.

## Implications

Our research has both theoretical and practical implications. From the theoretical perspective, we clarify how co-branding differs from other brand alliances. In addition, we extend the existing theory and take a step further by also investigating the result of the co-branding on the consumers' purchase intentions. From a practical perspective, both high and low equity clothes brands have the same incentives to eco-label their products. The clothes manufacturers can potentially choose an "easier" eco-branding and even create their own eco-labels. The organizations that manage audited eco-labels will therefore face difficulties to partner with clothes companies. Making the eco-labelled product highly evaluated by the customers should be the focus of the clothing companies.

**Key words:** co-branding, eco-label, brand equity, eco-label equity, perceived fit, ease of transfer, product evaluation, purchase intention

# Table of contents

Abstract.....	2
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background .....	4
1.2 Problem Analysis.....	5
1.3 Purpose .....	7
1.4 Research Contribution.....	7
2. Theoretical Framework.....	7
2.1 Co-branding .....	8
2.2 Eco-labelling.....	13
2.3 Purchase Intention .....	15
2.4 Eco-branded Product Evaluation.....	16
2.5 Perceived Fit .....	17
2.6 Ease of Transfer .....	18
2.7 Brand Equity.....	19
2.8 Eco-Label Equity.....	21
2.9 Research Model.....	22
3. Methodology .....	23
3.1. Research Design .....	23
3.2. Brand Selection .....	23
3.3. Survey Design .....	24
3.4 Data Collection .....	28
3.5 Sample Analysis.....	29
4. Data Results and Analysis.....	30
4.1 Handling of Missing Data .....	30
4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis .....	30
4.2.1 Reliability Analysis .....	31
4.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results .....	31
4.3 Structural Equations Modelling .....	36
5. Discussion.....	40
5.1 Interpretation of Results .....	40
5.2 Answers to the Research Questions.....	43
5.3 Theoretical Implications .....	45
5.4 Practical Implications.....	46
5.5 Limitations and Proposal for the Future .....	47
6. Conclusion.....	48

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The increased consumers' awareness and sensitivity about the worsening environment are growing day by day in recent times (Zaharia and Zaharia, 2014). Scherhorn (1993) found that many people have realized that we need to do something about it. The last decade environmental issues such as global warming, water and air pollution, overuse of chemicals in agriculture and so on, have increased the consumers' concerns about the recovery of the ecological balance and this has resulted in increased demands for eco-friendly products in countries around the world (Doyle, 1992; Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990).

However, according to the figures from the textile panel of GSK Fashion & Lifestyle, in the first three quarters of 2015, only around one in four consumers in Germany purchased at least one piece of clothing with an eco-label such as Fair Trade, GOTS (Frank et al., 2016). Scherhorn's study (1993) also argues that fewer and fewer consumers indicate that they have changed their purchase behavior and not more than 40% can take pro-environmental actions, which shows that although more consumers' environmental attitudes are raised, there is still a gap for them to turn into environment protection consumption. Furthermore, although there is a rising trend of consumer' awareness towards the environment, Gupta and Ogden (2009) point out that only a few consumers have pro-environmental attitudes regarding recycling and willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products, which translates their attitudes to corresponding behaviors.

Furthermore, when people hear about climate change and pollution, their first thoughts are related to mining, excessive deforestation of trees and forests, overuse and so on (Sandhu, 2019). Few people think about the fashion industry and globally, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reports that the fashion industry causes almost 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions, which represent more than those coming from the shipping and flights combined together (Sandhu, 2019). The fashion industry has started to account for a large proportion of climate change with a tremendous carbon footprint, which makes it one of the dirtiest industries in the world (ibid). According to the World Bank report, textile dyeing is considered the second largest polluter of clean water and garment manufacturing is responsible for 20% of global industrial water pollution (ibid).

The approach of co-branding strategies in which both parties collaborate has been considered one way

to do it. This has determined manufacturers to take action and produce more sustainable clothes and generate sustainable consumption. Kristensson, Wästlund and Söderlund (2017) show that a variety of new environmentally friendly products have become available for consumers who are interested in supporting sustainable development by purchasing eco-labelled products or services. Those actions and efforts are conveyed to the textile industry as well and nowadays some organic clothing can also be found in several clothing stores for consumers to choose.

There is an ascending trend that consumers with pro-environmental attitudes choose organic products (e.g., Manchiraju and Sasachar, 2014). This trend has also been identified in the field of organic clothing (Gam et al., 2010; Koszewska, 2013; Lin, 2010). Niinimäki (2010) defines organic clothing as “clothing that is designed for long lifetime use and it is produced in an ethical production system, which causes little or no environmental impact and it makes use of eco-labelled or recycled materials”. In addition, these are clothes that are made of natural materials, without the use of chemicals and are safe for the skin (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009). Moreover, fibers such as cotton, viscose, modal, bamboo, jersey, and blends of jute can easily be decomposed, which are widely used in organic clothes (Ghosh, 2010).

Nowadays, more and more companies and industries are aware of the benefits of sustainability-oriented production. They understand the need for sustainable development and put a lot of effort into it, which is driven by stakeholder concerns, government regulations, supply chain imperatives and competitive advantages (Joyce Stuart, 2011). From a macro perspective, we can see that organic clothing contributes to a sustainable economy as the lasting, worldwide guarantee of individual opportunities to secure basic needs and achieve a better quality of life for now and the future (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The transformation degree of the sustainability-oriented industry is mostly influenced or shaped by the changes of corporations for example by making sustainability principles of corporate value creation (Hansen and Schaltegger, 2013).

## 1.2 Problem Analysis

Previous research about co-branding focused mostly on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) such as cakes, cream cheese, beverage brands with chocolate brands, electronics, hotel restaurant industry (Knape and Rødestedt, 2013; James, 2005; Park, Jun and Shocker, 1996; Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Washburn, Till and Priluck, 2000; Boone, 1997). Corporate co-branding gradually establishes newly emerging markets by combining brands across the industry. The previous literature does not

explain enough what holds up as a foundation for the co-branded products' success in the clothing and eco-label industry. For example, Helming et al. (2007) argue that traditional theoretical co-branding models do not reflect the products' success and the mechanisms that determine consumers to purchase such products.

Ho, Lado, and Rivera-Torres (2017) analyze the reasons for the success of co-branding products from the alliances between high-tech products and luxury products. Simonin and Ruth (1998) conclude that consumers form either a positive or a negative brand attitude towards co-branded products. There are many studies already focusing on collaborations across the industry, but the majority of them explore the corporate co-branding strategies from business perspectives and study strategic cooperation and partnerships between brands (Oeppen and Jamal, 2014; Rodrigues, Souza and Leitao, 2011). Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) define cooperation as “the combination of forms of cooperation and competition between companies”. Understanding the consumers' perspective is important if a company seeks to attract and retain consumers, but few studies try to explore the reasons consumers choose co-branded products. Besides, previous literature explores factors that influence consumers' evaluations of brand alliances between commercial brands and non-profit brands (Jongmans et al., 2019; Dickinson and Barker, 2007; Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013) or directly explores factors that influence consumers' purchase intention. However, limited literature further studies the gap that factors influencing consumers' evaluation and how consumers' evaluations of brand alliance affect them to have the intention to purchase these co-branded products.

The strategic alliances and their advantages for the companies that form them have been widely studied in the academic literature (Ireland, Hitt, and Vaidyanath, 2002; Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001). The risks and potential problems of such arrangements and the key factors to mitigate them have also been identified (Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001). The marketing and promotion is one of the main areas in which companies collaborate as part of their strategic alliances (ibid). Strategic brand alliances play an important role in these categories (Newmeyer et al., 2018) and their importance has been underlined by the academic literature (Voss and Gammoh, 2004; Helmig, Huber and Leeflang, 2008). These arrangements have been classified and described based on their degree of brand integration ranging from co-location till co-branding, including its component and ingredient forms (Newmeyer et al., 2018). The literature has also identified that the benefits of the branding alliances are bigger in the higher level of brand integrations, meaning towards co-branding (Helmig, Huber, and Leeflang, 2008). Surprisingly though, there is no complete consensus regarding the definition of co-branding. Although the organic labels have been recognized as a form of ingredient branding (Aaker and Keller, 1990;

Desai and Keller, 2002), there is very limited academic literature that has studied the co-branding of products with organic or, more general, ecological labels. The studies of Jongmans et al. (2019) are an exception to this. Our study tries to fill in this gap by investigating the influence of eco-labelling on fashion products.

### 1.3 Purpose

In this paper, based on the factors of co-branding evaluation from previous studies, we focus on the co-branding alliance between clothing brands and eco-labels. The purpose of our study is to clarify what factors influence consumers to purchase co-branded clothing brands with eco-labels and to what extent these factors affect consumers' purchase intention. We intend to also explore the connection between the consumers' evaluation of these co-branded products and their purchase intention. Therefore we formulate the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What factors influence consumers' purchase intention of co-branded products with eco-labels in the clothing industry?

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do these factors influence consumers' purchase intention of co-branded products with eco-labels in the clothing industry?

### 1.4 Research Contribution

Our study is based on the research performed by Jongmans et al. (2019) and is extending it in several directions. First, we will analyze the eco-labelling in a different industry, the clothing one. Second, we will extend their model and also investigate the relationship between the evaluation of the clothes co-branded with an eco-label and the purchase intention to buy these products. Third, we will also extend the model by analyzing the direct influence of the equities of the clothing brand and eco-label on the purchase intentions. This direct influence will be compared with the purchase intentions that use co-branding as a mediator. This will help us understand if the co-branding with the eco-label has any influence on the purchase intentions or not.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will summarize the research performed in the co-branding and eco-labelling areas. The chapter will also introduce our research model.

First, we will introduce the co-branding and eco-labelling concepts. Co-branding represents the collaboration of two or more companies that results in a new product labelled by the allied brands.

Eco-labelling represents the producer's communication to its customers of the impact a specific product has on the environment in the form of a label attached to the product.

Second, we will clarify purchase intention, that we follow-up in our research to see if it is influenced in any way by the co-branding of products with eco-labels. Purchase intention reflects if the consumers consider purchasing a product and the likelihood to purchase it. Afterwards we will describe the potential factors that influence the purchase intention, brand equity and organic label equity and the mediators through which they channel their influence to purchase intention, perceived fit, ease of transfer and eco-branded product evaluation, as they all result from the academic literature.

The brand equity is investigated in relation with the additional value that the brand brings to the product. The equity of the eco-label represents the additional improved quality the consumers perceive when an eco-label is attached to a product. The perceived fit is described in terms of the compatibility between the categories of the products that are part of the co-branding and the consistency between their brands. The ease of transfer measures how simple it is for the consumers to shift their perception of the original brands that enter into co-branded to the new co-branded product. The evaluation of the eco-branded product pictures the consumer's attitudes towards it and the likelihood of its success. At the end of this chapter, we will compile all our findings into the proposed research model.

## 2.1 Co-branding

The strategic alliances have emerged as a continuously important means to achieve competitive advantage (Ireland, Hitt, and Vaidyanath, 2002; Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001). A strategic alliance represents the collaboration of two or several companies to achieve mutual benefits (ibid). The main reasons of companies to form strategic alliances are to grow and enter new markets, to get access to new technology, best quality or improved cost, to reduce financial risks, to share costs with its partners (for example the research and development ones) and to achieve competitive advantages (Elmuti and Kathawala, 2001). The most common areas the companies collaborate in an alliance are marketing and promotion, selling and distribution, production, design, technology and research, and development (ibid).

Strategic brand alliances are important strategic alliances in the marketing and promotion area. They represent the presentation in different ways of the brands of the allied companies (Newmeyer et al., 2018). The same authors have structured the different strategic brand alliances along the degree of brand integration and have identified six distinct collaboration types, presented in Table 1 (ibid):

High	Hierarchy of Types	Characteristics of the Brand Alliance						Definition
		Co-created	Physically Inseparable	Functionally Inseparable	Tie-in (Forced) Sales	Discount for Co-purchase	More Variety / Less Search	
↑	Co-development	✓ (Yes)	✓	✓	✓	×	×	Firm(s) pool brand resources to develop a new products
	Ingredient branding	×	✓	✓	✓	×	×	Firm(s) pool existing brand resources for a line extension. The brands are physically and functionally inseparable by the consumer
	Component branding	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	Firm(s) pool existing brand resources to sell a single item, however each branded component is physically separable by the consumer. The joint product will not function without both components.
	Brand bundling	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	Firm(s) pool existing branded products to create a functionally compatible and potentially complementary pairing. Each item can still be purchased and/or used independently
↓	Co-promotion	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	Firm(s) coordinate marketing activities to communicate value for two separate brand resources.
	Co-location	×	×	×	×	×	✓	Firm(s) place branded resources together to reduce search and increase variety. Each brand maintains physical and functional independence.
Low								

**Table 1:** Brand alliance types (Newmeyer et al., 2018)

The integration degree of a brand alliance increases from the co-location (in which the companies place together their resources to provide to the customers an increased variety and reduced searching costs) to the co-development (in which the allied brands combine their resources to develop a new product) (Newmeyer et al., 2018).

Jongmans et al. (2019) uphold the previous studies, concluding that the ingredient branding strategy could be included under the umbrella of co-branding strategies. Aaker & Keller (1990) also mentioned that an organic label allows a product brand to access a new product category, therefore, placing an organic label on products brands could be considered as an ingredient branding since ingredient brands introduce a new attribute to the host category (Desai and Keller, 2002).

The brand alliances have clear benefits like improving the image and recognition of the allied brands (Voss and Gammoh, 2004; Helmig, Huber and Leeftang, 2008), supporting the product differentiation (Helmig, Huber, and Leeftang, 2008) and providing additional assurance to the customers about the quality of the products (that become more valued by the customers and be charges with a premium price) (ibid). The advantages are bigger though in the higher level of brand integrations, as in the case of product integration, an area in which the co-branding term starts to be used more and more (Helmig, Huber, and Leeftang, 2008). It is no wonder though that companies strive to achieve these higher levels of integrations and that academic literature puts a lot of effort into studying it.

Surprisingly, there is no complete alignment yet on the definition of co-branding. Co-branding has been defined by Park, Jun, and Shocker (1996) as a composite brand, the combination of two existing brands in different positions, “header and modifier” to brand a new product. This definition differentiates co-branding from other brand alliances by the result of the brand collaboration, a new product. The co-branding has been mentioned though in many other ways in the academic literature, like “strategic alliances, joint marketing, joint branding, joint promotion, composite brand extension, and ingredient branding” (Oeppen and Jamal, 2014). Newmeyer, Venkatesh, and Chatterjee (2014) also present co-branding in a more general way, as a brand alliance that emphasizes to the customers the collaboration of several brands. The definitions start to consolidate though towards its initial meaning, focusing on the new product resulting from the brand collaboration.

Helmig, Huber, and Leeftang (2008) focus in their study on co-branding and emphasize its key characteristics compared with other forms of brand alliances. They emphasize co-branding generates a new product that is identified by the allied brands (Helmig, Huber, and Leeftang, 2008). The authors

identify the following four elements that define a co-branding alliance: the allied brands are established brands that can sell their products and services outside the co-branding (before, during and after it), the brands enter consciously into the co-branding alliance, they make this alliance visible to the customers and identify the products resulted from their alliance with both brands in the same time (ibid). In their attempt to better define co-branding, they enlist other brand alliance forms like joint sales promotions, advertising alliances, dual branding and bundling, and clarify that these do not represent co-branding since the brands and products remain separate.

A special attention is given to the brand extension. This represents the extension of a brand with a new product, possibly in a new area than the one the brand is established (Helmig, Huber, and Leeflang, 2008). The new product can be created with the help of another company and brand. If the new product is branded with only one, the same brand, it cannot be defined as co-branding. On the other hand, if the new product obtained from the collaboration is branded with both brands, the arrangement is a co-branding (ibid).

All in all the authors conclude the key characteristic of co-branding is the result of the brand alliance is a new product, branded and sold under the name of both brands simultaneously (Helmig, Huber, and Leeflang, 2008). Based on these characteristics, we can notice the co-branding arrangements represent a generic name for the component branding, ingredient branding and co-development brand alliance type identified by (Newmeyer et al., 2018). Helmig, Huber and Leeflang (2008) perform a simpler classification of co-branding types based on the integration types between the allied companies, vertical and horizontal co-branding. The vertical co-branding is realized between companies placed in different value chain levels. One of the allied brands is used as a component or ingredient for the other one in the co-branding alliance. This corresponds to the component and ingredient branding alliance in the model presented by (Newmeyer et al., 2018). The horizontal co-branding is a branding alliance between companies that are on the same level in the value chain. This corresponds to the co-development brand alliance type described by Newmeyer et al. (2018).

### **Co-branding in the clothing industry**

Co-branding has become a popular strategy in the fashion industry, especially in luxury brands and mass-market industries (Oeppen and Jamal, 2014). Performing effective branding is crucial for the success of the companies. Nowadays, the strong competition, the continuous environmental changes and consumer's expectations have pushed brands to evolve and adapt to the new setting (Mróz-Gorgoń, 2016). Being different and original represents an asset for the companies trying to gain in the

marketplace and more important to resist there (Linnell, 1999). The magnitude of the retail industry explains the companies' strategies of thoughtfully targeting and positioning their goods and services as well as developing marketing promotions to attract customers (Linnell, 1999). He further argues that through alliances, retailers aim to boost the strength of their brands and in return to decrease their weaknesses (ibid). Mróz-Gorgoń (2016) is making an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the brand alliances in the fashion industry, considering that it has been given much more attention to the positive effects than to the negative ones, such as the negative feedback effects experienced by one partner of an alliance or the case of a partnership failure.

Among the advantages of the co-branding strategy in the fashion industry, Mróz-Gorgoń (2016) mentions those for luxury fashion designer brands: high media exposure, expansion of the brand and new customer segments, increased sales volume, democratization of luxury fashion. Some disadvantages are also mentioned: the possibility of spoiling the brand image and dilute brand equity, the possibility of negative experience associated with partner brand transfer (ibid). For the fast-fashion brands, among the disadvantages Mróz-Gorgoń (2016) talks about: high media coverage, the increased sales revenue, differentiation from other fast-fashion brands, the positioning of the brand as more premium. For this category of brands, the non-positive aspect is reflected on the brand image (as a case of weak brand equity) and also over customers who might get confused. Mróz-Gorgoń (2016) argues that co-branding is a widely spread strategy in the fast-fashion industry. Shen et. al (2014) supports this statement and places the brand development under the name of "fast-fashion co-branding". In the fashion industry, this type of alliance is seen as a partnership between fast-fashion and designer fashion brands which are further developing co-branded lines of products (ibid). An example of such an alliance is the collaboration of the Swedish fast-fashion brand H&M with different luxury designer fashion brands such as: Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Viktor and Rolf, Madonna, Roberto Cavalli, Comme des Garçons, Matthew Williamson, Jimmy Choo, Sonia Rykiel, Lanvin, Versace and Marni (ibid). Shen et. al (2014) argue about the effects of co-branding with a fashion brand: the high popularity of the co-branded products among the consumers, the consumer's efforts to achieve these kinds of products (waiting in long queues or waiting the whole night to purchase the desired products), the products' short-selling time and a win-win situation for both brands.

The fundamental need of the brand owners to interpret the impact of branding and especially of the fast-fashion co-brands on consumers is directed towards the consumers' brand perception, which is influenced by their knowledge and the need for uniqueness towards the brand (Shen et. al, 2014). Consumers' need for uniqueness results from a particular characteristic of the fast-fashion and designer

fashion brands considering that both are launching trendy items in the market or unique products in the case of the last one (ibid).

## 2.2 Eco-labelling

The importance of sustainability in today's society has gained a gradual increasing trend in the last decades and companies have made visible efforts to become more sustainable. Sustainable brands are defined through sustainable products and practices. Packaging and its afferent labelling represent important communication channels for the brands and dominant elements for the customers' experiences with products (Martin and Schouten, 2012). They further argue that in order to perform sustainable marketing there is a real demand for sustainable packaging and labelling (ibid).

Labelling represents an important element of packaging as well as communication media, being able to highlight the environmental characteristics of a company or its products (Martin and Schouten, 2012). Advocating for sustainable consumption, educating and influencing consumers to purchase environmentally friendly products has been considered crucial by companies striving to meet their customers' needs (Song et al, 2019). They further argue that Eco-labels represent an important communication channel between producers and customers to transfer crucial environmental knowledge (ibid).

The 2020 Eco-Label Index registers 463 Eco-labels, covering 25 industries and 199 countries (Eco-label Index, 2020). Song et al (2019) argue that the large number of Eco-labels reflects a complex frame of Eco-label factors influencing consumers' purchase intention of co-branded commercial branded products with eco-labels. Hence they say that the wide usage of the Eco-labels impacts customers in different ways, underling that it might also represent an element of confusion for the customers in choosing a product (ibid). The ecologically related product labels can be classified into mandatory and voluntary labels. In some countries, the producers of some product categories are obliged by the legislation to display on their product labels that describe the impact of these products on the environment. Such examples are the EU Energy Label in the European Union or WELS (Water Efficiency Labelling & Standards) in Australia.

The voluntary ecological labels (eco-labels) represent information the producers want to display on their products to describe the impact these products have on the environment. These voluntary labels are regulated by the ISO 4020:2000 standard family and split into the following three categories (ISO, 2000). Type I, regulated by ISO 14024, certifies the product meets a set of predetermined

requirements. This certification is granted by a third-party organization that audits the producer. Type II, regulated by ISO 14021, represents a simple voluntary self-declaration of the producer about the ecological characteristics of its products (ISO, 2000). The evaluation is done by the producer itself (ibid). The type III, described by ISO/TR 14025, also represents a voluntary self-declaration of the producer based on the entire life-cycle (ISO, 2000). As we can see above, the most restrictive and the most trustful voluntary ecological labelling is the Type I one.

The involvement of a third party certification generated by governments and nonprofits organizations has positioned labelling on a positive trend since 1990, when the demand for the Eco-certificated products' started to grow rapidly (Martin and Schouten, 2012). Third-party certifications are seals which certify that products meet social and environmental performance standards (ibid). The same definition of Eco-labelling is shared by Global Eco Labelling (2020) that describes it as a global voluntary practice of the producers to certify and label their environmental performance. In contrast with other voluntary environmental declarations, Eco-labelling is granted by third parties, independent organizations, as a result of a certification process based on transparent environmental criteria (ibid). Eco-labelling has developed in a new global context, where governments, businesses and the public showed more concern for environmental protection (Global Eco Labelling, 2020). The business sector has sensed an advantage in all these concerns and new terms like “natural”, “recyclable”, “eco-friendly”, “low energy” or “recycled content” have appeared. All these business approaches have influenced consumers, who, in their turn, were trying to decrease the environmental impacts through sustainable purchase (ibid).

Eco-labels were introduced in the first place to offer consumers a bigger choice and to determine producers to approach sustainable practices with the perspective of gaining a certified and more worthwhile brand (Gulbrandsen, 2006). Gulbrandsen (2006) talks about the Eco-labelling beginnings (German Blue Angel in 1977, the Canadian Environmental Choice in 1988, the Nordic Swan label introduced in 1989 for the Nordic countries, the European Flower and EU Eco-label, both introduced in 1992) when the first Eco-labelling initiatives belonged to the governments, targeting a wide range of commodities. The Global Eco-labelling Network (GEN) appeared in 1994 as a certification emblem whose aim was to bring more clarity and demonstrate authenticity (Global Eco-Labelling, 2020).

The primary role of the Eco-labels of informing consumers about environmental criteria fulfilled by the labelled products. Lihhavtshuk (2015) refers to eco-labels as a means of advertising their system of certification, as in the case of any other brand. He further argues that eco-labels reinforce the

message communicated by the products' brands to the customers and therefore the alliance between a brand and eco-label can be seen as co-branding (ibid). The consumers and the producers have shown little interest in the proposed various schemes and sponsored programs, these ones having visible success only in the Nordic countries and Germany (ibid).

The partnerships created between corporations and non-nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are used in the context of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (Sorsa and Chaudhuri, 2018). Martin and Schouten (2012) say that "a third-party certification is a form of co-branding" in which two organizations associate their brands for mutual benefit. They further argue that the certification, attached to the brand, confers credibility to the product and the sustainable product is adding value to the certification (ibid). Poret (2014) supports the same idea, concluding that it is also a form of co-branding when a company partners with an NGO and communicates together their brands in order to improve its environmentally friendly image.

Lihhavtshuk (2016) talks about eco-labels as green marketing communications tools that are not always succeeding in communicating information about the environment through their design to the customers. He further argues that eco-labels can be seen as independent brands. Eco-labels are used to highlight certain features and performances of the products and services. This is a form of co-branding (ibid). Lihhavtshuk (2016) argues about the importance of the logo design in the eco-label recognition and credibility as well as in co-branding. He further clarifies that eco-labels are predominantly used in co-branding to back-up the credibility of the products and services brand image.

## 2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intentions reflect on consumers' predicted or planned future behaviors or the possibility that belief and behavior translate into purchase behavior (Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, 1978). In addition, purchase intention reflects consumer intentions to buy products or services based on their attitudes and emotions (Belk, 1975; Phau et al., 2015). Purchase intention is the subjective tendency of affection that consumers have towards a product, which is an indication of consumers' inclination to buy a product (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Some results also show that brand love leads to purchase intention (Fetscherin, 2014). Kim and Lim (2005) consider customers' purchase intention is one of customer orientation for firms' goals, which has also been widely used as a predictor of subsequent purchase in amounts of literature (Grewal et al, 1998). The Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB) model, created by Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1978), evaluates the consumers' purchase decision-making process, showing that purchase intention is finally made with the objective of purchase (Ariely, 2000),

recommendation (Chen and Xie, 2008), convenience (Schaffer, 2000), results and experience (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Hence, purchase intention could also be evaluated through these measures as dimensions.

However, Jin Gam (2011) explores three different dimensions, fashion orientation, shopping orientation and environmental concerns and eco-friendly behavior to measure consumers' purchase intention regarding eco-friendly clothing. The study shows that the "importance of being well-dressed" from fashion orientation, the "shopping enjoyment" and "cost-consciousness" from shopping orientation and all the three factors (environmental concerns, eco-friendly behavior and environmental concerns for apparel production) from environmental concerns and eco-friendly behavior are believed to have positive influence on consumers' purchase intention of eco-friendly clothing.

## 2.4 Eco-branded Product Evaluation

Several factors have been recognized in past research to influence evaluations of co-branded products. In our study, we focus on the perceived fit between clothes and organic labels and the ease of knowledge and affect transfer from a component brand to a new one, created by co-branding.

Gilbert and Hewlett (2003), Swoboda et al. (2012) and Puzakova et al. (2013) describe that consumers assess the brands in their minds and evaluate them by using their general attributes as various tangible and intangible clues related to the brand as a product and the brand as a person. Batra and Ahtola (1990) and Voss et al. (2003) argue that the hedonic construct presents consumers' evaluation is related to the fun or pleasure, which is also associated with product usage. Meanwhile, the utilitarian construct captures consumers' evaluation based on the functions performed on the product. Veloutsou (2015) underlines that the brand image is the assessment of interaction with the brand, while the brand reputation is the overall evaluation of a brand. Stern et al. (2001) explained that the brand image and brand reputation can be used as a basis of brand evaluation.

Park and Lee (2013) indicate that positive product evaluation increases purchase intention and confirms that product evaluation is the step prior to purchase intention. The way in which the brand is perceived and evaluated is one of the most important predictors of purchase (Esch et al., 2006). Lam and Mukherjee (2005) support that the evaluation of the target product has a positive effect on the consumers' intention to purchase the product. Therefore, we hypothesize:

***H1: Eco-branded Product Evaluation positively influence Purchase Intention***

## 2.5 Perceived Fit

The concept of perceived fit has been investigated in many studies (Aaker and Keller 1990; Park et al. 1991; Heckler and Childers 1992; Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Simonin and Ruth 1998; Ahn et al. 2009). Different terms are used to describe a similar concept such as fit, similarity, congruence or match-up (Sénéchal, Georges, and Pernin, 2013). Simonin and Ruth (1998) use the term “product fit” to describe the compatibility between two product categories (as perceived by consumers) and “brand fit” to describe the consistency between brands. Brand fit is considered as the consistency or cohesiveness of the alliance between two brands in the consumer evaluation (Keller 1993; Park et al. 1996; Simonin and Ruth 1998). Spiggle, Nguyen, & Caravella (2012) also pointed out that the perceived fit concept has relevance with brand equity and also drives the perception of cohesiveness of brand alliance. The presence of a strong eco-label in an alliance, the perceived fit between the product brand and eco-label should be higher as brand equity increases (Larceneux et al., 2011). Chang and Tseng (2015) indicate perceived fit can be used to indicate the potential performance of a new product. Jongmans et al (2019) present that product managers should also keep in mind that the greater the brand / label perceived fit is, the greater the ease of transfer and the more successful. For example, Wang, Zhu, and Chu (2017) also support that when a new organic product is launching, the relevance of the association between that brand and the eco-label brand should be well explained through promotional materials to increase the perceived fit between these two entities. By doing this, it can facilitate transfer and promote the organic market into a more successful level.

Kim, Chun and Ko (2017) describe that simple numerical indexes cannot measure brand evaluation because it involves complicated and distinctive assessments of brand value and that researchers usually propose different ways to demonstrate it. Chang and Tseng (2015) point out that under different levels of perceived fit, consumers evaluate new products with brand extension differently. Their research reveals that when the perceived fit is high, consumers evaluate the new product with brand extension more favorably than the new product with sub-branding, which extends the study from Martinez and Pina (2010) that perceived fit positively influences extension evaluations. However, in Chang and Tseng’s research, brand strategies also play an intervening role when evaluating new products with brand extension.

Baumgarth (2004) presents that the brand fit has a similarly high level influence on co-branding evaluation with both a higher and lower brand familiarity. Furthermore, in the direct replication of Simonin and Ruth (1998), the product fit is of no significance to the co-brand evaluation. The reason

is explained by Baumgarth (2004) who argues that participants might consider a consumer electronic product as a normal component in a car, thus the product fit is unimportant to the co-brand evaluation. Jongmans et al. (2019) also reveal that perceived fit positively influencing overall product evaluation was not supported when they conducted their research about brand and label co-branding. However, Dickinson and Barker (2007) show empirically that perceived co-brand fit positively influences brand alliance evaluations. The survey performed by Bouten, Snelders, and Hultink (2011) has also revealed that the fit between both the products and the brands of the products that form a co-branding have a significant positive effect on the evaluation of the co-branded product. Based on the above literature and related to our research topic, we perform the second hypothesis that is related to perceived fit with eco-branded product evaluation.

## ***H2: Perceived Fit positively influences Eco-branded Product Evaluation***

### **2.6 Ease of Transfer**

Brand extension research study has been done on both the cognitive transfer process (Aaker and Keller, 1990) and affective transfer process (Boush et al., 1987; Dickinson and Barker, 2007). Brand/label knowledge transfer is based on previous consumer knowledge or experience and is an important factor to be used to describe the evaluation of brand extensions (Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges, 1999). Jongmans et al. (2019) define the ease of knowledge transfer as the facility that positive knowledge and affect can be brought from an eco-label to a product brand. A transfer occurs between two brands when those two brands have similar concepts and are categorized as a single brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Boush and Loken, 1991; Simonin and Ruth, 1998).

Prior literature also revealed that overall brand evaluations determine consumers' affective responses towards a brand, such as liking, trust and desirability (Sirianni et al., 2013). Brand evaluation is based on information processing conducted by consumers and on the past and new information with an objective to evaluate the brand (Nurcahyo et al., 2011). Fransen, Fennis and Pruyn (2010) also reveal that "modality congruence enhances perceptual fluency which in turn positively affects evaluation and choice." In addition, different types of brands have different emphases and consumers would be expected to evaluate product attributes distinctively. The expected transfer of clothing attributes, information and perceptions in co-branding explain how people derive meaning from that information and the integration of this new information or knowledge could be modified from a single-branded product to another brand (Wu and Chalip, 2013). In the case of co-branding, when two brands are combined and shown on the same product, consumers' perception of the clothing brand and organic

label might change. This will affect consumers' evaluation and the degree to which their evaluation predicts the likelihood of purchase (ibid). Thus another hypothesis can be made as follows:

***H3: Ease of Transfer positively influences Eco-branded Product Evaluation***

The ease of transfer should differ from the perceived fit which stands for the degree of perceived similarity between the two categories (Bouten, Snelders, and Hultink, 2011; Simonin and Ruth, 1998). Czellar (2003) indicates that the perceived fit determines the ease of transfer of positive knowledge and affect from the parent brand to co-branding. Moreover, except for knowledge and information transfer, ease of transfer also contains affect transfer. Czellar (2003) indicates that "the level of fit determines the ease of transfer of positive knowledge and affect from the parent brand to the extension". Therefore, we assume that perceived fit should have an influence on the ease of transfer of positive knowledge and affect from an organic label brand to a product brand.

***H4: Perceived Fit positively influences Ease of Transfer***

## 2.7 Brand Equity

Brand equity has been conceptualized by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) as the incremental value added to a product by means of its brand. Aaker (1991) is one of the authors who defined the brand equity. His definition was widely acknowledged and used in the marketing domain. Brand equity has two important dimensions, consumer perceptions and consumer behaviors. It includes the following five components: perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations (brand image), brand awareness and other proprietary assets such as patents and trademarks. Yoo and Donthu (2001) focused on four of these five dimensions from Aaker (1991), those that construct the customer-based brand equity: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations.

Previous research (Zeithaml, 1988) measured perceived brand quality as consumers' subjective judgment of a brand's overall excellence. When brand quality is perceived to be high, it is valuable to share the benefits to the product extension and it is impossible without high perceived quality (Pitta and Prevel Katsanis, 1995). Furthermore, prior research shows that if the core product is perceived of high quality and the perceived fit between the core and extension is high (Aaker and Keller, 1990) it means that high perceived quality will influence the perceived fit of co-branding. Brand loyalty is "the attachment that a customer has to a brand" (Aaker, 1991) and Yoo and Donthu (2001) show that brand loyalty is the tendency to be loyal to the focal brand. Pappu, Quester and Cooksey (2005) indicate that the more brand loyalty a consumer has, the more he/she has the possibility to perceive the brand as

offering superior quality and vice versa and the more positive brand associations consumers have, the more their loyalty towards brands and vice versa. Brand awareness can be considered as brand recognition. Brand associations can be used to measure both the quantity and quality of information processing (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness is likely to be high when there is a strong association for the brand and when the perceived brand quality is high (Pappu, Quester and Cooksey, 2005). Aaker (1991) defines brand associations (brand image) as "anything linked in memory to a brand". Keller (1993) presents a conceptual model of brand associations, which consists of brand attributes, brand benefits and brand attitudes. Brand image is usually considered as the combined effect of brand association or as consumers' perception of brands' tangible and intangible associations (Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, 1978). Previous literature widely describes the existing brand attitude as a major success parameter for a brand extension or co-branding operation (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Washburn and Plank 2002; Dickinson and Barker 2007). Krishnan (1996) also concluded that high equity brands are more likely to have more positive brand associations (brand image) than low equity brands.

Furthermore, Spiggle, Nguyen and Caravella (2012) indicate that brand specific associations that are relevant to brand equity drive perceptions of cohesiveness, consistency or compatibility of the brand extension. Some other research argues that connections between the parent brand and the extension category enhance perceived fit in the absence of category similarity (Herr, Farquhar, and Fazio, 1996). Jongmans et al (2019) refer that the perceived similarity between the product brand and eco-label should be higher when brand equity increases. Moreover, Jongmans et al. (2019) also support that when a product brand and an eco-label brand are of high levels of equity, it should be easier for consumers to transfer their knowledge and affect and they propose that the higher the brand equity is, the easier the transfer can be achieved. Based on the above literature support, the following hypotheses can be formulated as:

***H5a, Brand Equity positively influences Perceived Fit***

***H5b, Brand Equity positively influences Ease of Transfer***

Furthermore, some studies find that brand equity has a direct relationship with purchase intention. Kim et al. (2008) reveal that brand loyalty, as one of the major components of brand equity, can play a vital role in purchase intentions. Aaker's (1995) brand equity model also proposes that brand equity provides value and enhances consumers' confidence in the purchase intention and purchase decision. Tolba and Hassan (2009) and Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995) describe that brands with greater equity generate higher preference for a brand and increase consumers' intention to purchase. Therefore we

can formulate the following hypothesis:

***H7: Brand equity has a direct positive influence on purchase intention***

## 2.8 Eco-Label Equity

An eco-label is an economic signal, a proof of the objective quality and a guarantee that the product has been manufactured following environmentally friendly requirements (Larceneux et al., 2011). Larceneux et al. (2011) define eco-label equity as “awareness and a set of associations or beliefs that provide a strong, sustainable, differentiated advantage compared to unlabelled products”. Consumers naturally infer a better perceived quality from eco-labels based on the halo effect. The halo effect is described as “a fundamental inability to resist the affective influence of global evaluation on the evaluation of specific attributes” (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). It guides a positive distortion to consumers’ affection and leads consumers to consider that eco co-branded products are more healthy and environmentally-friendly (Leuthesser, Kohli, & Harich, 1995). Jongmans et al. (2019) indicate that organic labels can be considered as decreasing the uncertainty with asymmetry information and it can provide information on unfamiliar products to accelerate the decision making process.

Regarding organic label equity, Park et al. (1996) say that co-branding between two favorably evaluated brands does not lead to a more favorably evaluated co-branded product, because they might have redundancy and probably a ceiling effect when joining with each other. Larceneux et al. (2011) also argued on this matter, saying that the impact of organic labels receives lower equity when the original brand has high equity. However, Jongmans et al. (2019) support the idea that label equity positively influences the perceived fit. They believe in the brand and label alliance, considering that the high label equity brand should perceive easier knowledge and affect transfer to the host brands due to the knowledge and affection in consumers’ mind is very strong. Based on Jongmans et al. (2019) the following hypotheses are articulated:

***H6a: Eco-label Equity positively influences Perceived Fit***

***H6b: Eco-label Equity positively influences Ease of Transfer***

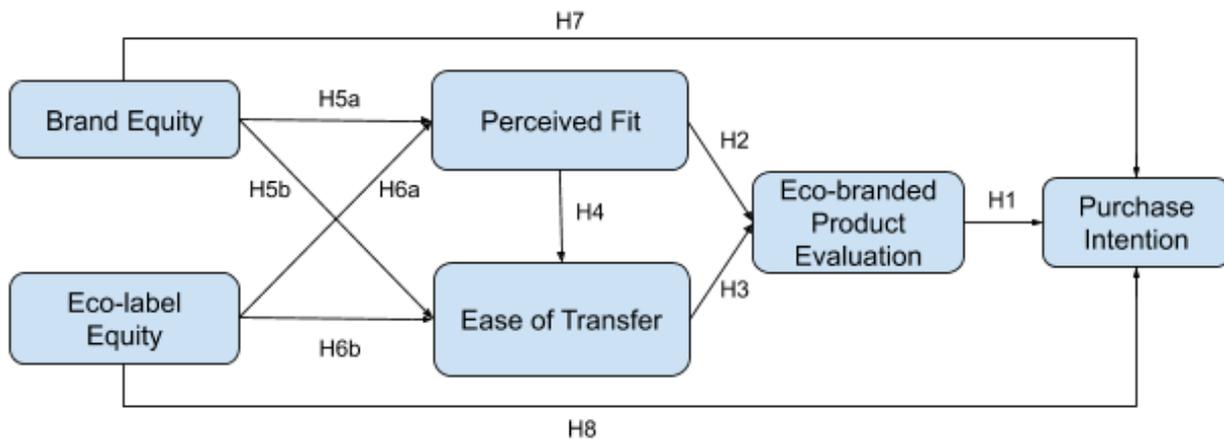
Eco-label has also been shown to have a direct relationship with purchase intention. Rashid (2009) argues that awareness of eco-label has a positive effect between knowledge of green products and consumers’ intention to purchase. There are beneficial connections between price fairness, contentment, confidence, and purchase intentions with respect to organic food products (Konuk, 2018). Attitudes and perceived purchaser effectiveness both shape favorably ecologically conscious

consumer behavior (Taufique and Vaithianathan, 2018). Persaud and Schillo (2017) conclude that social identity and interactional influence shape purchase intention in the context of the organic products and that perceived value of environmentally friendly products moderates these relationships. Thus another hypothesis can be generated as:

***H8: Eco-label Equity has a direct positive influence on Purchase Intention***

## 2.9 Research Model

The outcome of our theoretical research is reflected in our research model, presented in Figure 1. The model used by Jongmans et al. (2019) represents the core of our research model. Their research has investigated how the brand and eco-label equity affect the evaluation of the co-branded product. The model pictures purchase intention, the variable that we follow-up in our research and the potential three predictors that can influence it, the brand equity of the clothes and of the eco-label that enter into the co-branding alliance and the evaluation of the eco-branded clothes. The model also visualizes the mediators that facilitate the influence of these three factors on purchase intention, the perceived fit and the ease of transfer. The relationships between all these elements represent the hypotheses of our research.



**Figure 1: Research Model**

We have extended the model of Jongmans et al. (2019) with one more level, the purchase intention. As a result, our model also contains the hypothesis H1. In addition, our model shows the investigated direct influence of the equities of the clothing brand and eco-label on the purchase intentions, represented by the H7 and H8 hypotheses.

### 3. Methodology

The research model proposed in Figure 1 indicates the independent and dependent variables identified in the literature review. It contains multiple relationships between dependent and independent variables. Therefore, the most appropriate multivariate analysis method to use is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Hair et al., 2014).

A quantitative research method is the most appropriate method to collect the needed data. This method has been already used in the reviewed literature to validate constructs of variables from our model like brand fit (Newmeyer et al., 2018) or for the evaluation of the co-branded product (Voss and Gammoh, 2004). Quantitative research has also been used to test dependencies between variables of our model like between constituents brands and co-branding evaluation (Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013; Washburn and Plank, 2002) and perceived fit and co-branding evaluation (Sénéchal, Georges, and Pernin, 2013; Park, Jun and Shocker, 1996). It is most appropriate though to build on these findings and use quantitative research to collect the needed data to analyze and validate the more complex concept model we have built from combining all these previously identified dependencies. Jongmans et al. (2019) have also used quantitative research in their study.

#### 3.1. Research Design

The design of our research is based on the one of Jongmans et al. (2019), but contains several important changes. First, we have tested only one scenario, the co-branding of a high equity fashion brand with a high equity eco-label. Second, we have pre-selected the fashion brands and eco-label. This will allow us to run only one survey in our research and avoid the need to have additional pre-surveys to identify the brands to be used. Third, we have designed a survey that uses these brands to validate the model. We have adapted the surveys used by Jongmans et al. (2019), Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Yoo, Donthu and Lee, (2000) to the domain we investigate (clothing industry and eco-labels) and to our research model. Marketing scales from Bruner (2016) have also been used to evaluate the co-branded product and to measure the intentions to purchase it. The survey is presented in Appendix A.

#### 3.2. Brand Selection

Based on the outcome of our literature review, we have selected Nike as the fashion brand and The Nordic Swan as the eco-label. Nike is a top equity global brand. It was ranked the 14th in the Top Brands 2019 made by Forbes (Forbes Media, 2020), with an equity value estimated at \$36.8 B. This top also mentions a significant 15% year-on-year increase of the Nike brand (ibid). Nike is also

engaged in an extensive sustainability program towards zero carbon footprint and zero waste (Nike, 2020). This program includes more ecological shipping boxes (produced with FSC certified materials), usage of renewable energy and sustainable materials, recycling shoes, etc. Nike can potentially start a collaboration with an eco-label as part of its sustainability program, therefore we believe Nike is an appropriate clothing brand that can be used in our research. More than this, as a very well known brand worldwide, it will be easier to get highly accurate answers to a survey about Nike.

Established in 1989, the Nordic Swan Eco-label is a voluntary type I global eco-label. It is the official sustainability eco-label for products in the Nordic countries and it is managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Eco-label Index, 2020). This eco-label is applicable to appliances, building and cleaning products, cosmetics, electronics, food, textile, etc. (ibid). The labelling of the products with the Nordic Swan certifies that these products fulfill strict requirements that contribute to more sustainable development. The aim of the eco-label initiative is to reduce the environmental impact and to make it easier for consumers to choose an environmentally friendly alternative of the product. The conformity of the companies with this standard is assessed by a third party independent auditor based on the ISO 17011 Accreditation, ISO 17021 Management system certification, ISO 17025 Testing and Calibration Laboratories (Eco-label Index, 2020). The Nordic Swan eco-label is used in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and South Africa (Eco-label Index, 2020). The Nordic Swan has already collaborated with different companies to eco-label textile products, including clothes, therefore it can potentially start a collaboration with Nike. The Nordic Swan is also well known in Sweden, where we intend to run our research. Therefore we believe Nordic Swan is a suitable eco-label that can be used in our research.

### 3.3. Survey Design

Our survey is a combination of different surveys that have been identified in the reviewed literature as most relevant for our research. The starting point of the design was the survey used by Jongmans et al. (2019). We have reused from this survey the measurement of the perceived fit between the brand and the eco-label and of the ease of transfer and adapted it to the co-branded clothes that we study. The assessment of the brand and eco-label equity could not be reused from this study. Jongmans et al. (2019) measure it based on the purchase intentions, but our model has purchase intentions as a separate construct (and there could have been a risk for confusion). We have instead chosen to use a survey from Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Yoo and Donthu and Lee, (2000). The evaluation of the co-branded clothes and of the intentions to purchase them has been performed based on two surveys identified in Bruner (2016).

The survey has been designed to assess the six variables of the model in our research.

**a. The equity of the Nike clothes brand**

The equity of the Nike brand has been measured based on the scale and survey developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Yoo and Donthu and Lee (2000). Their model assesses the brand equity based on four of the dimensions of the brand equity concept developed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993): the perceived quality, the loyalty towards the brand and the brand awareness and its association with its characteristics (Yoo and Donthu, 1997; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Yoo and Donthu and Lee, 2000). This way of measuring brand equity has been demonstrated as reliable and valid (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). The functionality related questions in the quality assessment performed by Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Yoo and Donthu and Lee (2000) have been adapted to the clothing industry and replaced with the measurement of specific clothes characteristics: how easy is to maintain the product (wash, iron, etc.) and how durable it is (resist a long time).

In our research, the assessment of the Nike brand equity is done based on 12 items (4 for quality, 3 for loyalty, 5 for awareness and association).

**b. The equity of the Nordic Swan eco-label**

The assessment of the Nordic Swan eco-label has been done using the same model that was used for the measurement of the Nike brand equity. The questions have been adapted to the specifics of the eco-label. First, quality-related questions refer in more general to the products labelled with Nordic Swan since several product categories can have this label. Second, the functionality characteristics are formulated not only in terms of durability but also in sustainability terms: the impact of the products on the environment and the society. These small adaptations preserve the reliability and validity of the model.

The assessment of the Nordic Swan eco-label equity is performed based on 13 items (5 for quality, 3 for loyalty, 5 for awareness and association).

**c. The perceived fit between the Nike brand and the Nordic Swan eco-label**

This variable indicates how appropriate a potential collaboration between Nike and Nordic Swan is. This is reflected in the compatibility between the products, the Nike clothes and products labelled with Nordic Swan, as well as the consistency between the Nike and Nordic Swan brands themselves. The perceived fit is measured in terms of consistency, alignment and appropriateness in the same way as it was done by Jongmans et al. (2019). Their measurement model has been tested and proven as valid and reliable (ibid).

**d. The ease of transfer from the parent brands to the co-branded products**

This variable shows how easy it is (or not) for the consumers to extend their previous information about and their experience with the Nike clothes and the products labelled with Nordic Swan upon the potential co-branded clothes of these two brands. The assessment of this variable is performed on both cognitive (knowledge) transfer and affective transfer dimensions, in the same way as Jongmans et al. (2019) have also measured it. Their measurement model has been tested and proven as valid and reliable (ibid).

**e. The evaluation of the product that results from this potential collaboration between Nike and Nordic Swan, the Nike clothes labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label**

The measurement of this variable is performed based on a product evaluation marketing scale presented by Bruner (2016). The original scale was designed for the evaluation of food products, but we have adapted it in our study for the eco-labelled clothes. In our survey, this scale evaluates how much the consumers would like and enjoy the potential outcome of the Nike and Nordic Swan collaboration and how big are their expectations that this product will be a successful one when it will be launched. It has been proven that this measurement scale is reliable (scale's alpha = 0.96) (Bruner, 2016).

**f. The intention to purchase Nike clothes labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label**

This variable is also assessed based on a marketing scale presented by Bruner (2016). This scale has been initially designed to measure how much consumers consider or intend to purchase a certain product from a specific company and what the likelihood of this purchase is. We have adapted this scale to explicitly refer to the Nike clothes eco-labelled with the Nordic Swan. This measurement scale has also been tested and it has been proven that it is valid and reliable (Bruner, 2016).

**g. General questions**

The survey also contains several questions to get some insights into the population sample: age, gender, working situation, the average spending on clothes in the past six months and the intention to buy clothes in the following two months.

**h. Measurement scales**

All these items are measured by using seven-point Likert scales, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”: “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “slightly disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “slightly agree”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. The respondents are also offered the “don't know” option if they do not know the answer to the respective question. It is possible, for example, that not

all the respondents are aware of the Nike or Nordic Swan brands or have purchased products labelled with these brands.

The performed reliability analysis indicated that our survey is reliable. The details are presented in the data analysis section.

In order to make it easier for the respondents to answer, the survey design has followed the logical flow of the model. The survey has been structured in the following logical sections:

**a. Introduction**

This first part introduces the survey to set the stage for the following sections. First, it presents the purpose of the survey and who conducts it. Afterwards it introduces the topic of the survey and clarifies how long it takes to fill it in. In the end, contact information is provided in case the respondents have any questions.

**b. Nike**

In this section of the survey, the equity of the Nike clothes brand is assessed. This part starts with a short presentation of the Nike brand to make sure all the participants have common background information about this brand: when it was founded and what products it manufactures. It also clarifies that Nike is only an example of a clothing brand that can hypothetically start a collaboration with an eco-label, but the purpose of the study is more general. After this introduction, the survey continues with the assessment of the Nike brand on the quality, loyalty, awareness and association dimensions.

**c. Nordic Swan**

This part of the survey contains questions that measure the equity of the Nordic Swan eco-label. It also starts with a short introduction of the Nordic Swan to provide the respondents with basic information and prepare them for the questions about this brand: when it was established, the product categories that can use this eco-label, in what countries it is used and how the certification of the products takes place before they can be labelled with the Nordic Swan. The introduction is followed by the questions to assess the Nordic Swan label along the quality, loyalty, awareness and association dimensions.

**d. The possible collaboration between Nike and Nordic Swan**

The assessment of the variables related to the hypothetical collaboration between Nike and Nordic Swan and its result has been grouped into this section: Perceived Fit, Ease of Transfer, Eco-branded Product Evaluation of Nike clothes with Nordic Swan eco-label and the Purchase Intention of these co-branded clothes.

**e. Get some insights into the population**

At the end of the survey, it has also introduced a set of questions to get some information about the respondents to the survey. This will allow us to have a better understanding of the survey results. This section has been introduced at the end of the survey and not in its beginning in order to increase the chances to get answers to the key questions of the survey. The respondents that possibly become tired of answering the survey tend to skip the questions at the end, but we have already collected the answers to the most important survey questions by then.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The City of Gothenburg is one of the most sustainable cities in the world. According to The Global Destination Sustainability Index (2020), the City of Gothenburg has been designated the world's most sustainable destination in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Excelling in many areas such as accessibility, digitalization, culture and creativity, the City of Gothenburg has made tremendous efforts in becoming sustainable on multiple levels (social, environmental, supply, destination management), in this way laying the ground for future sustainable business (ibid). Worldwide recognized for the sustainable solutions implemented, the City of Gothenburg has aimed to bring a positive input to the society, the stakeholders and the local economy (ibid). The sustainable orientation is reflected in the business area as well, where companies strive to follow and support this socially sustainable trend. The University of Gothenburg is fully engaged in the sustainability efforts of the city, teaching its students different sustainability topics (Wals, 2017). The possibility to use the students in the Master Programs of The School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg for our study about eco-label co-branding is a great opportunity. The students in all sections of the Master Programs of this University study indeed different sustainability topics. As residents of Gothenburg, they are also immersed every day in all the sustainability activities and achievements of the city.

We have decided to pursue this opportunity and select the students in the Master Programs of The School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg as the population for our research. They arguably recognize, understand and experience co-branding and may be familiar with eco-labelling. As the young generation, the selected population should, arguably, be also aware of the fashion brands and fashion trends. Considering all these, our selected population is arguably one of the most educated on the topic of our research and this will make us expect a high accuracy of the answers. This will increase the chances to get more accurate answers in the survey and increase the validity of the study. We have decided to perform an online survey, so we can reach the entire population. The survey was

created in Webropol, the recommended survey tool of the Gothenburg University. The survey was sent to all 630 students of the Gothenburg University that are part of a Master Program of The School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg in 2020.

Due to the Covid-19 situation in Sweden, it is not possible to distribute the survey to respondents face to face anymore, although that can better improve the response rate. The survey was distributed to students' university email addresses, with the help of the Administrative Coordinator for Master of Science programs. In total, the survey has been opened by 430 respondents. From these ones, due to the questions in the online questionnaire were non-compulsory, therefore 143 have started to answer it and 125 of them have fully completed it, the response rate is 29.1%. The sample's demographics are shown in Figure 2.

### 3.5 Sample Analysis

The descriptive data of the population includes general information such as birth year, gender, working status and the average monthly spending on clothing in the last six months and the intention to buy clothes in the following two months. The descriptive statistics of the population are shown in Table 2.

Demographic information	Item	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	20-23	7	5.6%
	24-27	89	71.2%
	28-30	22	17.6%
	30-50	7	5.6%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	67	53.6%
	Male	58	46.4%
<b>Working Status</b>	Yes	41	32.8%
	No	84	67.2%
<b>Average monthly spending on clothes</b>	1-500kr	38	30.4%
	500-1500kr	42	33.6%
	1500-20000kr	45	36%
<b>Intention to buy clothes</b>	1-3	18	14.4%
	4	18	14.4%
	5-7	89	71.2%

**Table 2:** Demographic information of respondents in the survey

The data collected from the Master students shows that most of them aged between 24-27 years old, 53.6% are female and 46.4% are male, 41 of them are currently in a working status (32.8%) whereas 84 are not (67.2%). In addition, their shopping habits are quite different: one third of them spend less than 500kr on clothes, around one third purchase 500-1500kr per month and another one third group people have a relatively high level of purchasing power on clothing. When they are asked what the degree of their buying intention on clothes in the following few months (summer), 14.4% of respondents choose disagree and neutral respectively and there are still 71.2% people have a high intention to purchase clothes in the following days, which has not been affected that much by the Covid-19 situation in Sweden.

## 4. Data Results and Analysis

The data collected from the survey has been exported in SPSS format and processed with SPSS 24.0.0 and AMOS 26.0.0. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling have been performed using the guidelines of Gaskin (2020). The thresholds values used in the model fit analysis are based on Hu and Bentler (1999), Gaskin (2020) and the values recommended in the Model Fit Measures Amos Plugin (Gaskin and Lim, 2016).

### 4.1 Handling of Missing Data

Overall 125 responses have been collected and among those 125 responses, missing value analysis and remedy process are done as the first step. All of the missing data which are found to be random or they are not in a considerable amount, some remedies may be applicable instead of deleting these individual cases or variables (Hair et al, 2014). Hair et al. (2014) show that imputation is the process of estimating the missing value based on valid values of other variables and/or cases in the sample. Imputation by using replacement estimated values is used in our sample and we choose one of the most widely used methods, which is mean substitution to replace the missing data for a variable with the mean value of that variable calculated from all valid responses (ibid). In the end, all of the missing values of variables are replaced by series mean due to the mean is the best single replacement value and the demographic missing values are replaced by the mode (ibid). Therefore, all of these 125 observations are used in the following analysis.

### 4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a way of testing how well measured variables represent a smaller number of constructs (Hair et al., 2014). In CFA, we must specify five elements: the latent constructs, the measured variables, the item loadings on specific constructs, the relationships among constructs,

and the error terms for each indicator (ibid). We have considered in our study 6 factors to support the proposed hypothesis. Several indicators have been investigated for each factor. A total number of 6 constructs and 40 items were used to test the model of research.

### 4.2.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis mainly verifies whether the designed questionnaire is reliable through SPSS analysis, whether there is a good correlation between the questionnaire questions for analysis and the answers of the respondents, whether they are contradictory or reliable and so on. Because no single item is a perfect measure of a concept, we must rely on a series of diagnostic measures to assess internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). And one of the most widely used diagnostic measures is Cronbach's alpha, which assesses the consistency of the entire scale (ibid). A value of  $\alpha < 0.7$  indicates that the reliability of the designed questionnaire is not reliable,  $0.7 < \alpha < 0.8$  indicates that the questionnaire has certain reliability, and  $0.8 < \alpha < 0.9$  indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire is good (Hair et al., 2014). Referring to Table 3, all constructs met the acceptable values for the criteria of Cronbach's Alpha, which should be more than 0.7. Purchase intention (0.789) represents that it has certain reliability and all the other constructs (above 0.8) show that reliability is quite good.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Nike Brand Equity</b>	0.808
<b>Eco-Label Equity</b>	0.865
<b>Perceived Fit</b>	0.875
<b>Ease of Transfer</b>	0.881
<b>Eco-branded Product Evaluation</b>	0.872
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	0.789

**Table 3:** Cronbach's Alpha

### 4.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

The data that has resulted in SPSS after the handling of the missing data has been input in AMOS. The initial CFA diagram has been designed to include not only the research model but also the structure of the survey. First-order constructs have been created for the components of brand equity (Nike quality, Nike loyalty and Nike awareness) and the eco-label equity (Swan quality, Swan loyalty and Swan awareness) based on previous literature. Brand equity and eco-label equity have become in this way 2nd order factors.

The initial CFA diagram is presented in Figure 2:

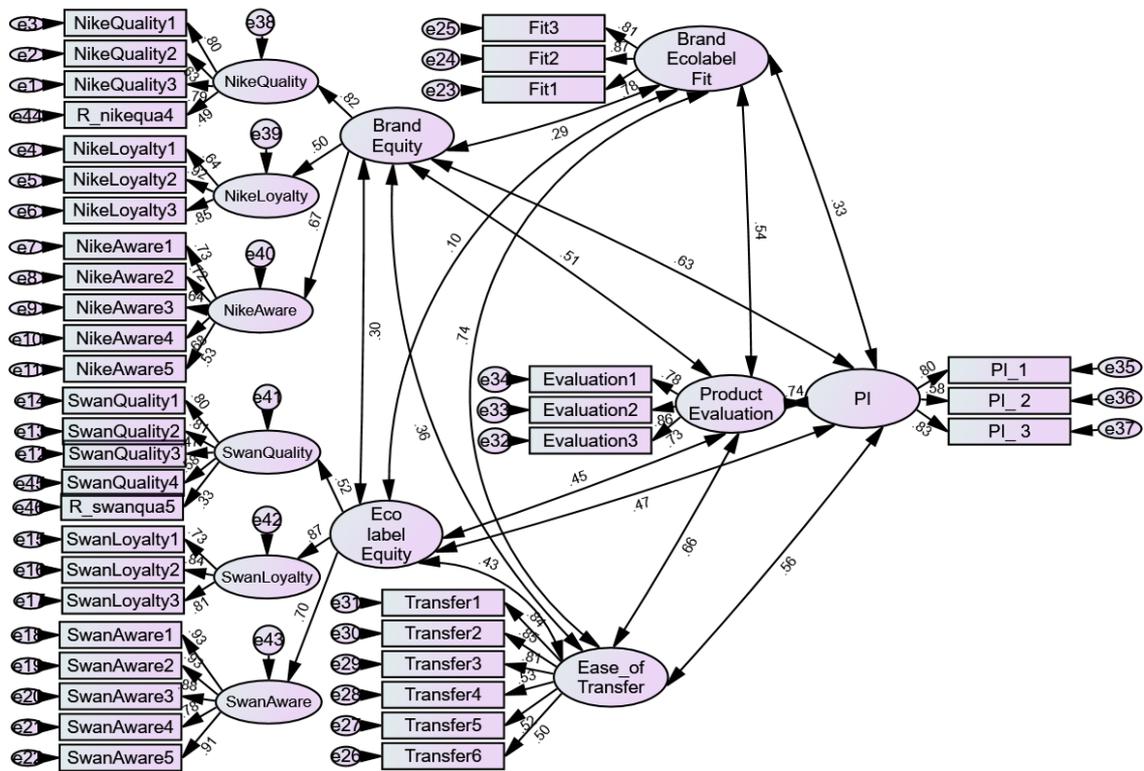


Figure 2: Initial CFA diagram

At the first glance, we can see that the maximum value of correlations is 0.74, so they all have good values (not above 0.8). On the other hand, we can also notice several loadings are below 0.5. These issues need to be addressed. The CMIN/DF has a good value of 1.723 (should be below 3), RMSEA has a moderate value of 0.076 (it is below 0.1, but needs to be below 0.05 to be considered a good value), but overall the model fit is quite limited: CFI = 0.821 (should be above 0.9 for a traditional model fit and above 0.95 for a good fit) and SRMR = 0.122 (should be smaller than 0.09). All these indicate some problems and actions need to be taken to improve the model fit. We have checked the modification indices to get possible solutions to improve the fit of the model (Gaskin, 2020). The outcome of the modification indices is presented in Table 4.

	M.I. Par Change	
e27 <--> e28	56.384	.826

Table 4: Covariance in modification indices

We can also notice that the Transfer 4 and Transfer 5 are indicators of the same factor, ease of

transfer and that these pairs of indicators are logically connected from a theoretical perspective, therefore we can add a covariance between these two indicators (Gaskin, 2020):

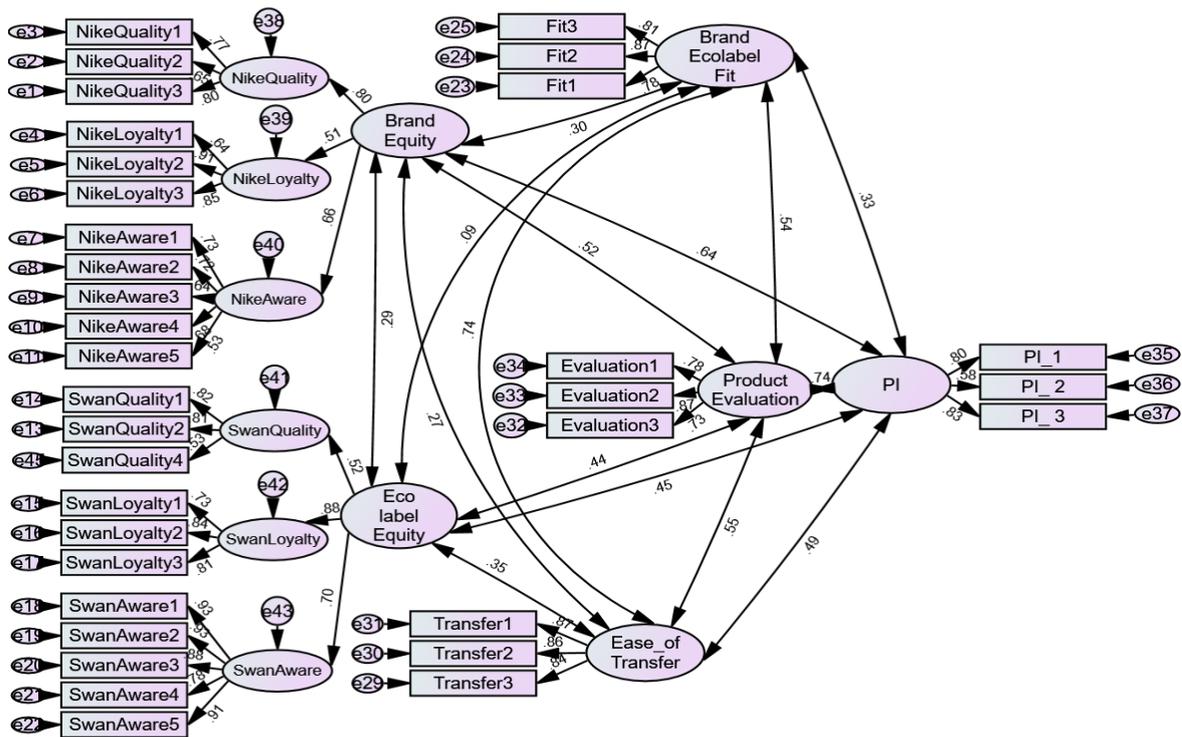
- Transfer 4 (Given my fashion tastes, it would be easy for me to like the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.) and Transfer 5 (My clothes preferences make it easy to be pleased with the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.)

This improvement has increased the model fit: CMIN/DF = 1.624, CFI = 0.846, RMSEA = 0.071 and SRMR = 0.124.

Analyzing the new model we can notice there are several loadings below 0.5, which are candidates for removal. We have decided to remove all the indicators with a loading smaller than 0.5. We have removed the following indicators:

1. Swan Quality 5, “If I see a product labelled with Nordic Swan, I assume it has poor quality. ( r )” - loading = 0.33
2. Transfer 5, “My clothes preferences make it easy to be pleased with the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.” - loading = 0.46
3. Transfer 4, “Given my fashion tastes, it would be easy for me to like the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.” - loading = 0.46
4. Transfer 6, “Anyone around me can easily appreciate the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.” - loading = 0.45
5. Nike Quality 4, “I perceive Nike clothes to be of very poor quality (r).” - loading = 0.48
6. Swan Quality 3, “If I see a product labelled with Nordic Swan, I assume it does not have a negative ecological impact.” - loading = 0.48

In order to be able to remove Transfer 6, we have moved the regression weight from this indicator to Transfer 1. The updated model is presented in Figure 3:



**Figure 3:** Research model after removal of indicators with loads smaller than 0.5

The updated model has an improved model fit: CFI = 0.899, RMSEA = 0.064. We can notice CFI is just below the threshold value of 0.9, therefore it can be considered as a good value in the traditional acceptance. RMSEA has a moderate value (between 0.05 and 0.1, closer to the lower end of the interval). The more detailed tests performed with the Model Fit Measures Plugin in Amos show an excellent value for CMIN/DF (1.501 - should be between 1 and 3). The value of 0.106 for SRMR is slightly higher than the threshold value of 0.09 (should be less than 0.09).

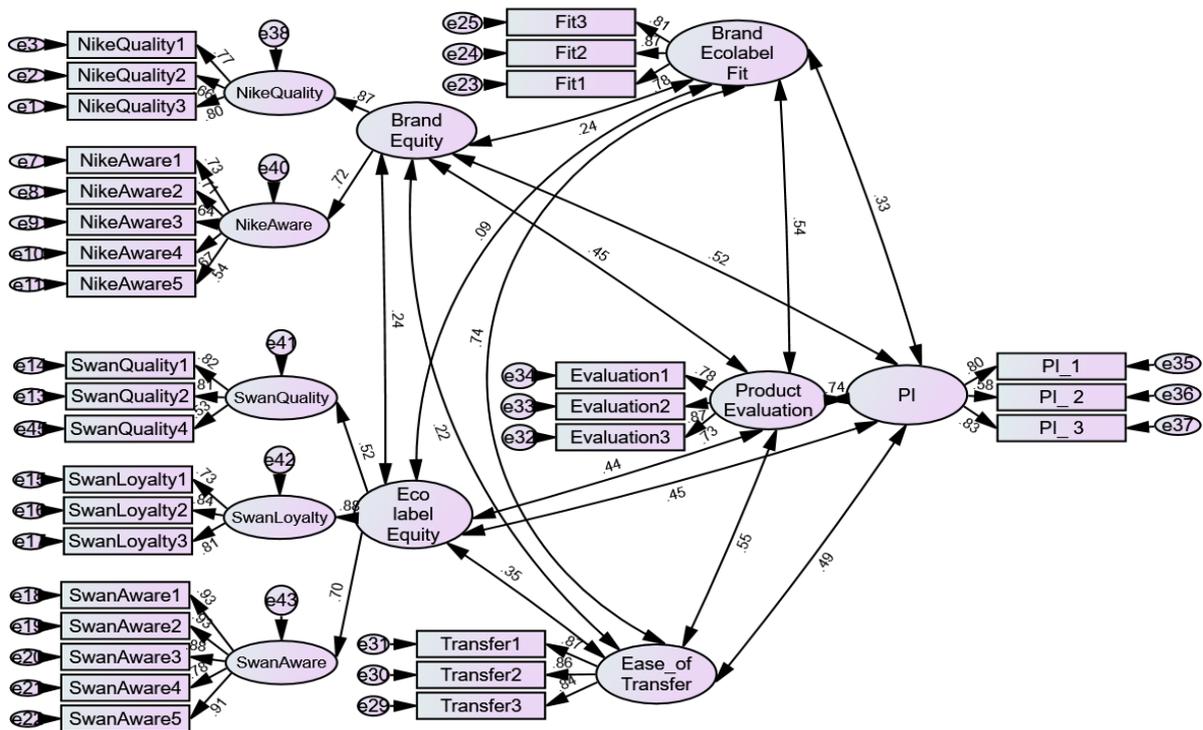
We have tested the validity and reliability of the model using the Stats Tool Package. The result is presented in Table 5:

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	Brand Equity	Fit	Transfer	Evaluation	PI	Eco-label Equity
Brand Equity	0.701	<b>0.447</b>	0.406	0.745	0.668					
Fit	0.861	0.674	0.543	0.867	0.298	0.821				
Transfer	0.892	0.733	0.543	0.893	0.267	0.737	0.856			
Evaluation	0.835	0.629	0.552	0.851	0.525	0.545	0.548	0.793		
Eco-label Equity	0.749	0.509	0.207	0.824	0.289	0.093	0.349	0.444	0.714	
PI	0.785	0.555	0.552	0.819	0.637	0.330	0.486	0.743	0.455	0.745

**Table 5:** Validity and reliability analysis of the research model after the removal of the indicators with loads smaller than 0.5

The Composite Reliability (CR) of all the constructs is good, bigger than 0.7. MSV is smaller than AVE for all the constructs. We can also notice that the square root of AVE values are good, greater than the values of the inter-construct correlations. Most of the Convergent Validity (AVE) of all the constructs is good, bigger than the recommended value of 0.5 with only one exception, Brand Equity. Hair et al (2014) argue that AVE should be 0.5 or greater to suggest adequate convergent validity. It is therefore needed to improve the validity of the Brand Equity. We have decided to remove the Nike Loyalty since this is the one that has the smallest loading for Brand Equity, 0.51.

The CFA diagram after the removal of Nike Loyalty is presented in Figure 4:



**Figure 4:** Research model after removal of the Nike Loyalty

This change has improved even more the model fit. CFI has now a good value of 0.901 (above the threshold of 0.9, so it has a good value in the traditional acceptance), while CMIN / DF and RMSEA continue to have good values of 1.547 and 0.066 respectively. SRMR continues to have the same value of 0.106, slightly higher than the threshold value of 0.09 (should be smaller than 0.09).

The validity and the reliability of this improved model has been tested again with the Stats Tools Package and the outcome is shown in Table 6:

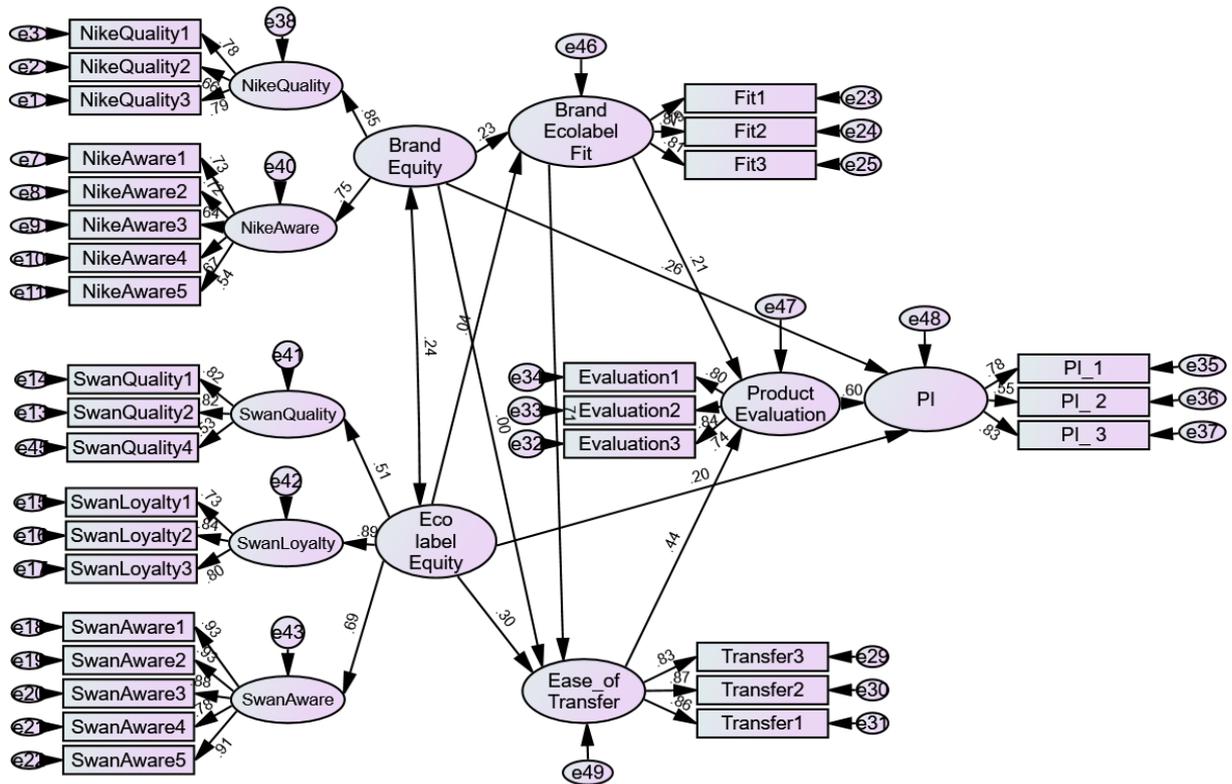
	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	Brand Equity	Fit	Transfer	Evaluation	PI	Eco-label Equity
Brand Equity	0.780	0.641	0.268	0.808	0.801					
Fit	0.860	0.673	0.543	0.867	0.241	0.820				
Transfer	0.891	0.732	0.543	0.893	0.223	0.737	0.856			
Evaluation	0.835	0.629	0.552	0.851	0.451	0.545	0.548	0.793		
Eco-label Equity	0.749	0.509	0.205	0.823	0.242	0.092	0.348	0.444	0.714	
PI	0.786	0.556	0.552	0.819	0.518	0.328	0.487	0.743	0.453	0.746

**Table 6:** Validity and reliability analysis of the research model after the removal of the Nike Loyalty

This result shows that there are no more validity and reliability issues of this latest model. We have therefore decided to finalize the CFA and continue with the Structural Equations Modelling (SEM) analysis.

### 4.3 Structural Equations Modelling

Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) can be used to test theories that contain multiple dependencies in which the same construct is at the same time dependent and independent (Hair et al., 2014). SEM can simultaneously analyze several dependence relationships (ibid). In our study, we have used SEM to validate the theoretical research model and the formulated hypotheses. We have started with the CFA model and we have removed all the covariances between the constructs. We have added the causal relationships as described in our researched model. The covariance between the Brand Equity and Eco-label Equity exogenous constructs has been also included in the model. We have also created error variables for the endogenous constructs Perceived Fit, Ease of Transfer, Eco-branded Product Evaluation and Purchase Intention (PI). The result is presented in Figure 5:



**Figure 5:** Initial SEM model

The model fit has been tested using the Model Fit Measures Plugin in Amos. The **CMIN/DF** has an excellent value of **1.583** (between 1 and 3) and a good value of **0.069** for **RMSEA** (a value between 0.05 and 0.1 is a moderate accepted value). **CFI** has a value of **0.893**, slightly below the threshold of 0.09 (a good value of CFI should be bigger than 0.09). Gaskin (2020) mentions that a CFI value bigger than 0.8 is still permissible. **SRMR** has a value of **0.115**, bigger than the limit value of 0.9, yet close to it (a good value of SRMR should be smaller than 0.9). All these tests show a **good fit of the model**.

We can proceed further to test the validity of the hypotheses from our research. The estimates of the dependencies and the value of their P-test are presented in Table 7:

Hypothesis				Estimate	P	Confirmed
H1	Product_Evaluation	→	PI	0.602	***	✓
H2	Brand_Eco-label_Fit	→	Product_Evaluation	0.211	0.154	✗
H3	Ease_of_Transfer	→	Product_Evaluation	0.435	0.004	✓
H4	Brand_Eco-label_Fit	→	Ease_of_Transfer	0.707	***	✓
H5a	Brand_Equity	→	Brand_Eco-label_Fit	0.232	0.74	✗
H5b	Brand_Equity	→	Ease_of_Transfer	0.004	0.968	✗
H6a	Eco-label_Equity	→	Brand_Eco-label_Fit	0.040	0.731	✗
H6b	Eco-label_Equity	→	Ease_of_Transfer	0.299	0.005	✓
H7	Brand_Equity	→	PI	0.260	0.023	✓
H8	Eco-label_Equity	→	PI	0.199	0.056	✗

**Table 7:** The estimates of the dependencies and the value of their P-test

### **H1, Eco-branded Product Evaluation positively influence Purchase Intentions**

The estimate of the structural path between eco-branded product evaluation and purchase intentions is 0.602 and this relationship is significant ( $P < 0.001 < 0.05$ ). We can conclude the eco-branded product evaluation has a moderate (almost strong) (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on purchase intention. The H1 hypothesis is confirmed.

### **H2, Perceived Fit positively influences Eco-branded Product Evaluation**

The estimate of the structural path between perceived fit and eco-branded product evaluation is 0.211 and this relationship is not significant ( $P = 0.154 > 0.05$ ). We can conclude that our study cannot confirm the H2 hypothesis. The data analysis indicated a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence of the perceived fit on the eco-branded product evaluation, but this result obtained for our sample cannot be generalized on the entire population because the regression between these two factors is not significant ( $P = 0.154$ ).

### **H3, Ease of Transfer positively influences Eco-branded Product Evaluation**

The estimate of the structural path between ease of transfer and eco-branded product evaluation is 0.435 and this relationship is significant ( $P = 0.004 < 0.05$ ). We can conclude the ease of transfer has a moderate (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on eco-branded product evaluation. The H3 hypothesis is therefore confirmed.

#### **H4, Perceived Fit positively influences Ease of Transfer**

The estimate of the structural path between perceived fit and ease of transfer is 0.707 and this relationship is significant ( $P < 0.001 < 0.05$ ). We can conclude the perceived fit has a strong (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on ease of transfer. The H4 hypothesis is also confirmed.

#### **H5a, Brand Equity positively influences Perceived Fit**

The estimate of the structural path between Brand Equity and the perceived fit is 0.232 and this relationship is not significant ( $P = 0.74 > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis H5a is not confirmed.

#### **H5b, Brand Equity positively influences Ease of Transfer**

The estimate of the structural path between brand equity and ease of transfer is 0.004 but this relationship is not significant ( $P = 0.968 > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis H5b is not confirmed either.

#### **H6a, Eco-label Equity positively influences Perceived Fit**

The estimate of the structural path between eco-label equity and the perceived fit is 0.040 and this relationship is not significant ( $P = 0.731 > 0.05$ ). This means that hypothesis H6a is not confirmed either in our study.

#### **H6b, Eco-label Equity positively influences Ease of Transfer**

The estimate of the structural path between eco-label equity and ease of transfer is 0.299 and this relationship is significant ( $P = 0.005 < 0.05$ ). We can conclude eco-label equity has a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on ease of transfer and the H6b hypothesis is confirmed. Jongmans et al. (2019) reach the same result in their study (standardized regression weight is 0.30).

#### **H7, Brand Equity has a direct positive influence on Purchase Intention**

The estimate of the structural path between brand equity and purchase intentions is 0.260 and this relationship is significant ( $P = 0.023 < 0.05$ ). We can conclude that brand equity has a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on purchase intention. The hypothesis H7 is also confirmed.

#### **H8, Eco-label Equity has a direct positive influence on Purchase Intention**

The estimate of the structural path between eco-label equity and purchase intentions is 0.199 but this relationship is not significant ( $P = 0.056 > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis H8 is not confirmed.

## 5. Discussion

Our study has tried to clarify the factors that influence consumers to purchase co-branded clothing brands with eco-labels and to what degree these factors affect consumers' purchase intention. We have started our research from Jongmans et al. (2019) study, extended it with the analysis of the purchase intentions and used it in a different industry. An online survey has been performed to test the model and hypotheses.

### 5.1 Interpretation of Results

The analysis of the data gathered in the survey has demonstrated the validity of the model we have built. First, this result reconfirms the validity of the model of Jongmans et al. (2019). Second, it demonstrates that the implications of the eco-labelling co-branding can be also analyzed in terms of the customers' intentions to purchase the eco-labelled clothes.

The results of the survey have revealed that 5 out of the 10 hypotheses formulated have been confirmed. The study has partially confirmed the researched theory.

Our research indicates that the evaluation of the clothes co-branded with eco-labels has a moderate (very close to strong) influence on the purchase intentions of these products (H1). An important part of the variation in the purchase intentions of the clothes, 60.2%, is related to the variation in the eco-branded product evaluation. This means that the higher the consumers evaluate the clothes co-branded with an eco-label, the higher is the chance to purchase these clothes. This finding matches the findings of Park and Lee (2013) that positive product evaluation can increase purchase intention and is the step prior to purchase intention.

Another result of our study is that the ease of transfer has a moderate positive effect on the evaluation of co-branded clothes (H3). The easier the consumers can extend their previous knowledge and experience with the clothing brand and the eco-label to the new eco-labelled clothes, the higher they evaluate the eco-labelled clothes. A variation in this easiness explains 43.5 % of the variation in the evaluation of the eco-branded clothes. This result supports the findings of Jongmans et al. (2019).

According to our findings, the perceived fit between the clothes and the eco-label brands has a strong effect on the ease of transfer (H4). This indicates that the higher it is the fit between the brands of the clothes and of the eco-label, the easier it is for the consumers to expand their previous knowledge and

experience with these brands to the eco-labeled clothes. The variation in the fit between the clothes and eco-label brands is the reason for 70.7% of the variation in the easiness for consumers to extend their information and affect the initial brands to the eco-labelled clothes. Jongmans et al. (2019) also find this positive influence of the perceived fit on the ease of transfer in their study.

Our study has also identified a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence of the eco-label equity on the ease of transfer (H6b). The variation in the equity of the eco-label brand explains almost one third (29.9%) of the variation in how simple is for the consumers to make use of their past information and experience with the clothes and the eco-label when they are evaluating the eco-branded clothes. The higher is the equity of the eco-label, the easier it is for the consumers to extend this previous knowledge and affect the new, eco-labelled products. This result is consistent with Jongmans et al. (2019) who get to the same conclusion in their study.

Brand equity has a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on purchase intention according to the results of our study (H7). A little bit more than one quarter (26%) of the variation in the customer's intention to purchase eco-branded clothes is related to the variation in the clothes equity. The intention of the customers to purchase the eco-branded version of the high equity clothes is only a little bit higher than the intention to buy the ones of the lower equity clothes brands. This result supports the previous findings of Tolba and Hassan (2009) and Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995).

Some of the results of our research are not supporting the theory though.

The data collected in the survey cannot demonstrate that the brand equity of the clothes has an influence on how easy the previous knowledge and experience with these clothes are extended to their eco-labelled version (H5b). This data indicates that there is a “zero” (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence of the clothes brand equity on the ease of transfer, but this conclusion drawn for our sample cannot be theorized for the entire population because the regression between these two factors is not significant ( $P = 0.968$ ). This results contradicts the findings of Jongmans et al. (2019). Their study indicates a weak positive influence of the brand equity on the ease of transfer. In our study, even if we would increase the error tolerance and use  $P = 0.1$  (instead of 0.5) as a significance threshold, the H5b hypothesis will be confirmed, but this positive influence will be “zero” (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) (0.004).

Our findings could not show either that the equity of the eco-label is affecting the fit between the clothing brand and the eco-label (H6a). The standardized estimate also shows a “zero” (Dancey and

Reidy, 2014) positive influence of the eco-label equity on the brand / label perceived fit. This result cannot be extended through from our sample to the entire population because the regression between these two factors is not significant ( $P = 0.731$ ). The interpretation of this result is that any eco-label fits just the same with a brand of clothes. This finding is not the same as the one of Jongmans et al. (2019) that has identified a weak (almost moderate) (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) and significant dependency between these factors.

The results of our survey do not indicate that the perceived fit between the brands of the clothing and of the eco-label has an influence on the evaluation of the eco-labelled clothes (H2). The identified dependency between these two factors is weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) for our sample, but this result cannot be extended to the entire population because this dependency is not significant ( $P = 0.154$ ). The academic literature has previously confirmed this relationship but it looks like this dependency is not functional in our context. Our results do not support the findings of Bouten, Snelders, and Hultink (2011) who have identified that the fit between both the products and the brands of the products that enter into co-branding have a significant positive effect on the evaluation of the co-branded product. This outcome does not match the findings of Dickinson and Barker (2007) who empirically show that perceived co-brand fit has a positive influence on brand alliance evaluations. Still, our results are in line with the ones of Jongmans et al. (2019) that could not demonstrate either this dependency.

Our results cannot indicate that the equity of the eco-label has an influence on the purchase intention of the eco-labelled clothes (H8). We cannot formulate a conclusion for the entire population based on the weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) standardized regression weight found between these factors on our sample since this regression is not significant ( $P = 0.056$ ). We can notice the significance level is a little big above the commonly used threshold value of 0.5. If this threshold is increased a little (and so is the tolerance to possible errors), the regression will become significant and the hypothesis will be validated. This result is not in contradiction though with the findings of Rashid (2009). First, because our study doesn't demonstrate that there is no influence of the eco-label on the purchase intentions. It only identifies on our sample a weak effect between these two factors that cannot be generalized for the entire population. A slightly bigger error tolerance level introduced in the analysis of our data will confirm this hypothesis and confirm the findings of Rashid (2009). Second, the study of Rashid (2009) identifies the moderating positive effect of the awareness of the eco-label on the relationship between the environmental consciousness of the respondent and its intention to purchase the eco-labelled product. Our study tests the effects of brand equity on the purchase intention as a

whole, where awareness is only one of brand equity components. The difference in findings can be given by the other factors we analyze as part of brand equity, quality and loyalty.

Our research does not identify that the brand equity of the clothes has an impact on the perceived fit between the clothes brand and the eco-label (H5a). The data obtained from our sample reveals a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) dependency that cannot be extended to the entire population since it is not significant ( $P = 0.74$ ). These findings do not support the conclusions of Jongmans et al. (2019) that have identified this positive influence as important. In our context, the rejection of this hypothesis means that any clothing brand will fit with an eco-label in the same way as any other clothing brand. The higher equity clothes brands will not fit better or worse with an eco-label than the lower equity clothes brands.

In conclusion, our research shows that it is possible to build a model that can explain how the eco-labelling of clothes influences the customer's intentions to purchase them. It also demonstrates that brand / eco-label fit, ease of transfer and product evaluation are important mediators for the influence of the clothes and eco-label brands on the customer's intentions to purchase eco-labelled clothes. This study could only validate half of the hypotheses formulated based on the theory. Important relationships like the effect of the brand and eco-label equities on the perceived fit, of the perceived fit further on the product evaluation or the effect of the eco-label equity on the purchase intentions could not be demonstrated.

## 5.2 Answers to the Research Questions

In our study we have tried to understand what factors play a role in the decision of the consumers to purchase co-branded clothing brands with eco-labels and what their importance is. The results of the data analysis have provided the answers to these research questions.

The equity of the clothes brand has both a direct and indirect positive influence on purchasing intentions of the eco-labelled clothes. With a structural path estimate of 0.26, the direct influence is weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014). The brand of the clothes has also an indirect positive influence on purchase intentions mediated by the equity of the eco-label, by how easy is to transfer the previous knowledge and experience with the clothing brand and the eco-label to the new eco-labelled clothes and by how good the evaluation of the eco-labelled clothes is: brand equity  $\rightarrow$  brand / eco-label fit  $\rightarrow$  ease of transfer  $\rightarrow$  product evaluation  $\rightarrow$  purchase intention. This indirect effect is very limited though, only 0.074. All in all, brand equity has a total positive standardized effect on purchase intentions of

0.333 which is still a weak dependency (Dancey and Reidy, 2014).

A second outcome is that our study could not demonstrate that the equity of the eco-label has a direct influence on purchase intention. The data indicates that there is a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) direct positive effect of the eco-label on the purchase intention, in value of 0.199, but this result obtained for our sample cannot be generalized on the entire population because the regression between these two factors is not significant ( $P = 0.056$ ). The equity of the eco-label has an indirect effect on the purchase intentions though, mediated by how easy is to transfer the previous knowledge and experience with the clothing brand and the eco-labelled to the new eco-labelled clothes and how good the evaluation of the eco-labelled clothes is: eco-label equity  $\rightarrow$  ease of transfer  $\rightarrow$  product evaluation  $\rightarrow$  purchase intention. The strength of this indirect influence is 0.091. We can conclude that eco-labelling of the clothes has a very limited effect on the intentions of the consumers to purchase the eco-labelled clothes.

The fit between the brand of the clothes and the one of the eco-label has a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on the intentions to purchase the eco-labelled clothes. In our model, this influence is not a direct, but an indirect one mediated by the ease of transfer and the product evaluation: brand / eco-label fit  $\rightarrow$  ease of transfer  $\rightarrow$  product evaluation  $\rightarrow$  purchase intentions and brand / eco-label fit  $\rightarrow$  product evaluation  $\rightarrow$  purchase intentions. The total standardized effect of the brand / eco-label fit on the purchase intentions in value of 0.312. We can notice this positive effect is comparable with the one the brand equity has on the purchase intentions and significantly higher than the one of the eco-label brand equity.

The ease of transfer has also a weak (Dancey and Reidy, 2014) positive influence on the intentions to purchase the eco-labelled clothes. This effect is not a direct one in our model, but an indirect one, mediated by the evaluation of the eco-labelled clothes: ease of transfer  $\rightarrow$  product evaluation  $\rightarrow$  purchase intention. The standardized value of the total effect is 0.262. This value is smaller than the effect of the brand equity and of brand / eco-label fit, but significantly higher than the effect of the eco-label brand equity.

The evaluation of the eco-branded clothes has a moderate (almost strong) positive effect on the purchase intentions to buy eco-labelled clothes. This effect is only a direct one and has a standardized value of 0.602.

In conclusion, the answer to the research question one is that all the factors that have been analyzed have a positive influence on the purchase intentions: brand equity, eco-label equity, brand / eco-label fit, ease of transfer and product evaluation.

The extent to which these factors influence the consumers' intention to purchase eco-labelled clothes (research question two) is different. The influence of brand equity, eco-label equity, brand / eco-label fit and ease of transfer is weak and about the same magnitude (0.333, 0.290, 0.312 and 0.262 respectively). The product evaluation is the only factor analyzed that has a significant positive effect on purchase intentions (0.602). According to our model and the results of our survey, the way in which these five factors influence the purchase intentions is also different from factor to factor. The purchase intention has only a direct effect on the purchase intentions. The clothes brand has both a direct and an indirect effect on purchase intentions. The other three factors have only an indirect effect on the purchase intentions, mediated by other factors.

### 5.3 Theoretical Implications

Our research has several contributions to the development of existing theory in the co-branding field. First, our study is trying to make a clear distinction between several close concepts such as co-branding, strategic alliance, brand alliance and brand collaboration, as well as to emphasize their characteristics. The collaboration between an eco-brand and a host brand is usually not considered as a co-branding strategy, therefore our study strives to clarify this topic to the readers.

Second, this study proposes a valid model that can be used to analyze the implications of the eco-labelling on the intention to purchase the eco-labelled products. The previous research has performed this analysis up to the influence on the evaluation of the co-branded products. The limitation of the prior research is that it only explores the influence of factors such as the attitude towards brands and the perceived co-branding fit on the evaluation of the co-branded product (Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013; Dickinson and Barker, 2007; Jongmans et al., 2019). Our study is filling this gap by extending this analysis one step further, from the evaluation of the eco-branded products to the intentions of the customers to purchase them. Our research also demonstrates that there is a moderate (very close to strong) positive influence from eco-branded product evaluation to purchase intention. This proves that the additional research performed by our study is of great significance.

Our findings also indicate that in the context of our study, a significant part of the previous theory could not be confirmed. Half of our hypotheses made on this theory could not be confirmed. Our

research has tried to understand how the brands of the clothes and of the eco-label influence the purchase intentions of the eco-labelled clothes and how the perceived fit, ease of transfer and the evaluation of the eco-branded clothes mediate this influence. The results show that only ease of transfer and product evaluation play a mediation role, while the role of the perceived fit is limited. The results also show that the equity of the clothes has both a direct and an indirect effect (via the mediators) on the purchase intention, while the brand equity of the eco-label has only an indirect effect on the purchase intentions.

All these findings indicate that more research of how eco-labelling influences the purchase intentions is not only important, but also needed. This can clarify the dynamics of this influence. It looks like it is not completely explained by the current research.

## 5.4 Practical Implications

The results of our study have important practical implications.

A first practical implication is related to the clothes brand. The equity of the clothing brand has a weak influence on the purchase intention to buy its eco-labelled products. According to this result, there is not a significant difference in terms of purchase intentions between the gains obtained by stronger or weaker brands when they eco-label their clothes. The companies that produce clothes with weaker brands have therefore no bigger incentives to eco-label their products in the attempt to increase their sales than the companies that produce high equity brand clothes.

Our research has also an important implication on how the clothes company can select the eco-labels to use for their products. Neither the equity of the clothes brand nor the equity of the eco-label brand has an influence on the brand / eco-label fit. It looks like in the eyes of the consumers it is the eco-labelling that is important, not the specific clothes brand that is eco-labelling its products or the eco-label that is used. According to our results, any clothes brand fits the same with any eco-label. This result has important consequences for both the clothing industry and the eco-label organizations. The clothing companies can make alliances with any eco-label as part of their sustainability program. These companies can select one eco-label that is easier, faster and maybe more cost-efficient to implement. The company can even select a non-audited (non Type I) eco-label. They can create their own eco-labels and connect them with a self-declaration of the sustainability characteristics of their products. This opens possibilities for greenwashing and partially explains why greenwashing has at least some commercial success. The organizations that manage audited (Type I) eco-labels can search their customers through all the clothes companies independent on the equity of the brands of the clothes

these companies produce and even independent on the brand equity of their own eco-label. On the other hand these organizations can have a difficult time to get customers in the clothing industry. The clothing companies can just perform a sustainability self-certification.

Another practical implication of our study is related to the product evaluation. The results of our survey show that the product evaluation has the most important positive effect on the purchase intentions, about twice as big as the influence the other four analyzed factors have. When they eco-label their products, the clothing companies should focus on making the outcome product highly evaluated by the customers and be less concerned about the eco-label they partner with or about the previous knowledge and experience the customers have had with their similar non eco-labelled products.

## 5.5 Limitations and Proposal for the Future

This study has several limitations that can indicate interesting possible future further investigations. Our study has only investigated the eco-labelling of a high equity clothes brand (Nike) with a high equity eco-label brand (Nordic Swan). It will be very interesting to investigate the implications of the eco-labelling on the purchase intentions of the customers in the other scenarios exploring different combination levels of both clothes brand equity and eco-label equity (high - low, low - high and low - low). This will provide (or not) a more comprehensive confirmation of the role played by the brands of the clothes and eco-label in the co-branding.

A second limitation of our study is the relatively reduced number of answers received for our survey. More than this the received answers have also had missing data. Imputation has been done to handle the missing data. All these could affect the accuracy of our findings. It will be useful to run the same survey and secure a bigger number of complete answers for example by selecting a bigger sample for the online survey or by running a face to face interview.

Another limitation of our survey is that the overall fit of our research model has not reached a perfect level. The CFI threshold value of 0.9 is considered as a good value in the traditional acceptance, however, the CFI of the SEM model in this study is 0.893, which is slightly below the suggested value of 0.9. Except that, the P-close value is 0.002, which is much lower than the threshold of 0.05 and SRMR is 0.115, which is higher than the accepted value 0.08. Those three measures, especially P-close and SRMR are considered as the limitation of our model fit. It would be interesting to see if changes in the sample size or the change of the entire sample can help to reach a better level of the model fit.

Another interesting continuation of this study would be to select a sample that is more representative for the population of a society. The sample of our research is represented by the students in the Master Programs of The School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg. This is a sample that is, arguably, not only knowledgeable about the co-branding and eco-labelling, but also more sensitive to the sustainability topics. This sample is not necessarily representative for the entire population of Sweden (or of another country) so it can introduce some bias in the results. Even so, the brand equities of both clothes and eco-label have no influence on the brand / eco-label fit, creating opportunities for the commercial success of greenwashing. We expect that a sample that is more representative for the entire society to show even smaller importance of the brand equities of the clothes and eco-label. Reproducing our study on such a sample can confirm this hypothesis.

## 6. Conclusion

This research has tried to identify the factors that influence the decision of the consumers to purchase eco-labelled clothes and the importance of these factors. The previous co-branding research has mostly focused on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) such as cakes, cream cheese, beverage brands with chocolate brands, electronics, hotel and restaurant industries. The study of the co-branding of products with organic or, more general, ecological labels is very limited. Little attention has also been given to look at the co-branded products from the consumer's perspective and understand why they choose these products. Our study had tried to shed more light on this research area. It extends a previous study upon the evaluation of a co-branding dairy product with an organic label in several ways. First, the research is done in a different industry, investigating the eco-labelling of the clothes. Second, our research goes one step further by also investigating the result of the co-branding on the purchase intentions of the consumers. It also explores the direct impact of the product and eco-label on the purchase intentions, not only the one mediated by the co-branding.

An online survey has been run to validate the research model and to confirm the formulated hypotheses. The survey has been sent to the students in the Master Programs of The School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg.

The outcome of the survey confirms that the results of the eco-labelling of clothes can be analyzed in terms of the customers' intentions to purchase them. This outcome could only confirm half of the findings of the previous research. It has confirmed that brand / eco-label fit, ease of transfer and product evaluation are important mediators for the influence of the clothes and eco-label brands on the

purchase intentions, but could not demonstrate important relationships like the effect of the brand and eco-label equities on the perceived fit, of the perceived fit further on the product evaluation or of the effect of the eco-label equity on the purchase intentions.

The analysis of the data gathered in our survey has also helped us to answer the research questions. According to our study, all the factors that have been analyzed have a positive influence on the purchase intentions: brand equity, eco-label equity, brand / eco-label fit, ease of transfer and product evaluation. The influence of the first four factors is weak and about the same for all of them, while the influence of the product evaluation on the intentions to purchase eco-labelled clothes is twice as big as the one of the other four.

Our research has several contributions to the development of existing theory in the co-branding field. First, it clarifies how co-branding differs from other strategic alliances, in particular from brand alliances like co-location, co-promotion or brand bundling. It also clarifies why eco-labelling is a form of co-branding. Second, our study fills a gap in the current research and extends the investigation of the eco-labelling implications with an additional step up to the purchase intentions. The model built that explains these dynamics has been proven valid. It has also demonstrated that the study of this additional step is important. Third, our findings indicate that in the context of eco-labeling, the current theory cannot completely explain the roles played by the different factors that have been analyzed. A significant part of the previous theory could not be confirmed in the context of our study.

Our study has also important implications for practitioners. It shows that both high and low equity clothes brands have the same incentives to eco-label their products. There are no bigger benefits in terms of purchase intentions for the low equity clothes brands to eco-label their products. Our findings indicate that for the consumers it is the eco-labelling that is important when they consider the purchasing of eco-labelled clothes, not the specific clothes brand that is eco-labelling its products or the eco-label that is used. Neither the equity of the clothes brand nor the equity of the eco-label brand has an influence on the brand / eco-label fit. This result has important consequences for both the clothing industry and the eco-label organizations. The clothes manufacturers can potentially choose an “easier” eco-branding and even create their own eco-labels. This is opening possibilities for greenwashing. The organizations that manage audited (Type I) eco-labels can partner with any company that produces clothes, regardless of the clothes brand equity or the equity of their own eco-label. It will be difficult though to make such partnerships since clothing companies can just perform a sustainability self-certification. Another practical implication of our research is that the clothing

companies should focus on making the eco-labelled product highly evaluated by the customers and not on the eco-label they partner with or on the previous knowledge and experience the customers have had with their similar non eco-labelled products. The evaluation of the eco-labelled clothes is twice as important as the brand equity of the clothes and of the eco-label, the brand / eco-label fit or the ease of transfer.

Our research has several limitations that open interesting possibilities for future research: investigating the implications of the eco-labelling on the purchase intentions of the customers in the other scenarios, when different brand equity levels of both clothes and eco-label enter into an eco-label collaboration, running the same survey in a way that secures a bigger number of complete answers and a better overall fit of the model and performing the study using a sample that is more representative for the society.

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## Appendix A - Survey

**First, we would like to know what you think about a particular clothing brand: Nike.**

Nike is an American corporation producing sport footwear, apparel, equipment, accessories and services since 1971. We are using it here as an example of a clothing brand that (hypothetically) could start labelling its clothes with an eco-label as part of its sustainability program.



**1. Please indicate how you (personally) perceive the quality of the Nike brand.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

**I perceive Nike clothes to be:**

QL1 Of high quality.

QL2 Easy to maintain (wash, iron, etc.).

QL3 Durable (resist a long time).

QL4 Of very poor quality (r).

**2. In the following statements we are interested in your loyalty to Nike clothes. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

LO1 I often buy Nike clothes

LO2 Clothes branded with Nike are my first choice

LO3 If clothes branded with Nike are available at the store, I seldom consider other brands.

**3. In the following statements we are interested in how well you know the Nike brand.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

AW1 I know how clothes branded by Nike usually look like.

AW2 I recognize Nike among other competing brands.

AW3 I am aware of the clothes branded by Nike.

AS 1 Some characteristics of the Nike brand come to my mind quickly.

AS 2 I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the Nike brand.

**In the second part of this survey, we would like to know more about your knowledge and perceptions of an eco-label: Nordic Swan.**

**We would like you to evaluate the Nordic Swan eco-label and to understand your relationship with it.**

Established in 1989, the Nordic Swan Eco-label is the official sustainability eco-label for products in the Nordic countries (appliances, cleaning, electronics, cosmetics, food, textile, etc.). The labelling of the products with the Nordic Swan certifies that these products fulfil strict requirements that contribute to a more sustainable development. The aim of the eco-label initiative is to reduce the environmental impact and to make it easier for consumers to choose an environmentally friendly alternative of the product.



**4. Based on the above description, how would you perceive the quality of the products labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label? Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

If I see a product labelled with Nordic Swan, I assume:

QL1 It has high quality.

QL2 It is durable (resists a long time).

QL3 It does not have a negative ecological impact.

QL4 It has a positive impact on society.

QL5 It has poor quality. (r)

**5. In the following statements we are interested in whether you are loyal to the products labelled with Nordic Swan.**

**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

LO1 I often buy products labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label.

LO2 Products labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label are my first choice.

LO3 If similar products are available, products labelled with Nordic Swan eco-label would be my first choice.

**6. In the following statements we are interested in how well you know the Nordic Swan eco-label.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

AA1 I know what the Nordic Swan eco-label looks like.

AA2 I recognize Nordic Swan eco label among other competing eco labels.

AA3 I am aware of the Nordic Swan eco label.

AS1 Some characteristics of the Nordic Swan eco label come to my mind quickly.

AS2 I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the Nordic Swan eco label.

**In the third part of this survey, we would like you to imagine that Nike is considering starting a collaboration with the Nordic Swan eco-label. Part of this collaboration will be that Nike will start labelling its clothes with the Nordic Swan as part of its sustainable program.**

**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

**7. Please indicate to what extent you think that the Nike brand and the Nordic Swan eco-label fit together in this association.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

The fit between clothes with the Nike brand and the Nordic Swan eco-label:

FIT1 Seems consistent

FIT2 Makes sense

FIT3 Seems appropriate

**8. In the following statements, we are interested in what you think about the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

EKT1 It would be easy for me to explain to someone the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.

EKT2 My knowledge makes it easy for me to understand the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.

EKT3 Those around me can easily understand the association between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco label.

**9. In the following statements we are interested in what you feel about the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

EAT1 Given my fashion tastes, it would be easy for me to like the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.

EAT2 My clothes preferences make it easy to be pleased with the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.

EAT3 Anyone around me can easily appreciate the cooperation between Nike and the Nordic Swan eco-label.

**10. In the following statements we are interested in how you would evaluate a product branded by Nike and Nordic Swan eco-label. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

OPE 1 I would really like to see Nike clothes co-branded with the Nordic Swan eco-label

OPE 2 I would really enjoy wearing Nike clothes co-branded with the Nordic Swan eco-label

OPE 3 I would expect Nike clothes co-branded with the Nordic Swan eco-label to be successful when they are launched

**11. Imagine that you find Nike clothes co-branded with Nordic Swan in the store when shopping. In the following statements we are interested in your intentions to purchase them.**

Please react to the following statements on a scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree.

PI 1: I would probably purchase the Nike clothes labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label.

PI 2: I would consider buying the Nike clothes labelled with the Nordic Swan eco label if I need a product of the kind.

PI 3: I intend to buy Nike clothes labelled with the Nordic Swan eco-label.

**Now you are almost done. Only a few background questions left!**

**12. What year are you born?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**13. Gender**

male

female

**14. Are you working?**

yes

no

**15. How much money did you spend on average per month during the last 6 months on shopping clothes?**

\_\_\_\_\_ SEK

**16. I have the intention to buy clothes in the following two months**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat Disagree
- 4 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 Somewhat Agree
- 6 Agree
- 7 Strongly Agree
- 8 I don't know