The Swedish home furnishing brand; sustainaBilly?

Understanding the consumers' perception, of a big international company in terms of sustainability.

Sophie Post, July 2013

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The report you are about to read is the result of a nine month study on the consumer perception of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. With this master thesis research for the master Sustainable Development track Environmental Governance, a period of 7 years of studying comes to an end, but I could not think of a better way to end this wonderful time.

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I feel that with this final research I am now ready to put everything I learned over the last seven years into practice and hope that I can contribute to working towards a more sustainable society.

I am grateful for this experience and all the support I have received. I hope you enjoy reading this report.

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English and Dutch executive summary.

English version

With the acknowledged shift from government to governance there is more room for corporations to show that they contribute to achieving a more sustainable society. However these corporations need the support of consumers in order to achieve their goals in the field of sustainability. Therefore, many companies who invest in becoming more sustainable want to gain insight in if this is acknowledged by consumers and hence is translated into a more positive image of their company with regard to sustainability. So did IKEA the Netherlands.

The elements from which a consumer's perception regarding a corporation's sustainability originates are various. Therefore different strands of literature have been studied and from these different strands of literature some factors that are argued to be influential in the process of shaping an image or perception, have been derived. Due to the large amount of factors some categorization was done in order to limit the amount of variables and merge overlapping variables. This led to six categories of independent variables; personal characteristics, worldview, definition of sustainability, sources of information, perceived features of products and services and perceived features of the company.

In order to get insight in whether these categories can truly explain where a certain consumer perception with regard to a corporation's sustainability comes from these categories were tested by means of a large scale questionnaire. Also the dependent categories of brand image and image of sustainability activities need to be measured and are therefore operationalized and included in the questionnaire. The category of "sources of information" needs some more elaboration since in literature the importance of information and communication is highlighted. However if we were to test this we should know what messages are out there about IKEA and sustainability, therefore prior to the questionnaire a content analysis has been conducted in which messages about IKEA and sustainability by IKEA, the general media and NGO's have been analyzed on tone of content.

The data obtained with the questionnaire are statistically tested on: if all variables are in the statistically right categories (factor analysis), if there are relations between the independent and dependent categories (correlation) and how much the independent categories contribute to explaining the dependent categories (multiple regression analysis). Eventually some categories had to be split as a result of the factor analysis and it became apparent that with regard to the "image of sustainability activities" of IKEA the categories (factors) that could explain most are (in order of magnitude); organizational competences, aspects of quality of products and services, purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products, IKEA information through press releases, attitude towards multinational companies and "ever purchased IKEA products". In this enumeration the "attitudes" are part of "personal categories" which cannot easily be changed by a company, therefore recommendations are mainly formulated on those categories that can relatively easily be adjusted by IKEA. In short the recommendations for the IKEA management are:

- to be transparent about the IKEA business operations as this creates higher valuation of organizational competences resulting in a better "image of sustainability activities"

- product quality improvement while ensuring low prices and modernity
- expand services range with services that make the shopping experience at IKEA more sustainable (e.g. recycling of products)
- more thorough use of IKEA press releases to convey sustainability messages
- more research regarding the experience that consumers have with IKEA products and how this influences the "image of sustainability activities"
- an evaluative study after implementation of the recommendations of this study, in other words further research

Nederlandse versie

De feitelijke verschuiving van voornamelijk overheidsbestuur naar meer variatie in en andere bestuursvormen, biedt bedrijven de mogelijkheid om op het gebied van duurzaamheid verantwoordelijkheid te nemen. Hierbij hebben bedrijven den steun van consumenten nodig om deze duurzaamheidsdoelen na te streven. Vandaar dat bedrijven die investeren in verduurzaming, graag inzicht willen hebben of consumenten dit waarderen en dit ook tot uitdrukking komt in een positiever beeld van hun bedrijf met betrekking tot duurzaamheid. Ook IKEA Nederland is hierin geïnteresseerd.

De elementen waaruit de consumentenperceptie met betrekking tot duurzaamheid van een bedrijf bestaat zijn erg verschillend. Daarom zijn er verschillende soorten literatuur bestudeerd en vanhieruit zijn er factoren gevonden waarvan gezegd kan worden dat ze van invloed zijn op de beeldvorming van consumenten. Echter, het bleken er nogal veel te zijn en vandaar dat er categorieën zijn gemaakt, waarbij de overlappende factoren zijn samengevoegd. Dit heeft geleid tot zes onafhankelijke categorieën: persoonlijke karakteristieken, wereldbeelden, definitie van duurzaamheid, informatiebronnen, gepercipieerde kenmerken van producten en diensten en gepercipieerde kenmerken van het bedrijf.

Om inzicht te verwerven in de vraag of deze categorieën ook daadwerkelijk kunnen verklaren waar een bepaalde consumenten perceptie van een bedrijf met betrekking tot duurzaamheid vandaan komt is er een groot aantal vragenlijsten (824) verstuurd. Hierin zijn ook de afhankelijke categorieën "merkimago" en "imago van duurzaamheidsactiviteiten" geoperationaliseerd en meegenomen. De categorie "informatiebronnen" vergt wat extra uitleg vanwege de nadruk die de wetenschappelijke literatuur legt op de rol van informatie en communicatie in het vormen van een bepaalde perceptie. Als we deze rol willen onderzoeken dienen we te weten wat voor informatie en communicatie er bestaat omtrent IKEA en hun inspanningen om duurzamer te worden. Daarom is er voorafgaand aan de vragenlijst een inhoudelijke analyse uitgevoerd van berichten over IKEA en duurzaamheid door de algemene media, door NGO's en door IKEA zelf. Ze zijn geanalyseerd op de toon (negatief, neutraal, positief) van de inhoud van de berichten.

De data die zijn verworven door middel van de vragenlijst werden statistisch getest op de volgende punten: of de geconstrueerde categorieën ook statistisch kloppen (factor analyse), de relaties die er zijn tussen onafhankelijke en afhankelijke categorieën (correlatie) en in hoeverre de onafhankelijke categorieën bijdragen in het verklaren van de afhankelijke categorieën (meervoudige regressie analyse). Uit de factor analyse bleek dat sommige

categorieën gesplitst moesten worden. Tevens werd duidelijk dat de belangrijkste categorieën voor het verklaren van "imago van duurzaamheidsactiviteiten" de volgende zijn (in orde van grootte): organisatorische bekwaamheden, aspecten van de kwaliteit van de producten en diensten, aankoop attitude met betrekking tot milieuvriendelijke producten, IKEA informatie via persberichten, attitude ten opzichte van multinationale ondernemingen en of mensen ooit IKEA producten gekocht hebben. In deze opsomming zijn de "attitude"-factoren onderdeel van de zogenaamde "persoonlijke categorieën", welke lastig te veranderen zijn door een bedrijf. Vandaar dat de aanbevelingen met name zijn geschreven voor de categorieën die wel relatief eenvoudig kunnen worden aangepast door IKEA. De uiteindelijke aanbevelingen in het kort zijn geworden:

- om transparant te zijn over de IKEA bedrijfsvoering omdat dit leidt tot een hogere waardering van de organisatorische bekwaamheden en zal resulteren in een beter "imago van duurzaamheidsactiviteiten"
- het verbeteren van de kwaliteit van producten en tegelijkertijd het waarborgen van lage prijzen en moderniteit van de producten
- het uitbreiden van het dienstenaanbod met diensten die de bijdragen aan een "duurzamere"winkelervaring (bijvoorbeeld het recyclen van producten)
- grondiger gebruik maken van IKEA persberichten om duurzaamheids boodschappen over te brengen
- meer onderzoek naar de ervaring die consumenten hebben met IKEA producten en hoe dit het "imago van duurzaamheidsactiviteiten" beïnvloedt
- een evaluatieve studie na de implementatie van de aanbevelingen van dit onderzoek kan bepalen of deze effectief zijn geweest, met andere woorden verder onderzoek is nodig

List of abbreviations and figures

CBS – Central Bureau of Statistics
KPI – Key Performance Indicator
MNP- Milieu- en Natuur Planbureau
NGO- Non Governmental Organization
RIVM – Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu
SPSS- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

List of figures.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

With the acknowledged shift from government to governance there is more room for parties, other than governmental ones, to influence the way to a sustainable society and contribute to sustainable development (Driessen et al., 2012). As stated by Baumgartner (2009) "companies can and have to play an important role in the development of sustainable societies" (p.102). This becomes apparent after the year 2000 when a shift towards self-governance in the domain of sustainable production and consumption can be recognized (Driessen et al., 2012). Proactive companies develop strategies to regulate sustainability throughout the supply chain, such as certification schemes (Ibid., 2012). These are often developed in collaboration with NGOs (non-governmental organization). In this mode of governance the role of the government is not of great importance and it is merely about the interactions taking place between market and civil society. Most of the communication within the domain of sustainable production and consumption (self-governance) takes place via public media. This means that companies which are using terms related to sustainability in their branding activities should, because of this prominent role of the public media in this domain, be aware of possible reputation damage. Additionally, NGOs use the media to shed light on those issues they think are important and to depict a black and white image of these issues (Ibid., 2012). Therefore, "businesses are far more vulnerable to the views of the public" (Driessen et al., 2012, p.12.).

As stated in the research by Bonini et al. (2007) companies are expected to take just as much responsibility as governments in "handling social issues" (p.7). Or at least, executives of big companies believe that the public expects them to take just as much responsibility in striving for sustainability as do governments (Ibid., 2007). When companies do so they are incorporating sustainability into their corporate strategies, although there might not be a common understanding of what sustainability means. The often mentioned triple bottom line is the base of many corporate sustainability strategies, which means that economic prosperity, social responsibility and environmental stewardship are the key elements of a sustainability strategy (Wong & Avery, 2008). However, it is argued that sustainability within an organization should go beyond this triple bottom line and should be part of the intent of existence of the company. This requires rethinking the entire structure of the company and changing and challenging those activities that are regarded as being not sustainable (Ibid., 2008, p.70). Those companies which are adopting such a strategy are referred to as proactive companies or frontrunners.

One of these companies, founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943, is IKEA. IKEA is a leading home furnishing company, which has 338 stores in over 40 countries and is employing over 154.000 people (IKEA, 2012a). The letters of "IKEA" stand for: Ingvar Kamprad, Elmtaryd (name of the farm he grew up) and Agunnaryd (village where he lived. A short introduction to IKEA will be useful in the course of this research. The IKEA concept was summarized in 1984 by Ingvar Kamprad himself whereby he formulated the IKEA vision as: "to create a better everyday life for the many people" (IKEA, 2012).The business idea behind this company is to: "offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them." (IKEA, 2012b). Part of the IKEA concept is also to use resources efficiently so nothing

is turned into waste, this has to do with the place from where IKEA originates. A region in the south of Sweden named Småland where resources are scarce and thus have to be used as efficiently as possible. Since Ingvar Kamprad grew up in this region it was this culture and mindset that formed the base of the IKEA business. As this is in the first place an economical consideration it can also be seen as a sustainability principle, in this case these go hand in hand. The company culture of IKEA is in the concept described with the Swedish word "tilsammans" which entails doing things together and caring for each other (IKEA, 2012b). In 1976 the Testament of a Furniture Dealer was published by Ingvar Kamprad; "the background is the idea about an IKEA Concept that will forever serve the many people. This is our way of contributing to making the world a better and more fair place" (IKEA, 2012b, p.4). Currently, IKEA is implementing a sustainability strategy known as "People & Planet Positive IKEA Group Sustainability Strategy for 2020"(IKEA, 2012c).

1.1 Problem definition

Since developments in the market are driven by the choices of consumers (purchase decisions) companies have to make sure they are supported by their clients. In order to develop products and services more efficiently and to communicate marketing more effectively it is valuable for managers to know how consumers tend to see their company (Rindell et al., 2010). This corporate image of a company by consumers is built over time and influenced by different factors. As Rindell et al. (2010) point out, the corporate image of companies has been researched, but mostly just by collecting data on "current customer perceptions" which lacks the underlying reasons for this perception (p.423).

Additionally, the term "sustainability" does not have a single definition and is interpreted in many ways by many different people. In the market "leading CEO's" see sustainability as an important part of future growth and therefore many companies are developing sustainability strategies (Strategic direction, 2012).

Social and environmental responsibility are deeply rooted in the IKEA organization, therefore it is of great importance for IKEA to know how the perception of consumers of their organization in terms of sustainability is created (Edvardsson et al., 2006). This consumers' perception of sustainability is measured, as a part of a much broader research on the total brand IKEA, among consumers annually by means of a survey among 300 consumers in every city where an IKEA store in the Netherlands is located; in total 3600 consumers are asked for their perception of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. In this research the "sustainability" of IKEA exists of three elements; responsibility for the environment, proper treatment of supplier employees and responsibility for the community (IKEA, 2012d). These elements are so called key performance indicators (KPI) and reflect the company's performance over the last year. IKEA sets certain scores they want to achieve for each KPI. Thus also for the three KPIs that can be regarded to reflect the consumers' perception of IKEA as a company that strives for sustainable ways of working. Despite the effort IKEA puts in becoming more sustainable, still the desired score for the KPI's that reflect the consumers' perception of IKEA and their efforts to become a more sustainable company, are not met and even remain relatively stable. Therefore, IKEA considers it desirable to find out what is underlying the percentages

of those KPIs that reflect the perception by consumers of IKEA and their efforts to become a more sustainable company (IKEA, 2012d).

1.2 Research objective and research questions

The research objective is to find what is underlying the consumers' perception of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable, since the current perception is not at the (by IKEA) desired level. Additionally, the ways in which IKEA communicates their sustainability efforts will be researched since this is a crucial way to influence the perception of consumers. This will result in the final product which will consist of recommendations to IKEA. With these recommendations they should be able to understand and know how to influence, the consumers' perception. Thus, it can be said that the project is practice oriented, since it will generate practical recommendations for the IKEA sustainability management staff. In order to provide a solution for the above presented problem definition, a research question is developed:

RQ: "What determines the perception that consumers have of a large international company (IKEA) in terms of sustainability and how can a company (IKEA) effectively steer towards an improved perception by consumers in terms of sustainability?"

1. What factors are at the root of a certain consumers' perception of a company in terms of sustainability?

2. What is the role of communication/information about IKEA and their sustainability efforts in constructing the consumers' perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability?

3. What are the most influential elements or combinations of elements in the process of explaining a perception in consumers' minds regarding the corporate sustainability image of IKEA?

4. Which factors should be addressed and above all, how could these be addressed, in order to create an improved image of IKEA in terms of sustainability among consumers?

1.3 Strategy

For this research multiple research strategies are employed. Since a single company is researched on consumer perception in terms of sustainability and the way of communicating this sustainability, it can be argued that this is an in-depth case study of a single company. This is emphasized since especially the first phase of the research consists of extensive in-depth literature study, which can be seen in figure 1 (research framework). Thus, it can be said to qualify as qualitative research because it concerns a single case (one company). On the other hand, to figure out, what is underlying the Dutch consumers' perception of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable and what the influence of various types of communication about these sustainability efforts is on consumers' perception, a comprehensive survey will be held. The empirical part of the research provides the research with a quantitative side where a large number of surveys will be held in order to achieve statistical value (representative sample). The use of a survey research strategy increases the breadth of the research, since a survey is normally held among many respondents; this is the opposite of a case study strategy which is argued to increase the depth of the research. Both

the in-depth case study strategy and the broad survey research strategy contribute to enhancing the validity of the research. It should be noted that this research can function as an example for IKEA in multiple countries, although this research is specifically commissioned by IKEA the Netherlands. A similar approach could be taken when executing this research in other countries or even in a more generalized form it could be applied to other companies. In phase 3 an extensive survey among consumers will be held to clarify underlying reasons of the current consumers' perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability and what the influence of various types of communication about these sustainability efforts is on consumers' perception. Below a visualization of the research phases (research framework is displayed.
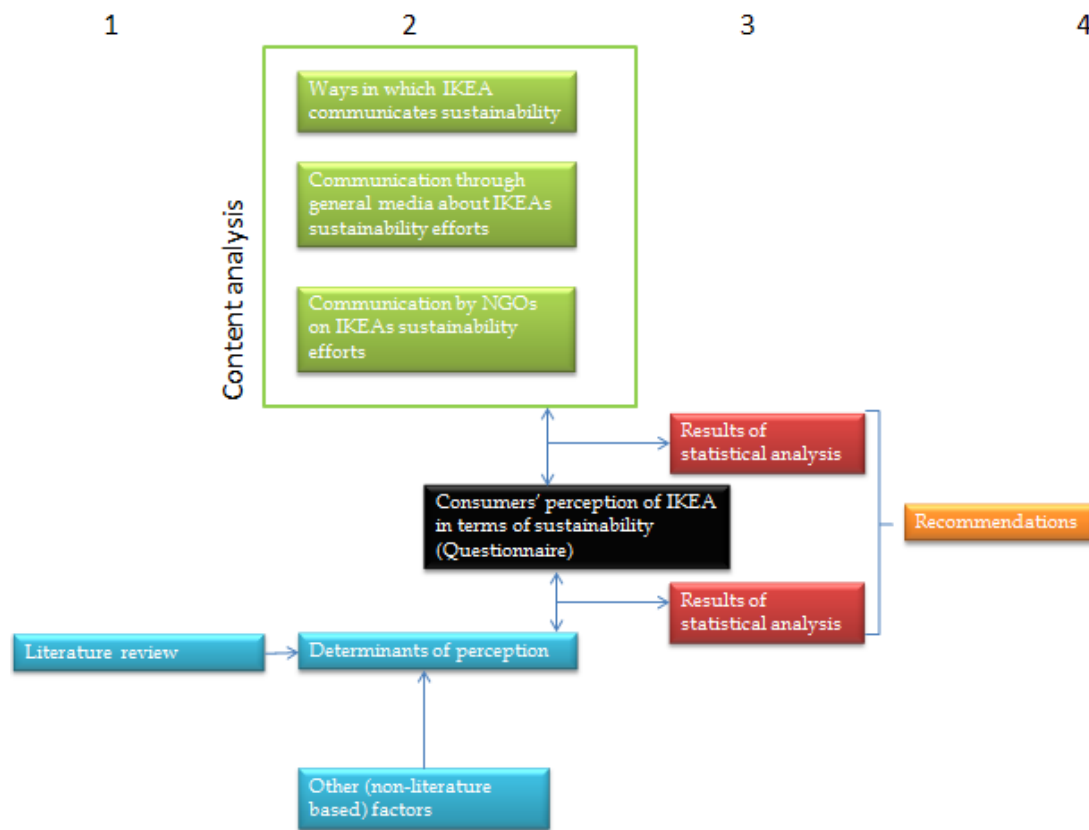
Figure 1.Research framework

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The first part of this research will focus on the theorethical foundation of this research. At first an extensive literature review was conducted in order to find factors that are influential in the process of perception formation in consumer's minds, with special attention to the consumers' perception of companies in terms of sustainability. Different strands of literature are included in the literature review in order to be as complete as possible. From literature it appears that information and communication are important factors in shaping a consumers' perception. Therefore a content analysis is conducted in order to get a sense of what messages are out there regarding IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. Subsequently the findings of the literature, and other relevant elements are operationalised

in order to translate them into theorems for a large-scale questionnaire, which is the third step in this master thesis research. The questionnaire is developed from the operationalization and is sent out to 824 people. The data that the questionnaire generates is in the next step analysed by means of statistical analysis. The statistical analysis will provide insights in which factors are determining a certain consumers' perception of a company when it comes to their sustainability efforts. As a fitting end, recommendations will be derived from the statistical analysis. These will logically flow from all previous steps. At the end of the report a discussion and conclusion can be found.

2. Theoretical foundation

The theoretical foundation chapter will provide an answer to the first sub-research question as presented in the introduction; what factors are at the root of a certain consumers' perception of a company in terms of sustainability? Moreover, this chapter provides a context in which this research should be placed. It also aims to show that different strands of literature are used to shed light on the topics of brand image and consumer perception in relation to sustainability. In the light of this research, the literature on corporate sustainability is addressed to provide a context for the rest of this literature review. Secondly literature with the following perspectives is discussed: marketing and brand image, brand perception by consumers and literature on corporate communication of sustainability efforts. From this literature study elements which are influential in the perception building process of consumers can be identified and the importance of effective corporate communication on corporate sustainability will be emphasized.

2.1 Corporate sustainability

Most parties in society are deliberately working towards sustainability, including the business community. Much has been written on the need for firms to change the way in which they do business hence that they should strive for sustainability practices (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013). In this light it is argued that "transformation of the Earth's resources into wealth through industrial activity has also led to a rapidly increasing level of consumption of materials and energy" (Ibid., 2013, p.382). This has led to changes in the local and global environment with negative effects for human and natural life on earth (Lozano, 2012; Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013). As a response to this, businesses feel the urge to change their organization (products, policies) and to address environmental and social issues (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013). Besides, there is growing attention for sustainability among consumers therefore businesses need to adhere to a new demand and expectations. It can be argued that this is at the root of corporate sustainability as we know it. Corporate sustainability is also argued to offer opportunities since corporations possess resources (money, technology), skills (marketing) and sometimes the willingness to work "towards sustainable societies" (Lozano & Huisingh, 2011, p.100). However, it would not be called "corporate" sustainability if economic or business interests are not important, but they are in corporate sustainability (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013).

In addition, Baumgartner & Ebner (2010) state that "corporations also seem to show an increasing commitment to a more sustainable behavior" (p.76). This provides a hopeful statement regarding companies being pro-active in taking their responsibility for their impact on the environment and the people. This sustainable behavior is argued to show through the sustainability strategy of a corporation, which should contain aspects on the three pillars of sustainability; economic, ecological and social (Ibid., 2010). Dyllick & Hockerts (2002) rather talk about three types of capital that are relevant in corporate sustainability: social, economic and natural capital. Whereas Elkington (2006) mentions these three pillars as the "triple bottom line" (TBL), or even writes about the creation of value in multiple dimensions, such as social value, economical value and environmental value. It can thus be argued that these authors are actually all trying to emphasize the fact that sustainability has three major fields of interest: economic issues, social issues and

environmental issues. Moreover, it is important to note that more and more companies are acknowledging that they cannot address a single field of interest, because the problems at the heart of the sustainability are interdependent. Dyllick & Hockerts (2002) attempted to define corporate sustainability, while using the well-known Brundtland definition of sustainable development as a basis: "meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders (such as shareholders, employees, clients, pressure groups, communities etc.), without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well" (p.131). In addition, Linneluecke & Griffiths (2010) state that corporate sustainability is a result of the emergence of sustainability as a general concept. The concept of sustainability is then argued to be shaped through "a number of political, public and academic influences over time" (Ibid., 2010, p.357). It is also discussed by Linnenluecke & Griffiths (2010) that corporate sustainability is sometimes called corporate social responsibility, which indicates that there is no consensus on its definitions, not even to mention on how to implement corporate sustainability in organizational practice. However, agreement is reached on how multifaceted corporate sustainability is and that it requires "organizational change and adaptation at different levels" (Ibid., 2010, p.358).

Elkington (2006) points out that "recent announcements by companies like GE ("Ecomagination") and Wal-Mart (e.g. their pledges on renewable energy, zero waste and sustainable fish) are both symptomatic of growing business unease on questions like climate change" (p.526). From this it can be derived that unease triggers taking corporate responsibility and as argued by Elkington (2006) it also enhances concern and interest in sustainability issues.

2.2 Corporate sustainability and its' perception by consumers.

This research will focus on a part that some authors call the "marketing debate", this research stream focuses, among others, on the "consumer perceptions of and responses to the adoption of social or environmental initiatives by firms" (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013, p.389). These perceptions and responses to corporate sustainability initiatives are argued to be important since these often determine consumer behavior, which in the end is decisive for the economic performance of a company. Many authors have argued that there is no consensus on the definition of sustainable business practices, corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Brunk, 2010; Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003). However, the reality is that more and more companies are adopting sustainability strategies for various reasons, competitive advantage, demanded by customers or because the company itself wants it. No matter what reason there might be at the heart of adopting such a sustainability strategy, the consumers will always construct a certain perception of the efforts of a company to become more sustainable. Therefore Van Marrewijk & Werre (2003) argue that each organization should decide on a "specific ambition and approach regarding corporate sustainability, matching the organization's aims and intentions" (p.107).

In addition, the role of companies to take on sustainability becomes bigger, as Baumgartner (2009) states that "corporations can and have to play an important role in the development of sustainable societies" (p.102). This is because in many developed countries, companies were argued to take more responsibility and in relation to sustainable development this led to voluntary certification programs and to the emergence of the

concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Driessen et al., 2012, p.11). At the same time the role of the public debate on sustainable development becomes bigger, which means that consumers are informed about sustainability in various ways, mostly through the public media (Driessen et al., 2012, p.12). Besides, the general public also starts to care more for "environmentally sound products" (First & Khetriwal, 2010, p.91) and socially responsible products. However, companies also try to get across their messages on their sustainability efforts to the general public, but the public media is of great influence on how this information by companies is received. This eventually results in the fact that "businesses are far more vulnerable to the views of the public" (Driessen et al., 2012, p.12). Therefore it is valuable for companies to know how they and their efforts to become (more) sustainable are perceived by the general public (consumers).

First & Khetriwal (2010) also argues that branding and corporate social responsibility are two different things but they are more and more interlinked. Branding in relation to sustainable development is often applied as green branding, in which a lower environmental impact of the brand is touted. However the author acknowledges that sustainable development also concerns organizational and societal issues (First & Khetriwal, 2010, p. 92). It is argued that green branding requires active communication. Since corporate social responsibility has gained ground among company managers, companies want to communicate all their efforts to become sustainable, as it is believed that this will benefit their reputation. The author argues that the organizational identity should be attractive in order for people to identify with an organization (Ibid., 2010). Therefore these can be regarded as elements that are influential in the process of creating a certain perception among consumers.

2.3 Brand image from the marketing perspective

Brand image and it's perception by consumers is a versatile subject which has been studied from many perspectives. It is especially important to marketers and therefore marketing research has focused on brand image. As Park et al. (1986) write "conveying a brand image to a target market is a fundamental marketing activity" (p.135). In addition, Cretu & Brodie (2007) write that "given that there are substantial marketing investments in building brand image and building company reputation, this is an area requiring investigation" (p.230). Brand image has a lot to do with the brand's market performance, since a positive brand image will eventually lead to higher sales (Park et al., 1986). In addition and as argued before, the brand image is not just a "perceptual phenomenon" shaped through what a company communicates but "it is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand- related activities engaged in by the firm" (Ibid, 1986, p.135). In similar wording Graeff (1997) poses that "brands can be described in terms of their image as perceived by consumers" (p.49). Since the brand image is something that consumers create from their own perceptions of everything that has to do with the brand, it is important for marketers to try and influence this brand image as much as possible. Therefore the marketing literature still mostly presents brand image as something that can be influenced by marketers. Graeff (1997) shows that through advertising, marketers try to create brand equity. This is what eventually should differentiate a certain brand from its competitors. Creating a certain brand image is, in marketing literature, sometimes called "branding". Branding is aimed at

creating the desired brand image, which is according to Graeff (1997) matching as closely as possible the self-image of as many people as possible at as many social roles that a consumer has. For example, "an individual consumer can assume the role of a father, businessman, baseball coach, fishing buddy, and a husband depending upon the nature of the situation in which they find themselves" (Graeff, 1997, p.50). If a company is able to relate in all these social roles to the desired image of the consumer, it will be in favor over its competitors. Saunders & Watt (1979) build on the idea that a certain brand image "is generally achieved by packaging, advertising, and sales promotion, which create an image of a product that is more a result of the buyer's mental perception than the product's physical properties"(p.115). In other words; most of the input for the brand image is made by marketers, in this case specifically product marketers. To conclude this section it can be argued that from the marketing perspective brand image is aimed at creating brand equity and that this can be , to a large extent, be determined by the work of marketers.

2.4 Consumers' perception of a brand.
Companies put a great effort into brand positioning, in relation to the efforts to become sustainable. This "branding" can be recognized as "green branding" (Hartmann et al., 2005). Currently, consumers are becoming more aware of environmental problems and try to reduce their environmental impact by changing their consumption choices. Businesses respond to this development by adopting sustainable business practices and communicate these through adapting green branding/marketing strategies (Cherian & Jacob, 2012, p.117). This branding is aimed at creating a certain image of the brand. It is important for managers to know how consumers and customers view their corporate image in order to see if the branding is effective. This is mostly done by describing current customer perceptions but the reasons underlying this perception remain often unknown (Rindell et al., 2010, p.423). In order to manage a corporation's image it is necessary to understand how these images are formed and subsequently to change "those factors on which they are based" (Dowling, 1986).

Hartmann et al. (2005) state that attitude is a result of how certain information is perceived. Thus perception of brand information results in a certain attitude towards, or image of a brand (Dowling, 1986). Therefore the terms: attitude, image of a brand and brand perception are interlinked. Following Hartmann et al. (2005) the creation of an attitude happens in two ways. Firstly it is assumed that a person's rationally considers information about the object (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.12). In the case where people do not have any direct experience with a company it is assumed that peoples' perception is based on external **information** (Dowling, 1986, p.110). Secondly, with no information or limited information Hartmann et al. (2005) argue that the attitude is formed through **feelings associated with the brand**. Also factors like **environmental knowledge** of the company and the **perceived individual customer benefit** are named as being determinants of the purchase decision. The perceived individual customer benefit is explained as the fact "that the reduction of a product's environmental impact generally does not deliver individual benefits to its buyer" (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.11). The decision to purchase a certain brand is the operationalization of the existing brand image, therefore these factors are regarded as indirect determinants of brand image (Gray & Balmer, 1998; McDonald & Oates, 2006).

Subsequently, a distinction is made between, functional brand positioning strategies related to information and creating environmental consciousness and emotional brand positioning strategies, which are related to the feelings that exist around a brand.

However, it must be noted that "a company will not have an image - people hold images of the company" (Dowling, 1986, p.110). At the same time, this image differs among persons, since people will "selectively perceive different aspects of the company's communications" and because not everyone has the same experience (reality) with a company (Dowling, 1986, p.110).

Furthermore, Hartmann et al. (2005) state that due to growing environmental consciousness among consumers there is a positive attitude towards brands "that are perceived as environmentally sound" (p.12). However, green brands are not always perceived that positively by consumers, since they suspect that there is a **trade-off between functional performance and environmental impact** (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.12). Additionally, the authors argue that brand perceptions are often developed, mainly through **advertising exposure** (Ibid., 2005, p.14). In order to achieve a favorable perception of the brand Hartmann et al. (2005) argue that "a well-implemented green positioning strategy" is needed, hence a mix between functional and emotional green positioning (Ibid., 2005, p.21). Dowling (1986) adds, that for achieving this "favorable corporate image" the "media is a subtle way for an organization to help manage its environment" (p.110).

In contrast to emotional and rational elements suggested by Hartmann et al. (2005), Dowling (1986) writes that the image of a company or attitude towards a company is based on personal experience and interpersonal communications. Dowling (1986) also states that: "the mass media communications of a company (advertising and its' publicity releases) represent the company's perception of itself" (p.111). Subsequently, he reasons that this image is also the image that the company wishes others to have of them, First & Khetriwal, (2010) argue that this is the brand identity. Thus, if there is a difference in the image that individuals have of a company and the image that a company has of itself, than it might be necessary for the company to reflect upon its marketing strategy (Dowling, 1986, p.111). However, Dowling (1986) adds that when a company sends out messages with the goal to influence peoples' perception there is a chance that these messages are not interpreted the right way and cause reinforcement of the already existing (undesired) images and attitudes (Ibid., 1986, p.114). This follows the principle of selective perception; "people usually see what they expect to see and their expectations will be governed by their current image" (Ibid., 1986, p.114). Dowling (1986) also presents the dimensions of corporate image:" **competent management, equal opportunity employer, quality products, sound financial condition, socially responsible, reliable, modern, technological leadership, sound financial investment, protects jobs of local workers, develops many new products, spends money on R&D as an investment in the future, cares about the local community and makes products that conserve energy**"(p.113). Reliability is also mentioned by de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder (2003) as being an important feature of a partner in a consumer-retailer relationship, thus in other words reliability is an influential factor in the creation of consumer perceptions. However, it should be noted that Dowling (1986) concludes by writing that non-company controlled elements (e.g. external interpersonal communication) are the ones that are most influential on the corporate image formation (p.115).

Rindell et al. (2010) take another stance on how consumers' perceptions are formed by stating that the consumers' corporate image construction is determined by the image-in-use and by the image-heritage. The image-in-use is explained as: "the result of an image construction process in which past, present and future merge" (Rindell et al., 2010, p. 423). Whereas the image-heritage is explained as being "the individual consumer's mental network of past individual and/or social experiences over time related to the company"(Ibid., 2010, p.423). It is argued that image-heritage is still of great influence on the current image-in-use of a company. By researching the image-heritage, past eras which are still influential (negatively or positively) on the current consumers' image, can be identified, it is important to know about these eras since these can still influence the success of the company (Ibid., 2010). Rindell et al. (2010) argue that image-heritage **(consumer's prior company-related experiences**) is used as "interpretation framework" for constructing images in the present (p.424). However, these company-related experiences are various in origin; "interactions with the company, social interaction with other people, other people's experiences, **social media**, reputation and so forth" (Rindell et al., 2010, p.424). This is supported by the findings of Cherian & Jacob (2012). By detecting clusters of consumers "with different image heritage configurations, focus and sources based on which the image is constructed" it becomes possible to gain knowledge on how the variety of how their actions are interpreted (Rindell et al., 2010, p. 428). Brands are furthermore used to create **trust**, **stability** and **differentiation** (Ibid., 2010, p.276), these elements are thus considered to be influential in the process of creating consumer perception. The research by de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, (2003) underlines the importance of the element "trust", in creating consumer perceptions in the light of consumer –retailer relationships (p.97). Also stressed in the research by Rindell et al. (2010) is that "consumers' corporate brand images are of great importance to company's success" but that these images are really difficult or maybe even impossible to manage (Ibid., 2010, p.428).

In addition to this research another research by Rindell and Strandvik (2010) was conducted on how brand images evolve over time. Again the terms image-in-use and image-heritage are brought up since they are believed to play a crucial role in the formation of a corporate/brand image held by consumers. The corporate image is defined as: "the perceptions and beliefs held by consumers', as reflected in the associations held in consumer memory" (Rindell & Strandvik 2010, p.281). Image heritage is then further specified as having dimensions. The first dimension the researchers elaborate upon is the awareness time span, which is the time span used by consumers to reflect on the company's actions. Thus it unveils the influence of the company's history on the current perception of that company held by consumers (Ibid., 2010). The second dimension of image heritage is argued to be the "temporal focus" of image heritage. This is explained as unveiling eras and experiences in the company's past that are still of influence on the corporate image currently held by consumers (Ibid., 2010). It is argued by the authors, that the image heritage provides consumers with an interpretation framework with which experiences with the company in the present can be interpreted (Ibid., 2010). Therefore it is very valuable for a company to know how certain time periods, messages or actions in the past are still influencing the current formation of a corporate brand image held by consumers. The image-in-use is defined as: "all consumption events" (Rindell & Strandvik, 2010, p.281). Thereby it is

important to know, when and with whom this consumption takes place, since this might also be of influence on the construction of a brand image (Ibid., 2010). The authors conclude by stating that the construction of a brand image by consumers is a dynamic process in which past and present experiences are influential and that many sources are used for the construction of this image (Ibid., 2010.).

Yet another stance on the creation of consumer perception is taken by de Wulf and Odekerken-Schröder (2003). In this research the authors argue that a certain image of a company or brand is created through the relation that, in the case of this research, the retailer has with the customer. Influential elements in this relationship, and thus in the creation of a certain perception among consumers are: **honesty, benevolence, expertise, intentionality and relationship commitment** (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p. 97/98). Other elements that the authors discuss are trust and reliability; these are regarded as necessary in a good relationship between retailer and customer. The authors define relationship commitment as follows: "a consumer's enduring desire to continue a relationship with a retailer accompanied by his willingness to make efforts at maintaining it"(de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.98).

More research on consumer perceptions and marketing strategies has been done by McDonald & Oates (2006). In this research another approach is taken to discover what determines consumers' perception with regard to sustainability. The approach in this research consists of letting consumers place activities, regarding sustainability, in a matrix of **perceived effort and perceived difference** to the environment (McDonald & Oates, 2006, p.157). The information that flows from this "rating" of activities can help marketers to adapt marketing strategies that will "positively influence consumers' perceptions of such activities" (Ibid., 2006, p. 157). This approach is derived from a matrix in which **degree of confidence and degree of compromise** are mentioned as axes. The degree of compromise can be understood to be the extra effort needed to buy at a "green" or more sustainable store. The degree of confidence can be understood as how sure the consumer is that the product they will buy or the company at which they buy is representing environmental benefits (Ibid., 2006, p.159). As in many other researches, McDonald & Oates (2006) state that consumers develop perceptions based on **information** and that consumers believe that their perceptions are based on knowledge. However, it appears that the objective knowledge that consumers have about the environment is lower than their perceived knowledge about the environment (Ibid., 2006). Logically, the question of where consumers get their information about the environment comes to mind and subsequently what can be done by governments and marketers in order to make sure that consumers receive correct information (Ibid.,2006). Personal (family, friends) and impersonal (media) sources of information are suggested as a point for further research in researching the construction of perceptions about the environment (McDonald & Oates, 2006, p.158). However it must be noted that sustainability is a more holistic concept than only dealing with environmental issues, it also concerns social issues, in this case related to sustainable production and consumption. As a result of rating several activities related to environmental sustainability, McDonald & Oates (2006) develop six "perception archetypes". The archetypes that are developed are reflecting the consumers' perception of these activities related to sustainability. In the research by McDonald & Oates (2006) these activities are activities that

individuals could undertake themselves, but the same classification could be used to explain the consumers' perception of these sustainability activities but then conducted by someone other than themselves. These archetypes are characterized by the level of perceived difference to the environment and the level of perceived effort for certain activities. "Optimist" and "Pessimist" are opposites regarding perceived difference to the environment, "No trouble" and "Too much trouble" are opposites in terms of perceived efforts certain activities take and lastly there are "Cherry picker" and "Chicken or egg" which are both archetypes in favor of activities that take the least effort (McDonald & Oates, 2006, p.165). The authors conclude by stating that more research is needed on determinants of consumers' perception of sustainability.

As Brunk (2010) points out, the image of a company held by consumers is based on how the business behavior is judged; the author argues that this is done based on the consumers' ethical perceptions of this company. Therefore it is interesting to find out how "corporate decisions are perceived by the public" (Brunk, 2010, p.255). Also, there might be a discrepancy between what businesses think ethical business behavior is and what consumers think that ethical business behavior is. Brunk (2010) continues by stating that ethical perceptions could be a source of attitude formation which in turn is influencing consumers' behavior. This makes it even more interesting for company managers to find out how their company is perceived in terms of **ethicality** (morality). Many examples exist of behavior by companies which is not perceived as being ethical by consumers e.g. Nike (sweat-shop and child labor). However, there is no consensus definition of CSR (corporate social responsibility), but it is argued that "a company's stance on CSR may strongly influence how ethically the company and its brands are perceived" (Brunk, 2010, p.256). The behavior of businesses is categorized in order to discover if there are certain types of corporate behavior in relation to sustainability that are clearly contributing to un/ethical brand or company perceptions. This categorization of behavior will also help to understand what kind of corporate behavior consumers would like companies to engage in, thus is perceived by consumers as ethical (Ibid., 2010). It was found in the research that the reasons for perceiving a brand as un/ethical can be various. Also, the study by Brunk (2010) provides us with six domains in which the behavior of companies can be categorized, these domains determine the perceived ethicality of a brand or company by consumers, this is referred to as consumer perceived ethicality (CPE). These six domains are related to the following aspects in a company: consumer, employees, environment, local community and economy, business community and lastly the overseas community (Ibid., 2010). All the domains mentioned by Brunk (2010) can be argued to reflect the aspects on which a company undertakes action in order to contribute to sustainable development. The six domains will be briefly elaborated upon. Firstly, the domain of consumers, the way in which consumers are approached by companies is prominent when discussing ethical behavior. The interviewed consumers mention that the **marketing activities** of companies are sometimes perceived as unethical when they are focused on taking advantage of more vulnerable consumer groups (Ibid., 2010). Other business behavior towards consumers that is perceived unethical by the interviewees is; **poor customer service, insufficient labeling, outsourcing of production abroad and customer lock-in**. Additionally, it becomes clear that consumers perceive marketing as a very important aspect of CSR while business managers

do not (Ibid., 2010, p.258). The second domain concerns the business behavior towards employees. Business behavior perceived to be unethical is the **ill-treatment of staff, unsatisfactory safety procedures, unusually long working hours and any kind of discrimination** (Ibid., 2010). Thirdly, in the environmental domain the following types of business behavior are perceived as unethical; **not prioritizing environmental issues, causing pollution, not having a preventative and pro-active approach, unnecessarily frequent airline travel and failing to protect animals** (Ibid., 2010). As the fourth domain the behavior of a company towards the overseas community is discussed. **Exploitation of labor in overseas communities is perceived as unethical just like tolerating child labor. Likewise, working conditions should not be dangerous and the exploitation of natural resources without appropriate financial compensation is perceived to be unethical business behavior**. Also "**investing and trading with countries under questionable political regimes**" can be at the base of being perceived as an unethical company (part of incorrect accounting practices) (Ibid., 2010, p.259). However it can be argued that people are not really worried about these issues since it occurs far away from where they live, ignoring these issues is called moral dissonance. Ignoring such an issue is easier if it does not happen in your direct environment. The fifth domain in which consumers judge the behavior of companies on ethicality is that of business behavior towards the local community and economy. Unethical behavior in this domain, as derived from the answers of interviewees is; **failing to invest part of its profit into socially responsible projects, outsourcing production to other countries and company contact with questionable organizations** (Ibid., 2010). Lastly, the behavior of businesses in the domain of the business community is perceived as unethical by consumers if; there is **poor treatment of suppliers, they are misusing their (financial) power to put competitors out of business, there are "incorrect accounting practices" and when they are tolerating bribery** (Ibid., 2010, p.260). Concluding this research Brunk (2010) states that "unethical perceptions are at the root of a faltering company/brand image and reputation" (p.260). This goes together with what people consider as ethical which in turn has to do with circumstances in which people live. However it can be argued that increasing environmental awareness and the increase in wealth have made room for people in developed countries to think about circumstances elsewhere. What also can be concluded at the end of this research is that there is often incongruence in what is perceived ethical by companies and what is perceived ethical by consumers. Therefore revision of CSR activities might be necessary.

2.5 The role of information and communication on consumers' perception.
What can be distinguished from studying literature on how consumers construct perceptions is that information is of great influence on this perception. This calls for a more in-depth review of literature on the information provided by companies, also known as corporate communication.

In relation to sustainable development most companies develop communication on their efforts to become (more) sustainable. Implementing sustainability in a company does not only require effort from the top management but also requires input from other corporate departments, such as communication management (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007). This implementation usually takes place under the name of "corporate social responsibility" or "corporate sustainability" and even more specifically, the communication on sustainability

efforts are sometimes named "corporate sustainability communication"(CSC)(Signitzer & Prexl, 2007, p.2). Wheeler & Elkington (2001) even add that communicating the "triple bottom line" (economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice) will become an ever more important aspect of corporate responsibility (p.1). However, Laufer (2003) argues that reporting on a company's sustainability efforts can easily be seen as "green washing". In other words, a company then reports on efforts that in practice do not exist. When a company is accused of "green washing", accusations are often made by environmental and social activists, which will damage the company's reputation (Laufer, 2003). Mohr et al. (1998) even state that "green" marketing claims are always received by consumers with some degree of skepticism (p.30).

But there also are companies that genuinely try to integrate sustainability into their daily business practices. These companies too, want to communicate their sustainability efforts without being accused of "green washing" since they want to build up an image based on their sustainability efforts. This corporate image and the information regarding the brand or company is of great influence on the consumers' perception of the company. As Tarnovskaya et al. (2008) point out, corporate branding has as a goal "to communicate corporate brand values"(p.942). Corporate brands are believed to influence consumers' perceptions and behavior and even "channel consumer perceptions"(Ibid., 2008, p.945). In addition Tarnovskaya et al. (2008) state that "relationships with all external stakeholders including investors, media and local communities are important as they contribute to the reputation and perception of the brand" (p.945). Regarding these relationships, Wheeler & Elkington (2001) argue that a dialogue on corporate environmental and social responsibility between company and stakeholder, will establish stakeholder (inter alia, consumer) respect.

It is believed by Wheeler & Elkington (2001) that there will be a shift towards more web-based communications in communicating sustainability efforts by companies. The authors argue that the communication on these sustainability efforts should change on two points. Firstly, the frequency and format of information provision should change and secondly the assurance of the integrity of information should be improved (Ibid., 2001, p.2). However, this is believed to be improved through the shift to more web-based communication and will lead to more effective information provision regarding corporate sustainability. In the future customers will search for information on companies, products or services, but these customers expect this information to also contain data on the efficacy and ethics of what they are considering to buy (Wheeler & Elkington, 2001).

Signitzer & Prexl (2007) point out that corporate sustainability communication (CSC) should not be seen as something additional for a company to conduct, but it should be integrated in existing program areas (p.5). Also stated by Signitzer & Prexl (2007) is that the current CSC is derived from the corporate social reports and the environmental communication programs in the 1970's and 1980's. Environmental disasters in the 1970's and 1980's caused a reaction by companies which responded with a wave of environmental communication programs (Ibid., 2007). The "social reports" published in the 1970's , aimed at presenting the socially responsible behavior of the company, generally lacked honesty and transparency and were used for advertising purposes (Ibid., 2007). Thus, an early form of "green wash" could already be identified. Not surprisingly, at the end of the 1970's no social reports were published anymore (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007). However, corporate

sustainability and sustainability communications can contribute to economic success and a more sustainable future (Ibid., 2007, p.5). The authors identify several motives for companies to communicate their sustainability efforts. These motives are labeled: "business case", "marketing case" and "public case" (Ibid., 2007). The business case motive for sustainability communication relates to how CSC can contribute to achieving the overall sustainability management goals (Ibid., 2007). The "marketing case" includes how CSC can contribute to achieving marketing goals such as enhancing sales of sustainable products (Ibid., 2007). Lastly the "public case" can be described as how CSC can contribute to the general communication regarding sustainable development in a society and how it can support societies in striving for sustainable development (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007, p.6). Those who communicate corporate sustainability in the "public case" are said to serve a "democratic function" since they provide the society with information on sustainability issues, therefore this is also known as "communication for development" (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007, p.10). Regardless of what motive a company has to communicate its' corporate sustainability, CSC is often used complementary to other communication programs and herein customers are seen as the most important stakeholders (Ibid., 2007).

Corporate sustainability communication is particularly interesting for big international companies since these use more human, financial and natural resources, since they have a higher environmental impact. Therefore they can also influence more people and they are also continuously observed by the global civil society (Ibid., 2007, p10). With the new information technologies, such as internet, information on for example corporate misconduct is easily spread all over the world (Ibid., 2007). On the other hand, as just mentioned, big international companies often have more financial means to actively conduct CSC, this is however not the only determining factor of the success of CSC (Ibid., 2007). Signitzer & Prexl (2007) argue that the country, in which CSC is to be conducted, is of great influence on the level of success. This is because the political system, economic development and level of activism in a country are also found to be of influence on CSC (Ibid., 2007, p.10). First world countries are argued to be most appropriate for CSC, since a liberal market system leaves room for companies to take over tasks that were previously government tasks (Ibid., 2007, p.11). However, the authors question whether big international companies who have their headquarters in a country with a liberal or social market system will ensure that CSC is also undertaken in developing countries (Ibid., 2007, p.11). Although it seems logic, that companies are more likely to conduct CSC in countries where the environment and social justice are highly valued (Ibid., 2007). Additionally, the societal culture of a country, and its inherent values, also influence the likelihood of success of CSC (Ibid., 2007). For example people in a very nationalistic country will try to buy only products of producers that are originally from that country, thus international organizations would perform badly.

More in general, Signitzer & Prexl (2007) highlight the need for clear professional communication on sustainability for four reasons. The first reason is that the general public still does not really understand sustainable development and corporate sustainability (Ibid., 2007, p.12). Secondly, social, environmental and financial problems, all at the heart of sustainability issues, are often not directly visible which can lead to the fact that problems are not perceived and understood (Ibid., 2007). Thirdly, CSC needs clarity and professionalism since there are differing and sometimes even opposing interests among

different stakeholders, such as the short term interest of financial groups and the long term investments demanded by NGOs and activist groups (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007, p.13). Lastly in addition, the complexities of the problems which are at the heart of sustainable development challenge complicate CSC even further.

Likewise, but also more generally, Gray & Balmer (1998) argue that corporate communication is important in creating the corporate image. The corporate image is defined as "the mental picture of the company held by its audiences", which can be argued to be the perception of consumers (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p.696) and related corporate reputation is explained as a "value judgment of the company's attributes"(Gray & Balmer, 1998, p.697). Both these elements are managed for two reasons, a company wants to create the "intended image" in the minds of important stakeholders and a company wants to create a good reputation in the minds of important stakeholders (Ibid., 1998, p.696). The authors argue that an image can be created by means of an image-building campaign, which consists of a "formal communication system" (Ibid., 1998, p.696). One group of important stakeholders are customers. Therefore, it is highlighted in the research that if customers develop a negative perception of the company this can be noticed through a decline in sales (Ibid., 1998, p.697). However, different groups of stakeholders have different perceptions of the company since they are interested in different aspects of the company (Ibid., 1998), as previously explained by Signitzer & Prexl (2007). When looking at customers, it is found that these are most interested in "**price, quality, reliability** of the company's products and services and, increasingly, the organization's **social and ethical policies**" (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p. 698/699). Here a growing interest in the social and ethical behaviour of companies by consumers can be noticed. Since this article is written in 1998 this shows the growing demand for CSR policies at the time. The corporate communication is argued to be the link between the corporate identity (culture and philosophy) and the corporate image and reputation (Ibid., 1998, p.699). At the same time the corporate communication comprises all communication from a company to its stakeholders. After which these stakeholders "through secondary and tertiary interpersonal communication may further influence the company's image and reputation" (Ibid., 1998, p.699). Gray & Balmer (1998) note that feedback on the corporate identity is of great importance to those who manage it. Knowing about the perceptions of stakeholders can help managers to make more informed decisions.

As previously indicated when addressing green washing, it appears that green marketing claims are often received with skepticism. This could be due to the "distrust for advertising in general" (Mohr et al., 1998, p.31). In addition, it can be read that: "less than a quarter of the TV advertisements are perceived to be honest and credible" (Ibid., 1998, p.31). This is because, often companies want to display their sustainability efforts or sustainable products through green marketing but this skepticism is something that should be kept in mind. Though, no distinction is made between the types of companies that exist and the ways in which they advertise their efforts to become more sustainable. However, the authors find that if consumers gain knowledge in support of the environmental claims made in the advertisements that it can reduce skepticism, and the other way around, skepticism could be enhanced through an increase in knowledge among consumers which can be contradictory to the environmental claims made in the advertisements (Ibid., 1998, p.48). In addition, it is

argued that "persons with moderate levels of knowledge rely more on marketer-provided information than persons with either low or high levels of knowledge"(Ibid., 1998, p.48).

Fombrun & Shanley (1990) write that stakeholders acknowledge a certain reputation to a company based on information from several sources such as the company itself and media. They add that, because of informational asymmetry different publics will judge the company differently (Ibid., 1990). Also the intensity of media attention for certain aspects of a company is very steering in how it is perceived, thus in what its' reputation will be (Ibid., 1990). "Reputation building is a view of advertising as a source of product and imaging cues designed to influence the perceptions of external publics" (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990, p.241). Therefore, reputation is closely linked to the consumers' perception and is strongly influenced by information, either information by the company itself or by other sources such as the media (Ibid., 1990). Hence, the media also (partially) determines how the reputation of a company will be judged (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990, p.252).

Hartmann et al. (2005) show that the role of communication and information provision is crucial in shaping consumer perceptions. In order to create the desired consumer perception of a green brand, green brand positioning requires active and effective communication of the green brand attributes (Ibid., 2005). The authors advice communication campaign managers to "deliver emotional benefits through the brand at the same time making sure that target groups perceive real environmental benefits" (Ibid., 2005, p. 21). In addition they state that information on environmentally sound product attributes should be briefly presented and emotional effects should be created through the use of nice imagery of nature (Ibid., 2005). According to the authors, association with this pleasant imagery is what a green brand strategy should be aiming for (Ibid., 2005).

More in general Keller & Lehmann (2006) write about marketers' efforts in brand building, thus not focused on green branding. However, there are elements mentioned by the authors that appear to be relevant for any type of branding (Ibid., 2006). A distinction is made between a part of brand building that is company controlled and a part of brand building which is external (Ibid., 2006). Regarding the part that is company controlled Keller & Lehmann (2006) argue that brands offer reduction of **risk**, since customers know what **quality** to expect. Therefore these elements (risk and quality) are assumed to be of influence in the creation of consumer perceptions. In the part which is company controlled the authors discuss that brand building is conducted through alternative ways of marketing (Ibid., 2006). However the non-company controlled ways of brand building and brand evaluation such as word of mouth interpersonal communication are not yet compared to those marketing activities that are company controlled (Ibid., 2006). This distinction and subsequently comparison is also relevant for researching green branding effectiveness and explaining the perceived sustainability of a brand.

3. Methodology

In this chapter the way in which the research is conducted is described. First the research strategy will be discussed and the phases in which the research is divided will be clarified. Then the research population, data collection and types of analysis will be illustrated. Lastly the operationalization and the conceptual model which are the result of the literature review will be explained.

3.1 Research strategy

For this research there are multiple research strategies employed. Since a single company is researched on consumer perception in terms of sustainability and the way of communicating this sustainability, it can be argued that this is an in-depth case study of a single company. This is emphasized since especially the first phase of the research consists of extensive literature study, this can be seen in figure 1(research framework, p.13). Thus, this can be said to qualify as qualitative research because it concerns a single case (one company on a country level). On the other hand, to figure out, what is underlying the consumers' perception of IKEA as a company that strives for sustainable ways of working and what the influence of various types of communication about these sustainability efforts is on the consumers' perception, a content analysis will be performed and a large-scale survey will be held. This empirical part of the research provides the research with a quantitative side where a large number of surveys (824) will be held in order to achieve statistical value (representative sample). The use of a survey research strategy increases the breadth of the research, since a survey is normally held among many respondents. It is believed that this is a good addition to the case study approach of this research. Both the in-depth case study strategy and the broad survey research strategy contribute to enhancing the validity of the research. It should be noted that this research can function as an example for IKEA in multiple countries, although this research focuses on IKEA in the Netherlands. A similar approach could be taken when executing this research in other countries where IKEA is located, or even in a more generalized form it could be applied to other companies in other industries. In phase 3 an extensive survey among consumers will thus be held to clarify underlying reasons of the current consumers' perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability and what the influence of various types of communication about these sustainability efforts is on consumers' perception.

3.2 Phases of the research

In the first phase literature study is needed to answer the first sub question. The method used for the literature study is external desk research by which through an online scientific database (Scopus, Google Scholar) literature will be collected and studied.

The second phase of the research will exist of a content analysis in which various sources of messages about IKEA and their sustainability efforts will be analyzed. As can be seen from the research framework (fig.1, p.12) the communication by IKEA itself regarding their sustainability efforts, the communication about IKEA and their sustainability efforts in the general media (newspaper, internet, television) and the communication about IKEA and their sustainability efforts by NGOs will be analyzed in this content analysis. The

communication by NGOs will be analyzed by first picking five major NGOs in the Netherlands and subsequently checking the messages they spread about IKEA and their sustainability efforts on whether these messages have a positive or negative content. The messages in the general media will be analyzed in a similar fashion. For example the ten most read newspapers of the Netherlands are scanned up until three years back on messages about IKEA and their sustainability efforts.

In the third phase of the research the empirical research takes place. Data will be gathered by means of a survey. The questions of the survey will be made based on the results of phase 1 and 2 of this research. Thus it will be an extensive survey which will measure the influence of communication on the perception of customers and the influence of the other factors (determinants) on the perception of customers of IKEA. These other factors are a result of the literature study. In order to find what factors outweigh others and what types of communication/messages are influential on the process of perception formation, the survey will be designed using a Likert scale answer model where appropriate. The Likert scale answer model is a commonly used answer model in perception research (Siegel & Kaemmerer, 1978) since it offers a way of defining (scaling) importance of certain items. The results of the survey will then be processed with a statistical analysis, using SPSS. The statistical analysis used to analyze the results of the survey will be factor analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression. With multiple regression it can be found what factors or what type of communication can explain the consumers' perception of IKEA as a company that strives for sustainability. Additionally by using multiple regression, the strength of relations between determining factors for perception and types of communication can be distinguished and from this the most effective ways to influence the perception of consumers regarding IKEA and sustainability can be found.

The fourth and last phase of the research is merging all the results of the different analyses which should result in practical recommendations for the IKEA management with which they can more effectively influence the consumers' perception of IKEA as a company that strives for sustainability.

3.3 Research population
The research population of this research consists of Dutch consumers. The Dutch consumers will be approached to take a survey to test the hypotheses generated later on in this methodology chapter. These Dutch consumers are approached by email via an external research agency. This external agency is called "Panel Inzicht", Panel Inzicht will script and host the developed survey and will provide the results in a .sav type of file, which ensures compatibility with the statistical analysis program SPSS. The respondents, or the "panel", are selected to be a representative sample of the Dutch population. The IKEA organization will not get the contact details of these respondents, since this is the service that Panel Inzicht sells. A distinction within this group of respondents will be made by asking the consumers if they have ever bought anything at IKEA(customer) or if they are an IKEA FAMILY member (involved customer) or if they know about IKEA but have never been or bought at an IKEA store. The external respondent's panel will exist of 824 people and is

financed by IKEA since the wish for this research comes forth out of the Brand Capital research. The Brand Capital research also concerns consumers rather than customers. Thus in order to be comparable to the Brand Capital research it is desirable to use a consumer respondents base rather than a customer respondents base.

3.4 Data collection

In the sequence of the phases several different types of data collection can be distinguished. In the first phase the way in which data is collected is by means of an extensive literature study. For this literature study several scientific search engines were consulted: Scopus and Google Scholar. Literature was sought using the following search terms: consumer perception sustainability, corporate sustainability, sustainability communications and corporate image. The second phase is a content analysis in which data is gathered by means of contact with the marketers of IKEA the Netherlands and by scanning databases of major Dutch newspapers, the archive of the TV news broadcasts for the last three years and by checking the first hundred hits on google.nl while using the search terms "IKEA" and "duuzaamheid"(sustainability). Utrecht University has access to the LexisNexis database in which all newspaper articles are archived, this is used for the collection of data needed for this content analysis. Also the messages spread by NGO's concerning IKEA and sustainability will be analyzed to make sure that a holistic overview can be presented. In the third phase, the empirical part of the research, data is collected by means of a survey which is compiled with the results of phases 1 and 2. The questions posed in this questionnaire should be mostly closed and straightforward questions that should be answered using a Likert-scale answer model most of the times. The questionnaire that was digitally sent to 824 (initially 750 with a 10% oversampling) consumers can be found in appendix III. The data was then analyzed with SPSS using factor analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression tests to discover where a certain consumer' perception originates from. The result of the data collection shows us that not all questions have 824 answers since it was not mandatory to answer all questions. Due to the sample size even questions which have been answered by half of the respondents have great statistical validity. From the composition of the research population (section 5.1) we can see that there is a representative research population for the Dutch population in general.

3.5 Type of Analysis

Two types of analysis are applied in this research. In the second phase of the research content analysis is used to get an overview of the relevant messages spread by either IKEA itself, the general media or NGO's concerning IKEA and its sustainability efforts. This will be done by coding the messages based on what aspect of sustainability they address and if the tone of the messages is negative, neutral or positive. The "attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications" can be explained by analysing what is the true content of these communications in relation to IKEA and their sustainability efforts (Colorado State University, 2013). Therefore this is useful input for the survey which will be sent to "consumers". But before sending the questionnaire to the real group of respondents (consumers) the questionnaire will be pre-tested among a small group of colleagues at IKEA Delft in order to check if the questions can be interpreted in only one way, thus if the questions are clear and to see how much time it takes to fill in the questionnaire. In the third

phase statistical analysis is applied, to process the results of the survey. The results of this survey are subsequently analyzed by means of factor analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression to see what factors explain the perception that customers have of IKEA and their sustainability efforts. The gained insights should eventually lead to being able to influence the customers' perception of IKEA and their sustainability efforts.

3.6 Operationalization.

From the literature review elements can be identified that are influential in the process of creating a certain brand image. In order to determine which ones have a greater explanatory share in explaining brand image, it is necessary to measure these elements. Therefore, these elements need to be operationalized, in other words, need to be described in measurable terms.

In the literature review these explanatory elements can be recognized since these are marked bold. However, maybe not all elements that appeared to be relevant in the literature study will be relevant in measuring what is underlying a certain brand image of IKEA. In this operationalization those elements that are relevant are discussed and it will be argued why other elements appear less relevant after all or in some cases elements are merged in order to prevent that the same element is measured twice. Also the elements that are found in the literature study are, whenever possible, grouped in order to create explanatory categories of elements. This grouping of the relevant elements is schematically presented in the operationalization table in appendix I. Furthermore, to approach the causal mechanism in this research a model will be developed based on these elements.

Firstly several categories of both dependent and independent variables are established. The independent categories, which are assumed to be explanatory for the dependent categories, are: personal characteristics, worldviews, the consumer definition of sustainability, sources of information, the perceived features of products and services and lastly the perceived features of the company (organization). Subsequently, the dependent categories are: brand image/perception and the image of IKEA's sustainability activities. Socio-demographic factors and loyalty are controlled for as intermediating variables.

The first independent category is **personal characteristics** which can be understood to be personal opinions, in other words which are inherent to the individual. The choice was made to approach these elements in a very general way, thus not yet specified on IKEA. Although some elements are a little bit more specific in the sense that they address sustainability issues. Therefore these are named sustainability related elements in the operationalization table which can be found in appendix I. The first element of the category personal characteristics is the "degree of (environmental) confidence". According to McDonald & Oates, (2006) this degree of confidence is "how sure the consumer is that the product addresses a genuine issue and that it represents an environmental benefit" (p.159). It can be argued that this is strongly related to trust and honesty. However it is more specific than trust and honesty since it focuses on environmental benefit. Therefore the general elements "honesty" (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.97) and "trust" (Keller & Lehmann, 2006, p.740; Rindell et al, 2010) will be merged into one element under the common name: trust. But the element of "degree of confidence" (McDonald & Oates, 2006,

p.159) will be addressed solely from the other two elements, since it is regarded to be a sustainability related element. The "degree of compromise" is an element that belongs to an individual's characteristics and is not straight forward in its definition, therefore it is explained by McDonald & Oates, (2006) as: "having to pay more, or travel further in order to purchase a green product" (p.159). It can also mean that "purchasing a green equivalent might involve a sacrifice in the performance of the product" (McDonald & Oates, 2006, p.159). This is identical to what is stated in the research by Hartmann et al., (2005):"perceived trade-off between functional performance of the brand and its environmental impact". Thus it seems logical to merge the elements of "degree of compromise" (McDonald & Oates, 2006) and "perceived trade-off" (Hartmann et al., 2005); these will be addressed under the common name of "degree of compromise". It can be argued that this element is also a bit more specific, since it addresses the willingness of people to put more effort into buying environmental sound products.

The "previous experience" that people have with a company is argued to be influential in the process of constructing a new perception by customers (Cherian & Jacob, 2012, p. 119; Rindell et al., 2010, p.423). The "previous experience" can thus be argued to be a real general element in understanding consumer perception of a brand. In the literature "customer benefit" is another element that might explain the customer perception. By "customer benefit" Hartmann et al (2005) mean that for example:"the fact that the reduction of a product's environmental impact generally does not deliver individual benefits to its buyer" (p.11). This personal characteristic is also specified on sustainability issues since it reflects doing something for the greater good. It can be argued that every individual will react differently to this which can be an explanation for a certain perception. Lastly, in the category of personal characteristics we find the element "feelings associated with the brand" (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.12). The author explains this element by stating that: "A brand can be associated with emotional contents through conditioning processes in consequence of exposure to emotional brand advertising" (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.12). Again, this can differ among individuals and can therefore be regarded as a personal characteristic. However, measuring the feelings associated with a brand is a research in itself since it is very complicated to identify feelings. Therefore the choice has been made to exclude the element "feelings associated with a brand" in this research. These "personal characteristics" are operationalized by means of presenting theorems regarding the above mentioned elements, to which respondents of the survey can answer by choosing an option from a multi-item Likert-scale answer model.

The second independent category is **worldviews**. People hold worldviews and these can be used to explain a certain consumer perception regarding IKEA and their sustainability efforts. In marketing research often consumers segments are used to identify target groups but these segments are largely constructed from socio-demographic factors. Since this research is done from a sustainable development perspective it is more interesting to identify world views instead of consumer segments because these worldviews offer a more in-depth explanation on how people think about developments and sustainability and if desirable, how this should be achieved. The Dutch Environmental Planning and Assessment Agency (2004), also known as the "Milieu en Natuur plan bureau"(MNP), developed a model for worldviews together with the National Institute for Public Health and

Environment (Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu [RIVM]), this is strongly linked to the value orientation of a person. This model was developed in order to research the Dutch society and the views towards sustainable development (MNP & RIVM, 2004). The model is based on how the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) described societal developments, on the one hand a vertical axis that puts globalization opposite to regionalization and the horizontal axis that puts efficiency opposite to solidarity (or sometimes equity) (Ibid., 2004). From this, four worldviews have been developed: A1-"the performance society", A2-"the private, secure and liveable society", B1-"the international and national common good" and lastly B2-"a society with a sense of community" (MNP & RIVM, 2004, p.47). These worldviews have been identified along two axes. One of these axes is the horizontal one, which sets out efficiency against solidarity as being opposites. In the light of sustainable development it can be argued that the discussion is mostly on how development should take place. Should development take place in an efficient way or in an equitable (solidary) way, is the question that is underlying this axis. The other axis, the vertical one, concerns on what scale these developments should take place. On one side as the far "extreme" option we find regionalization whereas on the other side the "extreme" option of globalization is suggested. The MNP (2006) wrote a report on value orientations and worldviews in the Netherlands. In this report the MNP provide some characteristic descriptions on several subjects, for the four different worldviews. These descriptions on four subjects are analyzed and the subjects of government and economy are operationalized along the vertical axis (globalization vs. regionalization). The subjects of technology and ecology are operationalized along the horizontal axis (efficiency vs. equity/solidarity).
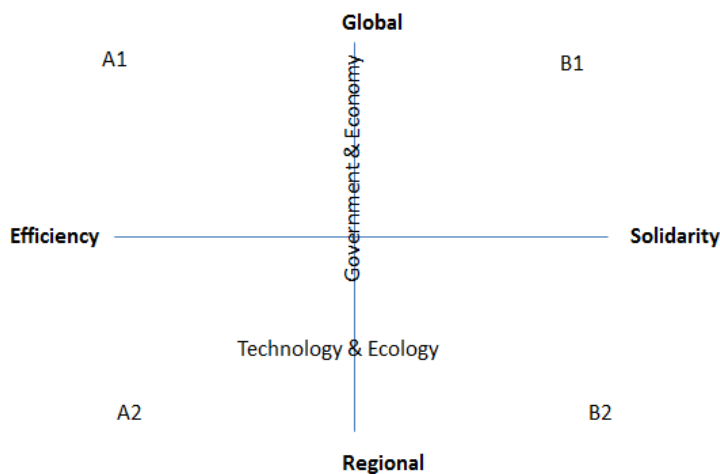
Figure 2.Subjects along axes to get indication of preferred worldview

By providing two subjects on each axis it becomes possible to quickly indicate which worldview is preferred by a respondent of the questionnaire. On each subject two extreme choices are presented and the respondent is to choose which extreme fits him or her best. In the questionnaire there will thus be 4 sets of choices, each set representing the opinions on one subject. The choices are posed in the form of two opposing theorems, these theorems can be found in the operationalization table in appendix I under "worldview". The theorems on the subject of government are based on the worldview descriptions regarding this subject

on pages 78 to 80 of the report "Waardenoriëntaties, wereldbeelden en maatschappelijke vraagstukken" by the MNP (MNP, 2006). For the subject of technology the same report was used but now the descriptions of the worldview regarding technology provide some statements that were used for operationalization, these are quoted from pages 81 to 83 (MNP, 2006). On the subject of economy, worldview-specific quotes are taken from pages 84 and 85 and for the subject of ecology quotes were found on pages 87 and 88 (MNP, 2006). A descriptive graph on the four different worldviews in Dutch can be found in the appendix II. There are thus four types of worldviews which can be characterized on the former mentioned axes. By using worldviews as independent explanatory category in this research, it is possible to research if worldviews can explain the current consumer perception of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable.

Worldviews also contain information on what people consider morally right (Brunk, 2010) and risky (Keller & Lehmann, 2006)**,** therefore these elements will not be specifically addressed, although they came forward in the literature study. These elements are inherent to the worldview that people prefer and therefore can, if necessary, be deduced from the worldview of the respondent.

Consumer definition of sustainability

Another possible explanation for the current consumer perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability can be sought in what is understood to be sustainability by consumers. Thus, if this definition of sustainability by consumers differs from the definition of sustainability by IKEA this might be a (partial) explanation for the current perception.

As it is clear that there is no consensus on the definition of sustainability or sustainable development it is necessary to find a way to define sustainability since it is desired to know how certain people see sustainability. As a starting point the lecture "The concept of Sustainable Development: making sense of 65000 'perceptions'" by Dr.W.J.V. Vermeulen (Utrecht University) was chosen since it defines sustainability along four axes. The first axis defines whether a person relates more to strong or weak sustainability. Whereas strong sustainability is explained by Vermeulen (2012) by using quotes such as: sustainable development "*includes that human-made capital cannot replace a multitude of processes vital to human existence*" (Rees, 1998, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012) and that sustainable development "*requires a substantial reduction in living standards of the rich*" (Hopwood et al., 2005 as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). To indicate the difference, and give an idea of what weak sustainability entails, Vermeulen (2012) uses the following quotes: sustainable development "… includes *no conflict between the growth of the global market and environmental stability*" (WBCSD, 1998, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012) and sustainable development "*includes that natural and manufactured capital are in principle interchangeable, with new technology mankind is able to fill human produced gaps in the natural world*" (Solow, 1974, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). Thus in order to operationalize the axis of strong vs. weak sustainability, these quotes is rewritten so they are easily understood. Furthermore for each "end" of the axis a quote is presented so that respondents can indicate to what end they relate more. The answer model will be a compulsory choice answer model. The second axis described by Vermeulen (2012) in his lecture, is about the focus in sustainable development and whether this focus is more on people or more on nature. In order to unveil the preferred focus Vermeulen (2012) uses

quotes that have a strong preference in either one of the directions. If people relate more to sustainable development with a focus on nature they are assumed to agree to the following quotes proposed by Vermeulen (2012): sustainable development "means that non-human species, natural systems and biodiversity have rights and values in themselves" (Naess, 1989 as cited in Vermeulen, 2012) and sustainable development "includes *interspecies equity*: the *importance of biodiversity*" (Haughton, 1999, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). On the other side of this axis we find the focus on people within sustainable development, in the lecture by Vermeulen (2012) this is indicated by the following quotes: sustainable development "includes social justice: *intra-generational equity*: the distribution of resources and justice between present nations or social groups" (Haughton, 1999, p. 236, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012) and sustainable development "also includes *procedural equity*: *people treated openly and fairly*" (Haughton, 1999, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). This axis is operationalized in a similar manner as the previous one.

The third axis used for the operationalization of sustainability is on where the main challenge in sustainable development lies. The opposite sides here are on the one hand that the main challenge for sustainable development lies in the south and on the other hand that the main challenge for sustainable development is everywhere. The "south" is used as a term for developing countries. A quote argued by Vermeulen (2012) that fits to the idea of the main challenge of sustainable development being in the south is: sustainable development "should recognize the *great differences in resource problems* that exist between *different countries and communities* instead of problematizing the sustainability of the global ecosystem as a whole. Alternatively, the *Third World needs to articulate alternative productive strategies* that would entail forms of environmental democracy, economic decentralization, and cultural and political pluralism"(Escobar, 1995. p. 21, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). Whereas opposite to this stance on where the main challenge in sustainable development lies Vermeulen (2012) poses this quote: sustainable development "is a means to eradicate poverty, meet human needs and ensure that *all get a fair share of resources*. Social justice today and in the future is a crucial component of the concept of sustainable development" (Hopwood et al., 2005, p.39, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012).

The fourth and last axis in the lecture by Vermeulen (2012) is whether sustainable development should entail keeping the status quo or if it should be really transformative. Since Vermeulen (2012) provides many quotes on this axis only two are presented here. The first quote by Vermeulen (2012) linked to preserving the status quo in sustainable development is: sustainable development "*requires that there is sufficient money to be made in it for businesses. Partnerships* between governments, businesses, environmentalists and scientists *could enable technology development*" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 142; Alier, 2003; Hopwood et al., 2005 p.40, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). On the contrary a fitting quote to a rather transformative approach to sustainable development is according to Vermeulen (2012): sustainable development "requires a *transformation of society and/or human relations* with the environment to avoid *a mounting crisis and even a possible future collapse*. Many of the *problems are located within the very economic and power structures of society* which are not primarily concerned with human well-being or environmental sustainability" (Hopwood et al., 2005, p. 45, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012).

In addition Vermeulen (2012) argues that future generations are not discussed in this model of axes. Therefore he adds that in the center of this model. Vermeulen (2012) presents some last quotes on future generations: sustainable development "includes the concept of 'social well-being': not only the well-being of those who are alive today, but also of those who will be here in the *future*" (Dasgupta, 2010, p.7, as cited in Vermeulen, 2012). This will also be taken into account when researching an individuals' idea on sustainability. In a same way as the previous axes, although this is not really an axis with two sides, this will be operationalized by providing a quote to which people can respond on a scale from totally agree to totally disagree.

Figure.3.The axes of sustainable development schematically presented by Vermeulen (2012)

Sources of Information

As a result of the literature review it is found that information provision and communication are key elements in influencing perception. Therefore special attention is given to these elements by means of an internal (within IKEA) and external media content analysis (see chapter 4). Questions will be asked regarding which information channels reach the consumer. From the judgement of the tone of content of that specific medium conclusions can be drawn in order to explain certain perceptions.

Perceived features of products and services

From grouping the determinants of perception it became apparent that features of products and services are also influential during the construction of a perception of a company by consumers. This is expected to explain (a part) of the general brand image and the image of IKEA's sustainability efforts since, products and services are the tangible parts of a company, therefore these reflect in many ways what the company stands for. In this

category the elements that are found are: "price" (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p.698/699), "quality" (Dowling, 1986, p.113; Gray & Balmer, 1998,p.698/699; Keller & Lehmann, 2006, p.740), "modernity" (Dowling, 1986, p.113)**,** "expertise" (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.98)**,** "reliability" (Dowling, 1986, p.113; Gray & Balmer, 1998,p. 698/699; de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.98), sufficiency of labeling (Brunk, 2010, p.258) and "customer service" (Brunk, 2010, p.258). However it can be argued that the element "customer lock-in" (Brunk, 2010, p.258) is not relevant for the market in which IKEA operates. Normally furniture is combined with a lot of different other products of different brands. The element of "customer lock-in" would for example be relevant in a case were an electronic device does not work if it is not connected to another electronic device by a specific cable of that same brand. This obliges you to buy that specific cable of the brand, otherwise your product will not work.

Operationalization of the relevant elements is done through posing theorems on each of these elements, alternately positively or negatively formulated in order to keep the respondents' attention.

More in general **perceived features of the company** also offer possible explanations of the consumer perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability. This category reflects upon the organisation that operates on the company on a daily basis. An element within this category is the available environmental knowledge in the company (Hartmann et al., 2005, p.12) also the stability of the company (Rindell et al., 2010, p.276) is considered in this category. In addition, elements like intentionality (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.98) and corporate differentiation (Rindell et al., 2010, p.276) are also argued to be eventually influential in the process of perception construction by consumers. Benevolence is another element within this category which can be explained as " the belief that the partner is interested in the other partner's welfare, is willing to accept short-term mistakes, and will not undertake unexpected actions that can negatively affect the other partner" (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.97). Sound finances (Dowling, 1986, p.113) are too argued to be an important feature of the company when it comes to the construction of perception. Sound finances also include the element brought up by Brunk (2010); correct accounting practices. Also competent management (Dowling, 1986, p.113) and the way in which a company commits itself in a relationship with the consumer, in other words relationship commitment (de Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2003, p.98) are elements derived from literature which are expected to play a role in the construction of a consumer's perception of IKEA. The last element that is part of this category is a merged element from the sub-elements; "technological leadership" (Dowling, 1986, p.113), "develops many new products" (Dowling, 1986, p.113) and "spends money on research and development as investment in the future" (Dowling, 1986, p.113). These three sub-elements are thus merged into the element "innovative ability". Lastly Brunk (2010) adds that the way in which a company uses the power it possesses is crucial in shaping consumer' perceptions, in the model this is referred to as "use of power". An example of the misuse of power could be that competitors are put out of business as a result of the use of power of one company.

Operationalization of the relevant elements is done through posing theorems on each of these elements, alternately positively or negatively formulated in order to keep the respondents' attention.

On the other side of the model we will find the categories that need explanation, in other words the dependent variables. These dependent variables are determined to be "brand image" and "image of IKEAs' sustainability activities". These variables are believed to reflect the content of the current consumer perception of IKEA and their sustainability efforts. Furthermore, the correlation between the image of IKEA and their sustainability efforts and the general brand image is researched. Therefore it is assumed that the valuation of a specific branch (sustainability) of the total general brand image can never exceed the valuation of the brand in general as it is inherent to the general brand.

The first dependent category is thus **brand image**. This is a quite broad and general category but it includes how consumers experience a certain brand, and therefore create a certain perception. In marketing literature this is linked to, and expressed in terms of support. If there is a favourable brand perception among stakeholders, in this case specifically looking at customers (consumers) as a stakeholder group, the company would have steady or increasing sales. If the brand perception is more negative, sales will decline (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p.697). As discussed by McDonald & Oates, (2006) the perception is reflected through consumers purchasing actions, hence for the company this means it can be measured in sales numbers. However not all sales can be dedicated to a positive or negative brand image, therefore a more sophisticated measure is needed. Furthermore, in this research it is not possible to make measurements over time due to the limited time span of this research. Thus another measure for brand image should be used. In the book "Brand equity & advertising" by David Aaker and Alexander Biel (1993) a strong stance is taken on how brand image can be measured. However, they clearly define that brand image and brand equity are not the same. Brand image is defined as "a concept originated and owned by marketers and advertising specialists, the idea is that a brand has equity that exceeds its conventional asset value is a notion developed by financial people" (p.69). It must however be noted that in this research the approach is taken that people hold images of brands (Dowling, 1986). In the research by del Rio et al., (2001) it is stated that the communication of a certain brand image is aimed at making the target groups "link such a brand (and thus the products sold using its name) with a set of associations"(p.410). They add that brand associations are key in the formation and management of brand equity (Ibid., 2001, p.410). The proposed dimensions of the brand associations are roughly consistent with the elements and categories found in the literature review. Furthermore del Rio et al. (2001) propose to measure the influence of each these dimensions (associations) on the "consumers' willingness to pay a price premium for the brand, recommend it to others and buy brand extensions"(p.411). Brand image can, according to del Rio et al. (2001), be defined as: "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the cluster of associations that consumers connect to the brand name in memory."(p.411). But the authors argue that brand image drives brand equity, and brand equity can be measured. However, it must be noted that brand equity includes more than only those elements that drive brand image. Brand equity also concerns the so called "non-image factors contributing to brand equity", examples of these factors that Aaker & Biel (1993) give

are: market growth and margins (p.74). Thus it seems obvious to try to measure that part of brand equity that says something about IKEA and their brand image, hence, the other way around than proposed in the book. Aaker & Biel developed a model to show how brand equity relates to brand image, and where brand image consists of. The elements, where brand image consists of according to Aaker & Biel (1993), are roughly consistent with the elements found in the literature review of this research. In order to indicate where similarities with the elements found in the literature study, are recognized a green line is drawn in the figure of the multiple attributes by Aaker & Biel (1993). It also becomes clear that the image of competing brands is not included in this study since the main aim is find out what is underlying the current consumer perception of IKEA and their sustainability efforts. Other studies within IKEA such as the "consumer tracker" research give information on how the IKEA brand is valued in relation to other brands.
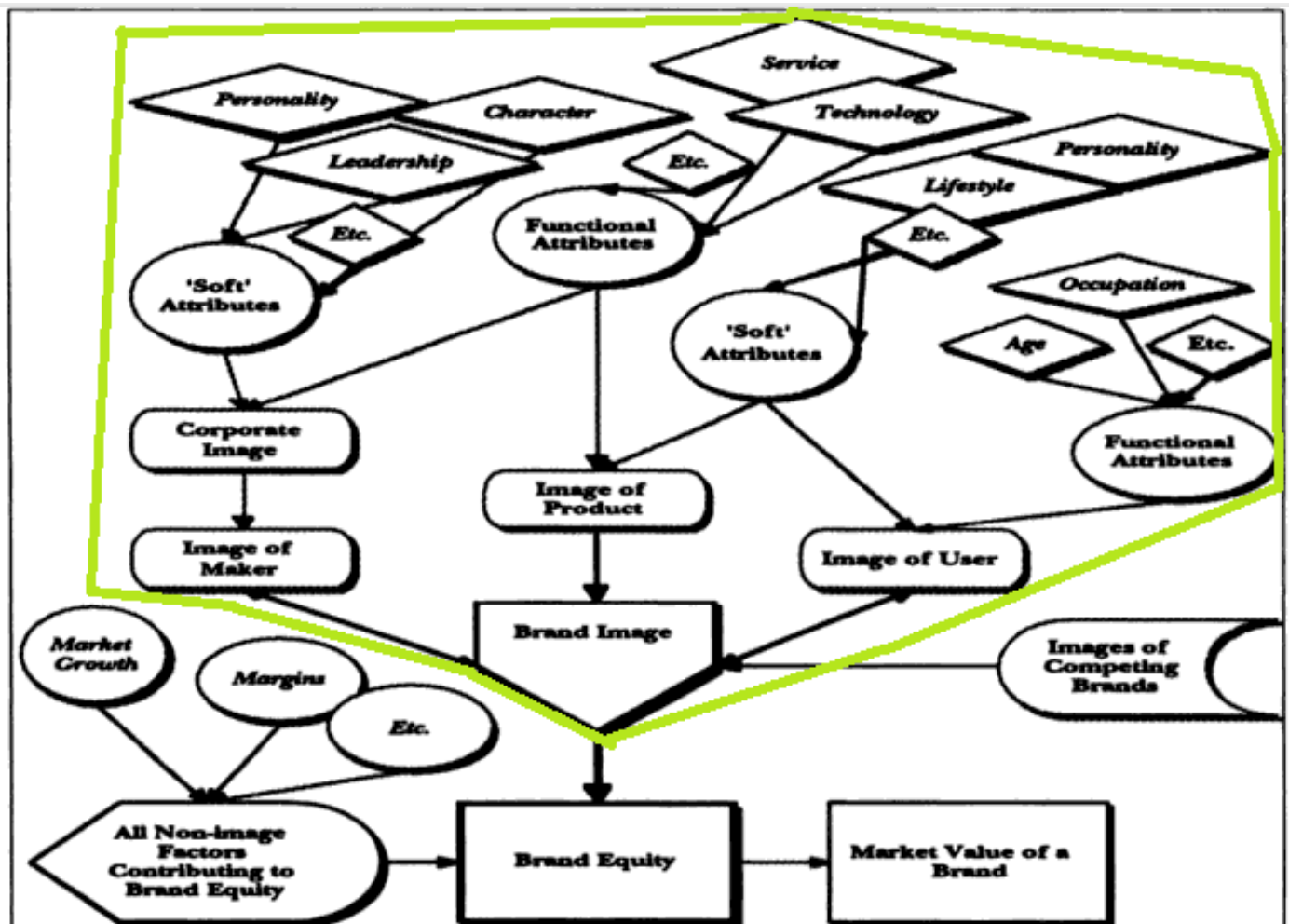
Figure 4. Model of how brand image drives brand equity (Aaker & Biel, 1993 p.74)

Furthermore, Biel (1993) argues that "it is useful to recognize that the equity of a brand is driven by brand image, a consumer (or customer) concept". Here it seems as if the authors mention brand image to be a concept that is held by consumers or customers. Some authors argue that it is not possible to measure brand image, but it is possible to identify what the

brand equity is. In order to do so David Aaker developed in 1996, some measures to get an idea of the brand equity of a certain brand. Thereby he notes that not all measures are applicable in all contexts and other new measures can be added (Ibid., 1996, p.104). Five categories with ten measures for brand equity are proposed, see table 1:

Table: 1. Measuring Brand Equity across products and market (Aaker, 1996, p.1)

Loyalty

Price Premium

- For a 17-ounce package of chocolate chip cookies, Nabisco is priced at $2.16—how much extra would you be willing to pay to obtain Pepperidge Farm instead of Nabisco? _____

- Brand Y would have to be _____ percent less than Brand X before I would switch brands.

- Trade-off questions such as: For a 16-ounce package of chocolate chip cookies, would you prefer Nabisco at $2.16 or Pepperidge Farm at $2.29?

Satisfaction/Loyalty (among those who have used the brand)

- I was—dissatisfied vs. satisfied vs. delighted—with the product or service during the my last use experience.

- I would buy the brand on the next opportunity.

- The brand is the—only vs. one of two vs. one of three vs. one of more than three brands—that I buy and use.

- I would recommend the product or service to others.

Perceived Quality/Leadership

Perceived Quality

In comparison to alternative brands, this brand

- has: high quality vs. average quality vs. inferior quality

- is: the best vs. one of the best vs. one of the worst vs. the worst

- has: consistent quality vs. inconsistent quality

Leadership

In comparison with alternative brands, this brand is

- the leading brand vs. one of the leading brands vs. not one of the leading brands

- growing in popularity

- innovative, first with advances in product or service

Associations/Differentiation

Perceived Value

- This brand provides good value for the money.

- There are reasons to buy this brand over competitors.

Personality

- This brand has a personality.

- This brand is interesting.

- I have a clear image of the type of person who would use the brand.

Organization

- This brand is made by an organization I would trust.

- I admire the brand X organization.

- The organization associated with this brand has credibility.

Differentiation

- This brand is different from competing brands.

- This brand is basically the same as competing brands.

Awareness

Brand Awareness

- Name the brands in this product class.

- Have you heard of this brand?

- I know what this brand stands for.

- I have an opinion about this brand.

Market Behavior

Market Share

- Market share based on market surveys of usage or syndicated data

Price and Distribution Indices

- Relative market price—the average price at which the brand was sold during the month divided by the average price at which all brands in the product class were sold

- The percentage of stores carrying the brand or

- The percentage of people who have access to it

Great similarities between the work of Aaker & Biel (1993), Aaker (1996), del Rio et al.,(2001) and the model proposed in this research make it possible to operationalize brand image in terms of the valuation of the IKEA brand (brand equity). Similarities are found regarding the explanatory independent categories and the "images" mentioned in the model (figure 4) proposed by Aaker & Biel (1993). If the findings on brand equity are linked to the conceptual model (figure 6) of this research it provides the following overview:
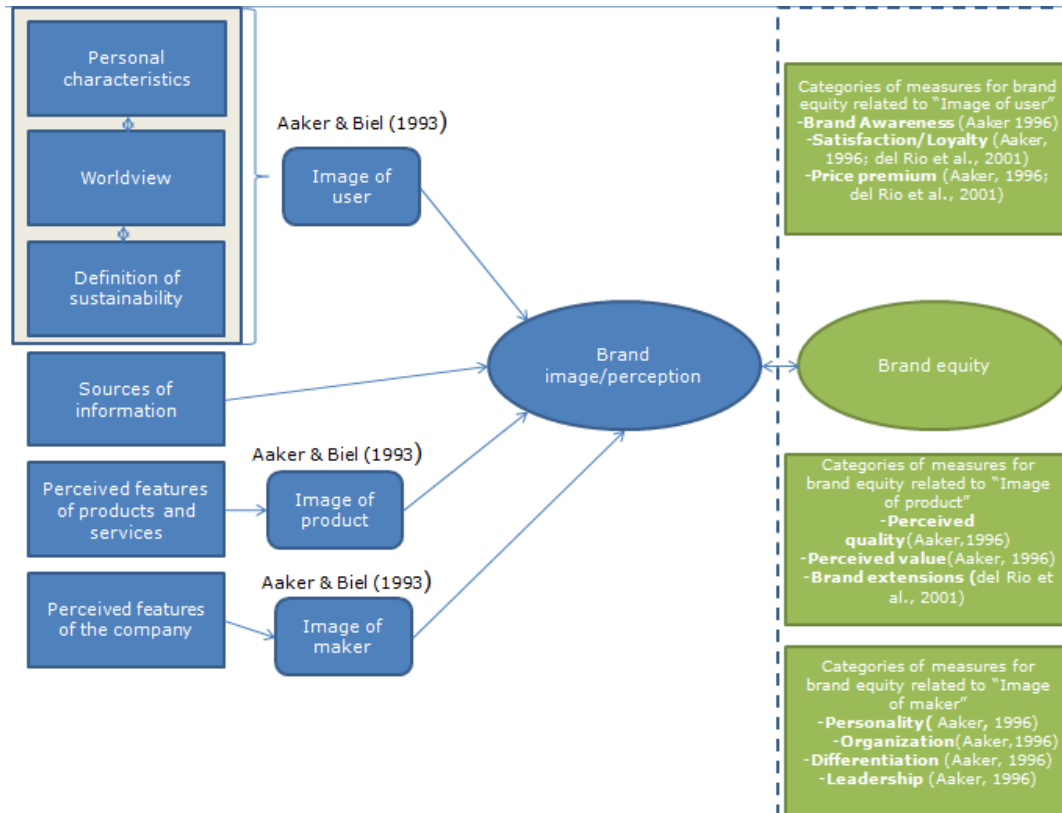
Figure 5 . The link between the existing conceptual model and operationalization of the dependent variable of brand image

With this as a starting point it is now possible to derive some core questions that can be used to measure the brand image part of brand equity of IKEA and subsequently to say something about the brand image of IKEA. From table 1 it is possible to exclude the category of "Market behavior" since this is not relevant for this research because IKEA is a brand and at the same time the organization, the store and the products. Therefore asking questions about the amount of stores carrying the brand seems unnecessary. Another theorem that seems less relevant in the context of this research is "there are reasons to buy this brand over competitors" since no further questions will be asked on what these reasons might be. These reasons should become apparent from the research and the suggested elements of brand image. Similarly, the theorems posed under the headings of "personality" and "awareness" in table 1 do not provide added value for this research. The theorems under "differentiation" have been merged since it is argued that both theorems actually measure the same thing. Furthermore, not all theorems proposed in table 1 are used for the operationalization of brand image in this research since these appeared to be less relevant. Also those theorems that are used have sometimes been rewritten in a way that is more

suitable for this research. However the table (table 1) proposed by Aaker (1996) is still regarded as the main source for the operationalization of brand image through relevant elements of brand equity as previously stated.

The second category that is dependent on the categories mentioned is **image of sustainability activities.** This category explains the more specific image of the brand "IKEA" when it comes to sustainability. For the consumer this is reflected through the activities IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable. Therefore attention should be paid to the valuation of these activities by consumers. The actions noted in the literature along with the actions already undertaken at IKEA on all aspects of sustainability will be tested on/for the value that the consumer assigns to these actions. The actions pointed out in literature that will be evaluated are; "makes products that conserve energy" (Dowling, 1986, p.113), "protects jobs of local workers" (Dowling, 1986, p.113), "cares about the community"(Dowling, 1986, p.113), "equal opportunity employer" (Dowling, 1986, p.113) and action reflecting "social responsibility"(Dowling, 1986, p.113; Gray & Balmer, 1998,p. 698/699). Since the term "social responsibility" is vague it is argued that action reflecting "social responsibility" could be the "investment in socially responsible projects", which is also an element noted in the literature study but is addressed later on in this section. Therefore the element of "social responsibility" will not be addressed as such and will be reflected through other elements found in the literature study. In addition the elements brought up by Brunk (2010) are formulated in a negative sense, therefore the elements are rewritten in a more neutral or positive way, for example: "treatment of suppliers" (Brunk, 2010, p.260), "outsourcing to other countries" (Brunk, 2010, p.259). However "having a preventative/pro-active approach"(Brunk, 2010, p.259) is argued to be an element that is reflected through many other elements mentioned in this section and therefore will not be addressed as such. The element "causing pollution"(Brunk,2010, p.259) is merged with "airline travel"(Brunk, 2010, p.259) since airline travel is an example of causing pollution therefore these fall under the same denominator of "causing pollution". The element of "prioritizing environmental issues" (Brunk, 2010, p.259) is rewritten as the element of "addressing environmental issues". This is done since the word prioritizing suggests that it should be prioritized over something else, but the author (Brunk, 2010) means to say that there is a necessity to address environmental issues. Furthermore the elements :"protection of animals"(Ibid., 2010, p.259), "fighting child labor" (Ibid., 2010, p.259), "prevention of exploitation of labor in overseas communities"(Ibid., 2010, p.259), "investments in socially responsible projects (Ibid., 2010, p.259), "prevention of discrimination among employees" (Ibid., 2010, p.259), "prevention of exploitation of natural resources without financial compensation"(Ibid., 2010, p.259), "not tolerating bribery"(Ibid., 2010, p.260), "prevention of dangerous working conditions" (Ibid., 2010, p.259), "preventing unusually long working hours" (Ibid., 2010, p.258) and lastly the "treatment of staff"(Ibid., 2010, p.258). However it is argued that the element "treatment of staff" is reflected through other elements such as the previously mentioned elements of "preventing unusually long working hours", "equal opportunity employer" and some other elements. Therefore this element ("treatment of staff") will not be addressed as a separate element.

More in general, "perceived difference" and "perceived effort" of activities are mentioned by McDonald et al (2006) as being important elements of a certain perception regarding sustainability (p.157). The difference that a certain activity makes and the effort to undertake this activity are argued to contribute to the image that consumers have of the efforts that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable.

Furthermore there are two elements mentioned that could have an intermediating effect on explaining brand image, the so called **intermediating variables** or control variables. These are the sociological and demographical factors and loyalty. Therefore these are also taken into account and controlled for. The socio-demographic factors that are controlled for are age, gender, income, living situation and education. Living situation is not one of the standard socio-demographic factors but is controlled for since this is relevant for the market in which IKEA operates. Loyalty is the relation that consumers have with IKEA, thus how often do they visit IKEA, do they buy furniture or other items at IKEA and are they maybe even IKEA-family member?

From all these categories with their corresponding elements it is now possible to construct a conceptual model.

3.6.1 Conceptual model

Figure 6. Simplified model for operationalization
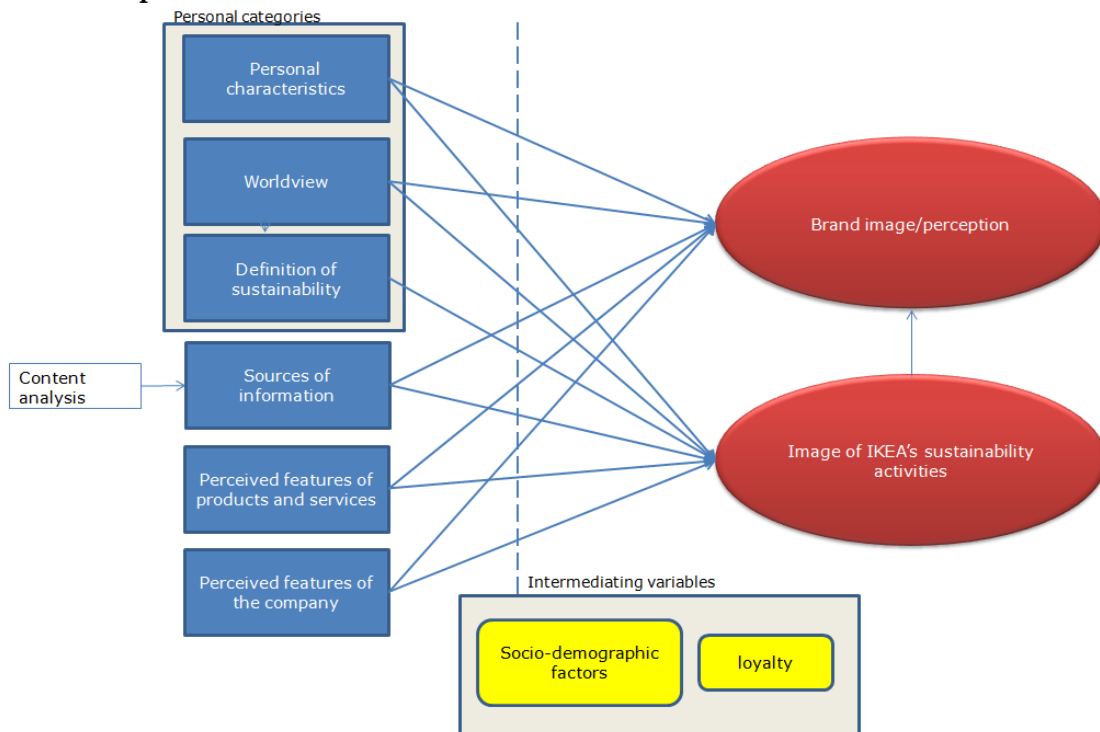
From this model it is now possible to say that an answer to the first research question: "What factors are at the root of a certain consumers' perception of a company in terms of sustainability?" has been given. However these factors or more specifically these clusters of factors now need to be tested by means of a survey in order to gain insight in their explanatory power.

3.7 Structure of the questionnaire

The structure of the questionnaire is argued to be strategic. In the first place the choice is made to start the questionnaire with questions on the socio-demographic data. This way the respondent did not immediately figure out that this questionnaire is about IKEA. After these first five questions, the Brand Capital questions that reflect how sustainable consumers think IKEA is are repeated in order to have a point of reference. At this time, the respondent can suspect that the whole questionnaire is about IKEA. However, as can be seen in the conceptual model, the first three independent categories (personal categories) and their associated variables are the first three sections of questions. These three are deliberately asked first since they have nothing to do with IKEA, but more with the attitude of the respondent. Thus, at this point only the three Brand Capital questions regarding IKEA have been asked. But, the next section is on the relation that the respondent has with IKEA, this is argued to reflect the loyalty. The two subsequent sections are on the dependent categories in the conceptual model; brand image and image of the activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable. These are positioned here since the general thought is to develop the questionnaire in such a way that it proceeds from general questions to more specific questions about IKEA and then about their activities to become more sustainable. After these two sections, the input of the content analysis is turned into questions in order to test the role of communication and information. Lastly two specific sections of questions, on the variables of the independent categories of perceived features of products and services and perceived features of the company, are posed. Finally one open question is asked about IKEA being the subject of conversation.

3.8 Editing of the categories

The variables that were measured using Likert-scales have been constructed into factor scores (scales) during factor analysis. In the conceptual model it can be seen that there are several other categories which are not measured using Likert-scales. In order to make sure that these can be taken into account while conducting the statistical analyses, a different approach is taken.

First the **worldview** category will be explained. In order to include this category in the further analysis some adjustments have to be made to the data. As we know, the vertical axis has at the bottom the "local orientation" and at the top the "global orientation", therefore we use the letters G and L to indicate to what end the respondent relates most. For the other axis which sets out efficiency against solidarity, the letters E and S are used. This results in 4 possible unique combinations, as there are scores on both axes; GE, LE, GS and LS. Respectively; GE is A1, LE is A2, GS is B1 and LS is B2. In order to create these four worldviews from the data, the following pattern of recoding has been followed. First a merged variable of questions regarding one axis is made, in this research 8&10 and 9 &11. The merged variables have values ranging from 0 to 2 where in the global-local axis 0 means a preference for local orientation and 2 means a strong preference for the global orientation. Subsequently a recode from the merged variable for questions 8 and 10 into a new variable has been executed, the name of this new variable is "Lokalisering" since with this recode the command is given to SPSS to change the value 0 into 1 and all other values into 0. This is done since originally in the merged variable of 8 and 10 the values ranged from 2 to 0 and

moreover the group that prefers local development is by far the largest. Therefore a variable that is called "lokalisering" has been made where the value 1 means in favor of local development and 0 means everything else so global development or in-between. The same steps have been followed for questions 9&11 and a new variable "solidariteit" was created. Now in order to arrive at the four worldviews, another recode is necessary. A recode into a new variable for example the GE (Global+Efficiency) group is created in SPSS by selecting "solidariteit" as the old value, the new name of this variable will be GE_group. Then at the bottom of this box there is an "IF" option, here the command for "lokalisering =0" (this means a preference for global developments) is given. Then values are changed in the following way: 0→1(if the respondent scored 0 on solidarity it means that he or she scored 1 on efficiency). Subsequently a recode into same variables is done where the command for system missing →0, has been given. Now the GE or the A1 group has been distinguished. This is also done for the other three worldviews. We now have four variables for worldviews, each of these represent one worldview. These have been created by means of recoding them into dummy variables meaning that there are only answers with values 1 or 0. The dummy variables can be regarded as ordinal variables for the correlation analysis, however in fact they are nominal. These can be correlated with the dependent factors.

For the **definition of sustainability** no aggregation was applied because the 4 axes along which the definition of sustainability is operationalized would make it extremely complicated to execute an aggregation. However in order to easily test the hypothesis some dummy variables had to be created in order to test the conformity with the IKEA definition of sustainability. The IKEA definition of sustainability will now be illustrated for every axis based on examples from the sustainability strategy. The first axis is strong vs. weak sustainability where weak sustainability includes the replacement of natural capital by human capital and growth through the market, whereas strong sustainability entails that natural capital cannot be replaced by human capital and that there should be a reduction of living standards of the rich. Weak sustainability can be recognized in the sustainability strategy of IKEA; "a better home for people with ordinary incomes" (IKEA, 2012c, p.5) and the message that IKEA wants to contribute to achieve a great quality of life indicate weak sustainability. Because IKEA even wants to expand and increase living standards and as they are a business they will do so through the market. The second axis is regarding a focus on nature or on nature and people. Clearly IKEA relates more to end where there are people involved as can be read in the sustainability strategy the vision of IKEA is "creating a better everyday life for the many people"(ibid, p.5). The third axis is on where the main challenge in sustainable development lies, in the South (third world countries) or everywhere. As IKEA stores are located everywhere around the globe their focus regarding sustainability is thus also everywhere. The last axis along which sustainability is defined is status quo vs. transformative, which has been illustrated with stating that status quo reflects that there should be the possibility for businesses to make money when developing sustainably. On the other end we find "transformative" which entails that more thorough changes within our society (economic and power) are needed for sustainable development. Since IKEA is a business they relate more to the status quo end of this axis. However, IKEA argues that a transformation is needed and that IKEA will "advocate for government policies that support

positive change in society" (ibid, p.8). As it now is clear at what ends of the axes IKEA is positioned, it is possible to test the relevant hypothesis (3).

Also for the aspects of the **content analysis** sometimes dummy variables had to be created in order to deal with missing values. It should however be noted that for the interpretation of these data and thus the correlation of these data with the dependent variables, knowledge about the tone of content of the different elements of the content analysis is necessary. In addition, for two of the general media a scale variable was created in order to make it possible to include it in the regression analysis. These media are newspapers and television. The scale variable for newspapers and television were constructed by means of calculating a net-value for these media. An example is given for the newspaper "de Telegraaf" by which 7 out of 8 messages are positive (see content analysis).The other message is negative thus then Telegraaf gets a value of 7-1 =6. For newspapers where there is a neutral message this will be taken into account as a 0 in the calculation of a net-value for that newspaper. In order to construct a scale for newspapers, all values for the newspapers are summed (since it is also possible for a respondent to read more than one newspaper). This is done in a similar fashion for television programs.

3.9 Hypotheses
From the conceptual model (fig.6), which is the result of the extensive literature study and operationalization of these results, some hypotheses can be drawn. These hypotheses will be confirmed or refuted by means of the outcome of the various statistical analyses. Almost every arrow in the conceptual model is translated into a hypothesis. Therefore if we consider the first category of personal characteristics it is believed that these play a big role in explaining brand image and more specifically the image of IKEA's sustainability image. Thus it is expected that:

H.1.a. A positive general attitude towards big international companies results in a more positive brand image of IKEA
H.1.b. A positive general attitude towards big international companies results in a more positive image of the sustainability activities of IKEA

The second category in the conceptual model is "Worldview. As can be read in the operationalization this is a multi-faceted item. Based on the two axes along which the worldview is defined the following hypotheses are drawn:

H.2.a. If a person relates more to the efficiency oriented worldviews, the more positive that person will be about the brand IKEA
H.2.b. If a person relates more to the equity oriented worldviews, the more positive that person will be about the sustainability activities of IKEA
H.2.c. If a person relates more to the globalization oriented worldviews, the more positive that person will be about the brand IKEA
H.2.d. If a person relates more to the regional oriented worldviews, the more positive that person will be about the sustainability activities of IKEA

Regarding the third category in the model, the definition of sustainability, it is hypothesized that:

H.3. The more a respondent's definition of sustainability matches that of IKEA, the more positive the image is that the respondent has of the sustainability activities of IKEA

From the literature study it can be noted that the first three categories should have the greatest explanatory power since it is written that those factors, that are the hardest to influence (the personal aspects), are expected to determine the consumer perception. Therefore an extra hypothesis regarding the aggregated effect of these three categories is drawn:

H.4. The better the score on the personal categories, the better the brand image of IKEA and the image of sustainability activities of IKEA

The literature argues that communication and information play a crucial role in explaining the consumers' perception of a company in terms of sustainability. Therefore it can be hypothesized that:

H.5.a. The more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the brand image
H.5.b. The more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the image of the sustainability activities of IKEA

For the category of "perceived features of products and services" the literature also poses that these are influential in determining a consumers' perception of a company. However it is argued that these features of products and services are not as influential as the categories included in the "personal categories".

H.6.a. The more positive a consumer is about the features of IKEA products and services, the more positive the brand image
H.6.b. The more positive a consumer is about the features of IKEA products and services, the more positive the sustainability activities of IKEA

The last explanatory category is "perceived features of the company" this category is also argued to be influential in shaping the consumers' perception of a company. However just as the previous category to a lesser extent influential. Therefore it can be hypothesized that:

H.7.a. The more positive a consumer is about the features of IKEA as a company, the more positive the brand image
H.7.b. The more positive a consumer is about the features of IKEA as a company, the more positive the image of the sustainability activities of IKEA

Furthermore, regarding the dependent categories it can be argued that the image of IKEA's sustainability activities cannot surpass the total brand image, since it is only a fraction of the total brand image. Therefore another hypothesis can be drawn:

H.8. The more positive a consumers' perception of the sustainability activities of IKEA, the more positive the overall IKEA brand image

Additionally, the effect of socio-demographic factors and loyalty (expressed in terms of relation to IKEA) is controlled for, by testing the additional influence that these factors have on the above hypothesized relations. It is however hard to draw hypotheses on socio-demographic factors since they are so various (age, gender, living situation etc.). Therefore it is not possible to draw a hypothesis regarding this category. Loyalty on the other hand can be translated into a hypothesis since it can be argued that the intensity of a relation between a consumer and a company reflects how often a company is able to make a good impression. Therefore it can be hypothesized:

H.9.a.The more intense the relation between consumer and IKEA, the more positive the consumers' perception of the IKEA brand
H.9.b.The more intense the relation between consumer and IKEA, the more positive the consumers' perception of the sustainability activities of IKEA

4. Content analysis of media and IKEA information

In this chapter a content analysis of general media, a NGO and IKEA itself regarding the messages spread on their sustainability efforts will be conducted since it became apparent from the literature review that information and communication plays a crucial role in the perception formation process. A distinction is made between information and communication in a sense that consumers will actively seek for information (search on the internet for messages about IKEA and sustainability) and communication is what reaches the consumer anyway (television, newspaper etc.). In order to conduct a content analysis firstly a framework has to be developed in order to categorize the findings. Based on the variety of messages that will be analysed and the time that consumers are usually aware of these messages, the choice was made to analyse three years back in time, thus the years included in this analysis are 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 (as far as it has progressed). The first messages that will be analysed in this chapter are the messages spread by IKEA itself about their efforts to become more sustainable. Secondly, three media channels, newspapers, television and internet will be analysed on messages regarding IKEA and their sustainability efforts. Lastly in this chapter, messages spread by five prominent Dutch NGO's concerning IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable are analysed on content. The main goal is to see on what aspects of sustainability most messages focus and to see whether the content is negative, neutral or positive on the efforts that IKEA takes to become more sustainable. The results of the content analysis are schematically presented in tables that show the absolute numbers of messages published on IKEA and sustainability. At the same time the bars in figures contain the percentages of the amount of messages of a certain tone of content regarding one of the three aspects of sustainability (people, planet, prosperity). This is done for all types of media included in this content analysis.

4.1 IKEA communication on sustainability

In order to find what types of communication channels IKEA uses to convey their sustainability messages, orientating conversations with IKEA staff were held. A large share of the communication could be found online, since these are the messages which are sent out to the press (press releases) and the broadcasting scheme of an IKEA-radio commercial could also be found online. Also email contact with the marketing team of IKEA the Netherlands led to finding communication in the form of a TV-commercial with two tag-ons and the IKEA catalogs from the years 2010-2013 have also been scanned on messages regarding sustainability. However, there was no comprehensive archive of this communication which made it the hardest communication channel to analyze. Not surprisingly, all the messages that IKEA publishes about its own efforts to become more sustainable are argued to have a positive tone of content regarding these efforts.

From the content analysis it becomes clear that IKEA mostly (77%) uses written messages to convey the importance of their actions to become more sustainable. However there has also been a commercial on more sustainable living at home which was promoting the use of more energy efficient and water saving kitchen appliances. Most of the written messages were published in 2012 (89%) the other messages were published in 2010 (11%). The analyzed messages are the IKEA press releases between 2010 and 2013 (as far as it has

progressed). Most has been published about the partnerships in which IKEA is involved. But also donations to charities are highlighted. Another issue that has been subject of many messages is energy supply of IKEA stores and the investments of IKEA in renewable energy projects.

There has also been a television commercial in 2012 on IKEA and the more sustainable products they offer regarding sustainability in your home. This commercial especially focuses on kitchen applications and on the ease of using more sustainable products. The commercial has two tag-ons regarding specific energy saving or energy/resource efficient products for consumers to use in the kitchen. A tag-on is a short sequel or addition to the original commercial in which an additional message is presented.

In 2012 there was also a radio commercial about "sustainable living at home" at Dutch radio. It was broadcasted 1224 times at different radio stations during January and February 2012.

Additionally there also was the internet campaign to promote the partnership on more sustainable cotton that IKEA has with WWF. Achieving more sustainable cotton is done through the better cotton initiative. To get people's attention for this partnership and more sustainable cotton, IKEA and WWF set up an awareness raising campaign through internet. In the end, for every time that the link of the partnership has been shared on social networks such as twitter and Facebook, IKEA donates 1 euro to the WWF. Together these parties work on achieving sustainable cotton production.
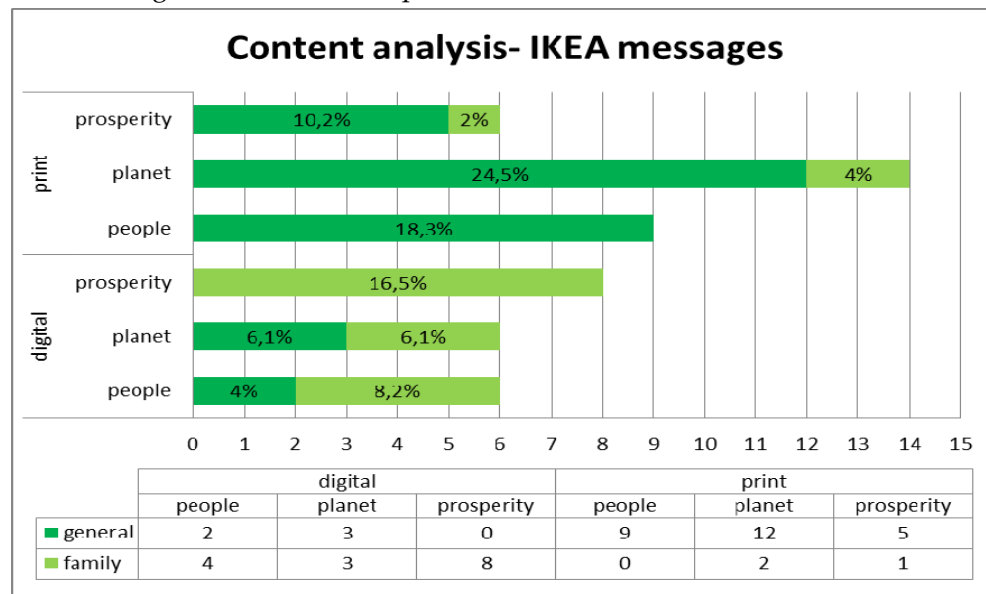

Figure 7. Overview IKEA messages

4.2 General media communication on IKEA and sustainability
In order to see what the general media has published about IKEA and sustainability in the last three years the choice was made to analyze the main general communication channels; newspapers, television and the internet.

4.2.1 Newspapers

The ten most read (HOI, 2011) newspapers of the Netherlands have been analyzed on messages about sustainability and IKEA in the last three years (2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013). The tone of the content (negative, neutral, positive) of that specific message is the most important aspect in this content analysis. In this section the results of the content analysis of the messages in newspapers are presented. For each newspaper that is analyzed, a couple of articles will be used to indicate the general tone of content. When there is a message with an opposing tone of content compared to most of the messages in that specific newspaper, this will be discussed more in detail.

The first newspaper analyzed is the most read newspaper of the Netherlands: *de Telegraaf*. In this and the last three years, eight articles were found addressing IKEA and their sustainability efforts and activities. Some articles with a positive tone of content are: "Duurzaamheid cruciaal voor retailers", which means "Sustainability crucial for retailers. In this article the necessity of integrating sustainability goals into corporate strategies is discussed, where they mention IKEA to be one of the "goede voorbeelden" (good examples). Another example of an article with a positive tone of content is on the success of the Christmas tree offer. As it already addresses the success of this action, the tone is argued to be positive. On the contrary, we find in 2012 an article titled "DDR-dwangarbeiders maakten IKEA-kasten" which has a negative tone of content since it addresses IKEA involvement in forced labour in the former GDR.

The newspaper *het AD*, which is short for het "Algemeen Dagblad", is the second most read newspaper of the Netherlands. Two articles, one in 2011 and one in 2012, regarding IKEA and sustainability were found of which one has a positive tone of content and the other one has a negative tone of content. The positive article is addressing IKEA's energy saving products in order to create a nice and cosy garden. On the other hand the negative tone of content article is about the fact that women were intentionally erased from the IKEA catalogue in Saudi Arabia.

Content analysis - De Telegraaf	People	Planet	Prosperity
Positive	1	2	4
Neutral			
Negative	1		

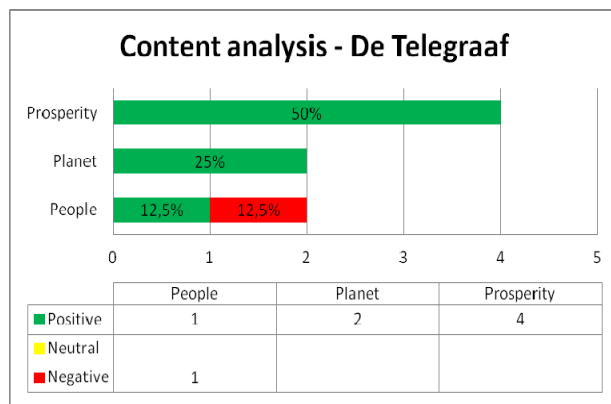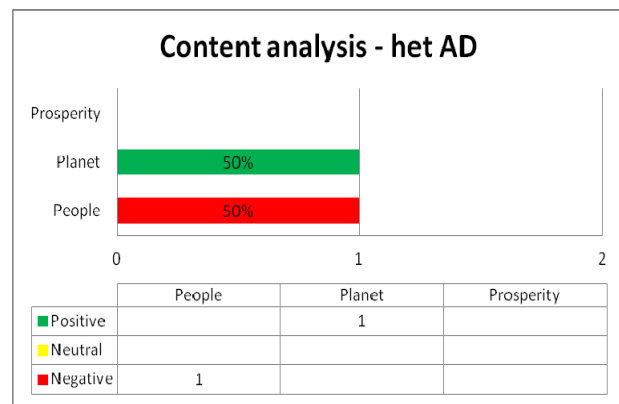| Content analysis - het AD	People	Planet	Prosperity
Positive		1	
Neutral			
Negative	1		

Figure 8. Overview messages de Telegraaf   Figure 9. Overview messages het AD

The third most read newspaper of the Netherlands is *de Volkskrant*. De Volkskrant has published seven articles on IKEA and sustainability. From the analysis it shows that three articles had a positive tone of content, three articles had a negative tone of content and one

had a neutral tone of content. The positive articles were all published in 2010, and were judged to have a positive tone of content since for example sentences like "Ikea en Douwe Egbers (Sara Lee) zetten momenteel grote stappen op het gebied van duurzaamheid" (IKEA is taking major steps in terms of sustainability) were identified. The article that is regarded to have a neutral tone of content is discussing two entrepreneurs who wanted to sell their solar panels at IKEA but then decided that it did not fit the IKEA concept. There is no value judgement about IKEA in this article therefore the tone of content was identified as neutral. The three negative articles were each published in a different year (2011, 2012 and 2013). A negative tone of content was identified for example in one article the food of several restaurants was judged and the food of IKEA was argued to be in one of the bottom categories.

The Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* also published articles on IKEA and sustainability in the last three years. Negative content was recognized in one of the two negative articles since it was highlighted that the public thinks that IKEA is relatively sustainable while it appeared through measurements that IKEA is not. This is regarded as negative content concerning IKEA and sustainability. The other neutral article was about traffic problems and going to an IKEA-store, however no value judgement about IKEA was made.
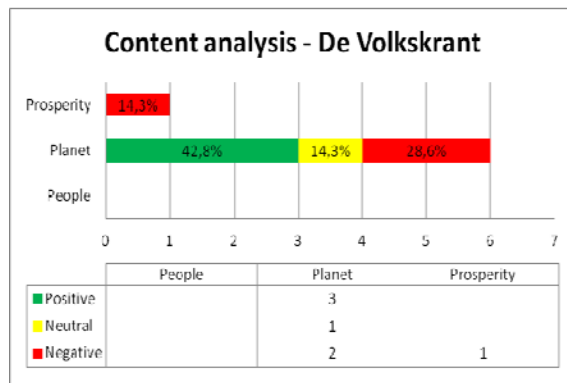
Figure 10. Overview messages de Volkskrant   Figure 11. Overview messages NRC Handelsblad
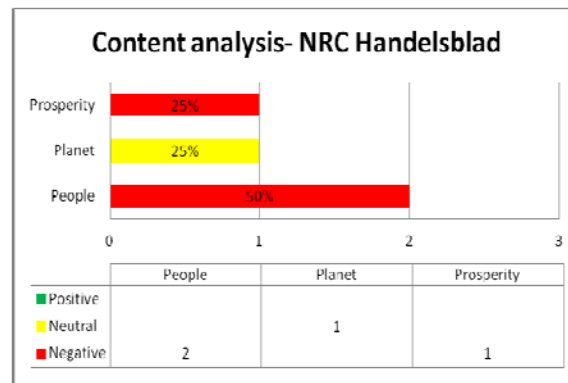
The fifth national newspaper of the Netherlands is *Trouw*. This newspaper also published articles on IKEA and sustainability in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and in 2013. Trouw is also the newspaper that has written most about IKEA and sustainability, namely twelve articles. An example of what is argued to be negative content is an article that addresses IKEAs' involvement in forced labour in the former GDR. Positive content is argued to be found in for example an article that addresses IKEAs' role in producing products using Better Cotton which is produced and controlled through the Better Cotton Initiative. Articles with a neutral content can be recognised in an article about the Christmas tree offer of IKEA, this is presented as one of many options to buy a Christmas tree, however it does not say anything about this being a good or bad action. It should however be noted that other newspapers report more positively on the Christmas tree offer.

The newspaper *nrc next* is the sixth most read national newspaper. It is related to the previously discussed NRC Handelsblad but is more aimed at young people. Regarding IKEA and their sustainability efforts, nrc next published two articles in 2012. One of these

articles is argued to have a neutral tone of content and the other one a negative tone of content. The neutral tone of content article takes the example that people often do not realise how much effort it costs to maker and produce things, for example to get an "billy into the ikea store". The other negative article is about erasing women from the IKEA-catalogue in Saudi Arabia, this has also been discussed in other national newspapers.
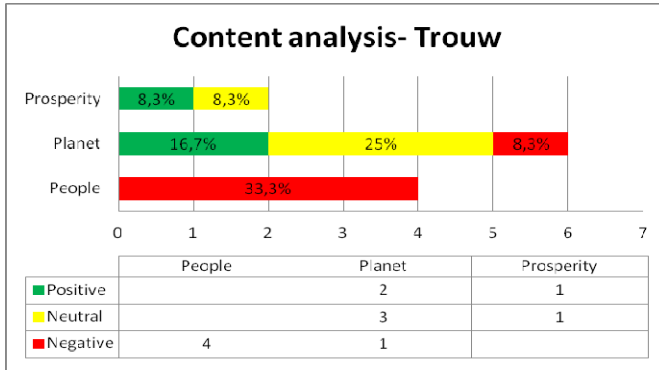
Figure 12. Overview messages Trouw
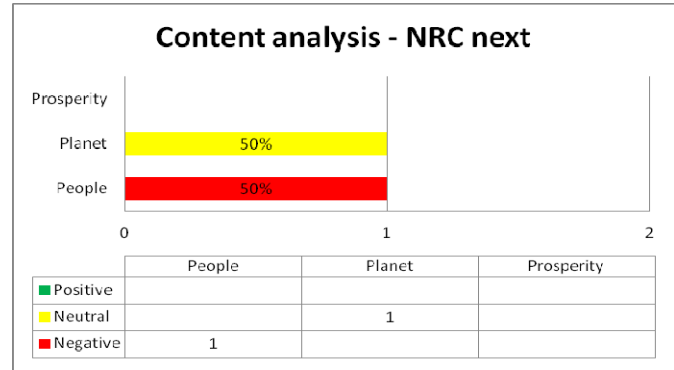
Figure13. Overview messages NRC next

Another newspaper that published articles about IKEA and sustainability is *het Financieele Dagblad*. An example of what is regarded to be an article that is positive in tone of content is about IKEA investing 4 billion euro in sustainable energy and by doing so they are getting closer to energy independence. A neutral tone of content was recognized in the article titled "Duurzaam levert meer rendement", here IKEA is mentioned as an example which creates awareness for sustainability through the commercial market. No value is assigned to IKEA. The negative tone of content of some articles is also on the forced labour in the former GDR.

The newspaper titled *"Reformatorisch Dagblad"* has published on IKEA and sustainability in the last three years, namely once in 2011 and two times in 2012. One (33%) of these articles has a neutral tone of content, this one is about the possibility of charging electric cars at IKEA in the U.S.A. The text of this article mostly consists of facts which make it not so outspoken about IKEA, therefore it is argued to be a neutral tone of content article. The other two (66%) articles, with a negative tone of content, are on the use of forced labour in the former GDR by IKEA.
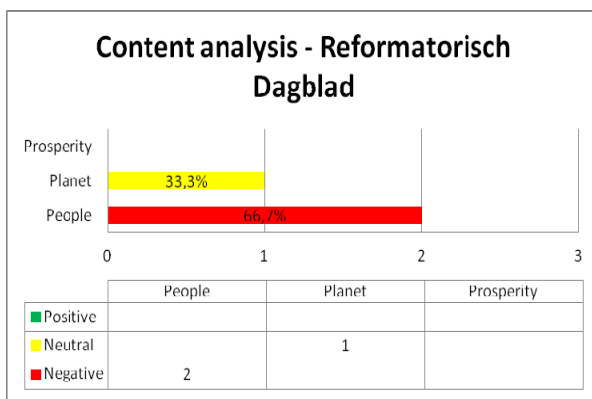
Figure 14. Overview messages Reformatorisch Dagblad
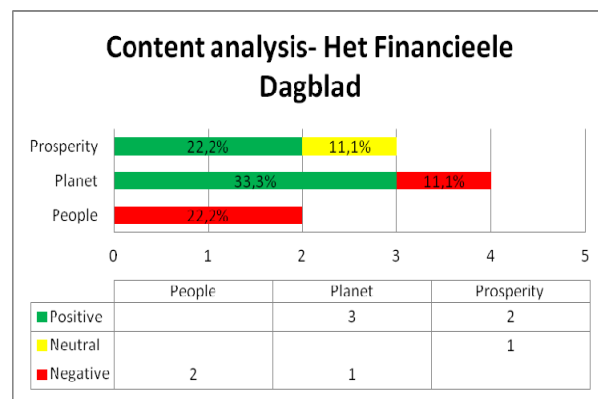
Figure 15. Overview messages het Financieele Dagblad

One of the Dutch free newspapers discussed in this content analysis is called **"Metro"**. It published twice in 2012 about IKEA and sustainability. The positive article was an interview with the CEO Mikael Ohlsson on the possibilities that employees have within IKEA. The other article in 2012 was negative about IKEA, since it was about the erased women in the Saudi-Arabian catalogue of IKEA.

The other free newspaper is **"Spits"** they published five times about IKEA and sustainability The positive articles were mainly on the actions that IKEA undertakes in the light of their partnerships with for example UNICEF and Save the Children. The neutral tone of content article is about the design and sustainability of IKEA furniture. The interviewee in this article is not extremely positive but also not negative about IKEA furniture. Lastly, the negative tone of content article in Spits is about the erasing of women from the Saudi-Arabian catalogue.
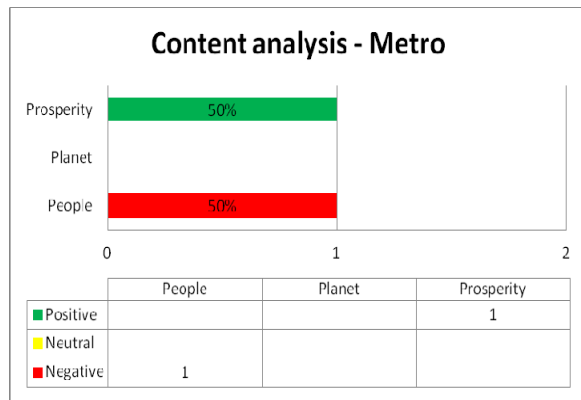
Figure 16. Overview messages Metro
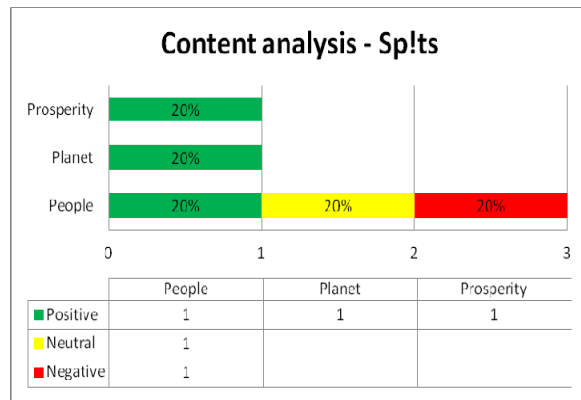
Figure 17. Overview messages Sp!ts

4.2.2 Television

The fourteen TV programs that are included in this content analysis are chosen based on which shows were viewed most in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and in 2013 as far as it has progressed. However one program that is included in the analysis was not in the top 100 of most viewed programs of the year in question. This program has been included since it is, next to those that are in the top 100, one of the most important consumer programs on Dutch television: de Keuringsdienst van Waarde. The rest of the programs included in the analysis are a result of checking the ten most viewed consumer- or affairs programs of the year in question. However, during the years included in this analysis many of these types of programs stay in the top 100 year after year, thus the list of programs includes the most viewed programs of the year in question in this specific category. Of the fourteen programs included in the analysis only two shows provided news on IKEA and related sustainability issues. From these two shows one was found to have a negative tone of content regarding IKEA. This negative tone of content showed through two messages which were in the same show: "Half acht nieuws" at the "RTL4 "channel. Both messages were news items, one regarding the horse meat in the meat balls, which therefore had to be withdrawn from the market and the other one regarding almond cakes being withdrawn from the market. Withdrawing products from the market is a sign that something is not right with the product, thus it is regarded as negative tone of content. The other television program that

broadcasted something about IKEA is "de Keuringsdienst van Waarde" at the "KRO" channel. On the contrary to the messages at "RTL4" this show is argued to have a positive tone of content. In this show, the supply chain of glass is researched and even more specifically the claim that the glass is mouth blown. The program producers are surprised when they found that mouth blown glass is truly mouth blown, so the claim is true. This is regarded as a positive tone of content, since it proves that when a claim is made regarding an IKEA product it appears to be true.
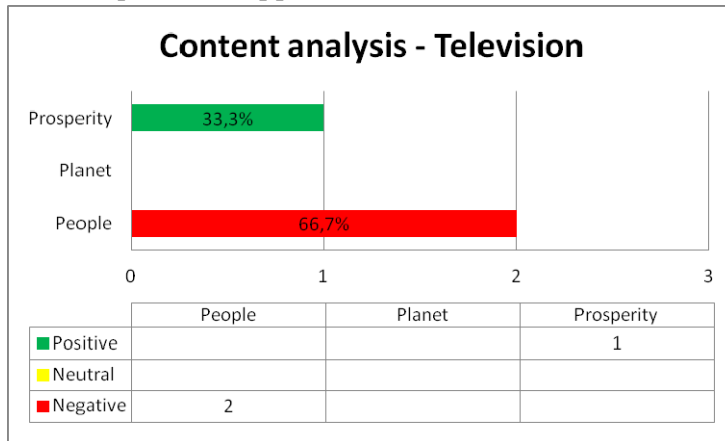
Figure 18. Overview messages Dutch Television

4.2.3 Internet

The first one hundred hits for IKEA and "duurzaamheid" (sustainability) on Dutch Google (google.nl) have been analyzed on content. Also in this part, websites back to 2010 have been taken into account. From the 100 hits analyzed, 93 are judged to have a positive tone of content regarding IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. However it must be noted that 30% of the analyzed hits in Google are published by IKEA itself. The most common aspect of sustainability in these articles is found to be prosperity. This aspect was found 53 times in 100 websites. This is due to the research of the Sustainable Image Index in which IKEA is perceived to be the most sustainable company by consumers. From the 100 websites analyzed on tone of content regarding IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable, 7 were found to be not positive of which 4 are argued to have a negative tone of content and 3 are argued to have a neutral tone of content. One "negative" website argues that IKEA takes credit for making people behave in an environmental friendly manner; however the author of this message argues that this behavior has already been adopted by people long before IKEA encourages them to. This message has a critical attitude to IKEA and even accuses them of taking credit for something IKEA did not do. Another message that is regarded to have a negative tone of content is addressing the number one position of IKEA in the Sustainable Image Index. The author of this message does not agree with this position since he or she writes about how forests are cut down to make IKEA furniture. The third message with a negative tone of content is about the IKEA food. The message is a score card of several restaurants on which the food is scored on sustainability. Sustainability of food is specified on several topics, but IKEA does not score well. Lastly a blog about home furnishing mentions the new products of the "Stockholm collection" and presents these products as being more sustainable, however they refer to IKEA as producing furniture that

falls apart after moving once. Therefore this is a negative tone of content. The neutral tone of content messages within the first 100 hits on Google will now briefly be discussed. The first message found on IKEA and sustainability, is part of the general Dutch Wikipedia page on IKEA. It is mentioned that while building the new store in Zwolle there is a greater emphasis on sustainability. However this article does not provide a value judgment on IKEA. The second message with a neutral tone of content can be found on the website of IKEA itself. It might seem strange that this message is not regarded to have a positive tone of content, but when following the link you will arrive at an advertisement of an IKEA product. Where the description of the product says it is sustainable, while it can be argued that in this case the word sustainable might be better replaced by durable. Thus, the message does not necessarily promote IKEA and their sustainability efforts, it is presented as a product attribute. Therefore the tone of content of this advertisement, regarding sustainability, is neutral. Thirdly, a message on the investment efforts of IKEA in renewable energy is argued to have a neutral tone of content. This message only compares IKEA to Walmart and Apple and concludes that Walmart has invested the most in renewable energy, however the article does not judge the efforts of IKEA and Apple it only presents the facts. Thus it is argued to have a neutral tone of content.
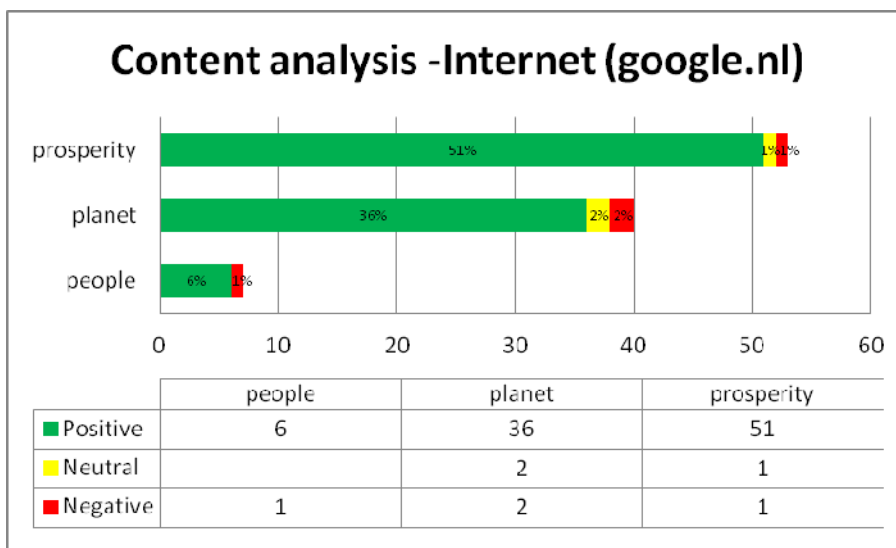
Figure 19. Overview messages internet

4.3 Communication of Dutch NGO's on IKEA and sustainability

In addition to what has been written or broadcasted in the general media, the five largest, Dutch NGO's are also included in this analysis (based on number of donors)(Unicef, 2011; VARA,2012).

Position	Name	Number of donors +year of measurement
1.	Wereld Natuur Fonds	870.000 (2012)
2.	Natuurmonumenten	732.000 (2012)
3.	Greenpeace	466.000 (2012)
4.	Unicef	361.000 (2011)
5.	De 12 Landschappen	311.963 (2012)

The websites of these NGO's were searched for messages concerning IKEA. It must be noted that with three out of five of these Dutch NGO's, the IKEA organization has partnerships. Therefore it is expected that these NGO's are more likely to publish messages with a positive tone of content regarding IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. The largest NGO in the Netherlands is the WNF, the Dutch branch of WWF. The WNF has published 17 messages regarding IKEA in the last three years (2010-2013) and all of these messages (100%) are argued to have a positive tone of content. Most messages of the WNF are about the sustainability aspect "planet" on which they take action together with IKEA. The second largest Dutch NGO is "Natuurmonumenten" they also have a partnership with IKEA in order to protect Dutch nature areas. Every year the IKEA sells Christmas trees and a share of the returns goes to "Natuurmonumenten" which invests this money in the conservation of several local nature areas. Not surprisingly, most messages by Natuurmonumenten on IKEA are about the sustainability aspect "planet".
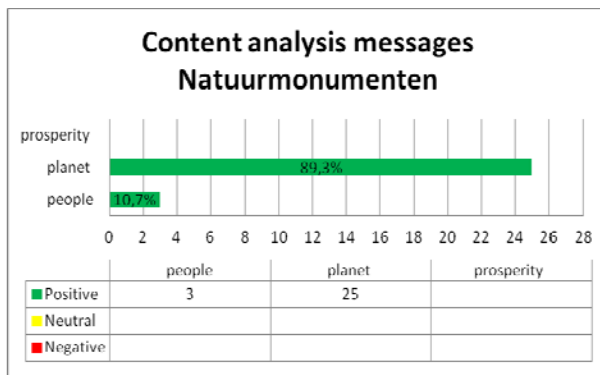
Figure 20. Overview messages Natuurmonumenten   Figure 21. Overview messages WNF
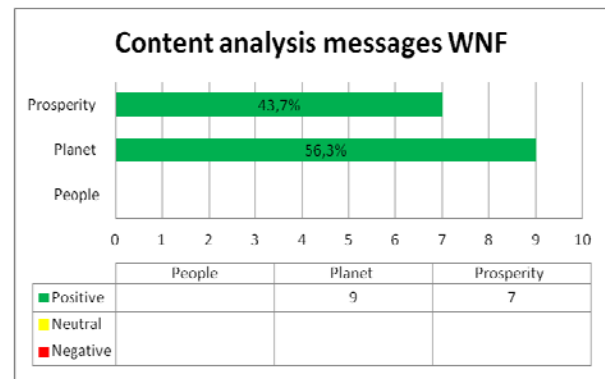
The Dutch branch of Greenpeace is number three when it comes to number of donors. Moreover, Greenpeace is one of the NGO's in this top 5 which does not have a partnership with IKEA. Therefore it might be unexpected that all (100%) messages back until 2010, published by Greenpeace are positive about IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. The sustainability aspect that is addressed is "planet". Greenpeace found that livestock farmer that provides IKEA with meat, cuts down rainforest to make space to keep their cattle. When IKEA received this information they switched supplier. In all messages by Greenpeace, the proactive approach of IKEA is noted. On the fourth place we find the Dutch branch of Unicef, which has a partnership with IKEA in order to prevent child labor and to incorporate children's rights in all aspects of the business. Therefore the most addressed aspect of sustainability is "people". Nine messages were published by Unicef on IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. The positive messages are mostly on the campaigns that IKEA does together with Unicef in order to gather money to provide children in developing countries with education, food, shelter etc. One of the two neutral tone of content messages is about a discussion about how to incorporate children's rights in corporate social responsibility, here only the fact that IKEA participates is mentioned.. The other "neutral" message is just an overview where IKEA is presented as one of the strategic partners of Unicef
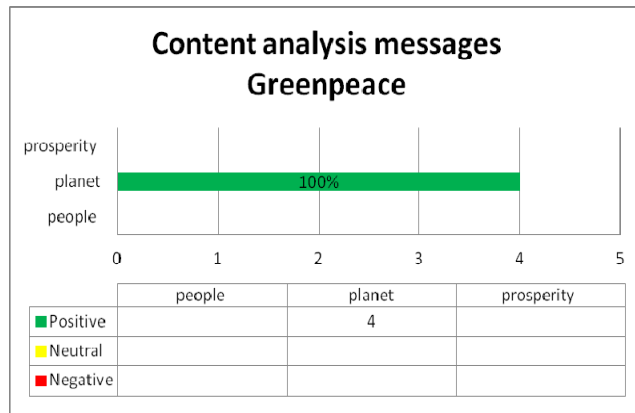
Figure 22. Overview messages Greenpeace
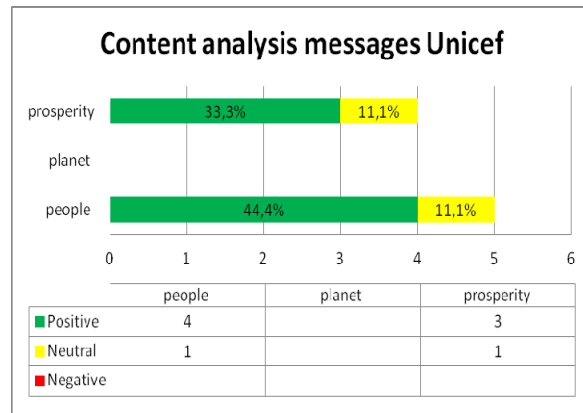
Figure 23. Overview messages Unicef

The NGO "de 12 landschappen" did not publish any messages on IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable.

However due to the content analysis insight is gained in what the overall tone is in the media regarding IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. Concluding it can be argued that in order to answer the second research question *"What is the role of communication/information about IKEA and their sustainability efforts in constructing the consumers' perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability?"* some more information on the explanatory power of these different types of media is necessary.

5. Survey Results

In this part of the research the data that is gathered by means of the questionnaire is analyzed. Firstly, the general composition of the research population is clarified. Secondly, frequencies of answers to the questions are visualized in order to get some insight in possible relations. Thirdly, a factor analysis is conducted in order to see if the categories in the conceptual model are truly the underlying combining factor of the variables. Thereafter, the correlations between the factors and other variables are calculated. Lastly multiple regression analysis conducted in order to find the relative contribution of each of the independent variables in explaining the dependent variables. This is done while using the computer program: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

5.1 Composition of the research population

In order to check if the research population of is a representative sample of the Dutch population some numbers are compared to the numbers of the Dutch "Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek" which means Central Bureau of Statistics (hereafter; CBS). The Dutch population consists for 49,5% of men and for 50,5% of women (CBS, 2013a). The sample used in this research consists for 41,9% of men and for 58,1% of women which shows that substantially more women have taken the questionnaire than men, however the total N (824) is large therefore this is not seen as an deviation. If we look at the age distribution of the Dutch population it can be found at CBS that most Dutch citizens are between 38 and 64 years old.
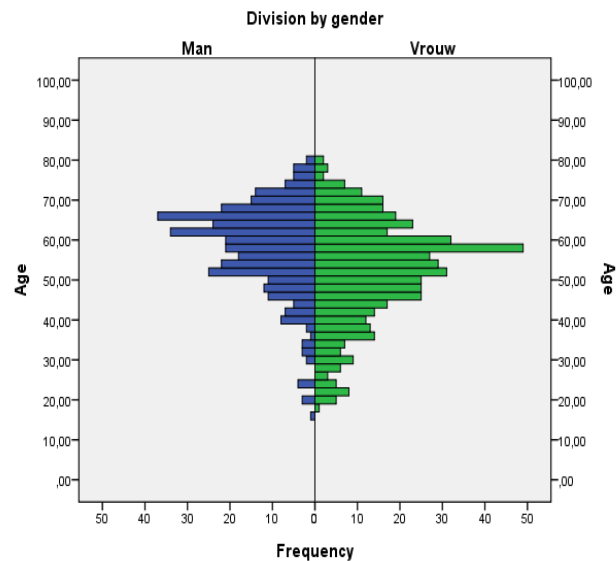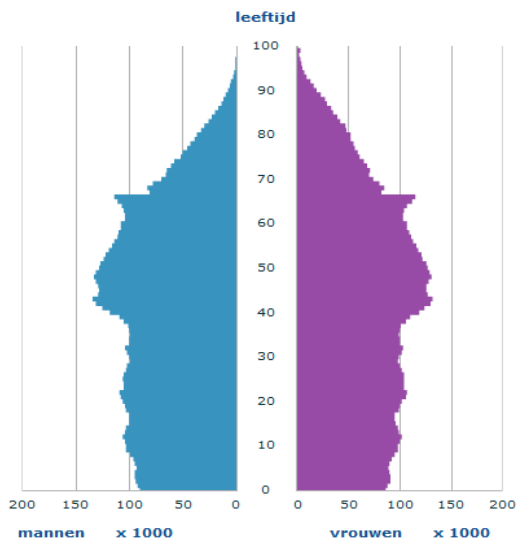
Figure 24. Dutch national age structure (CBS, 2013b)   Figure 25. Age structure in research population

In the research population it can be found that there is also a large group of respondents that are within the age category of 38-64. However, in the research population there is a relatively high representation of old people in comparison to the amount of young people. This might be due to the fact that old people are often retired and have more free time in which they can participate in research, whereas young people often have (fulltime) jobs. The level of education of our sample is distributed as follows:
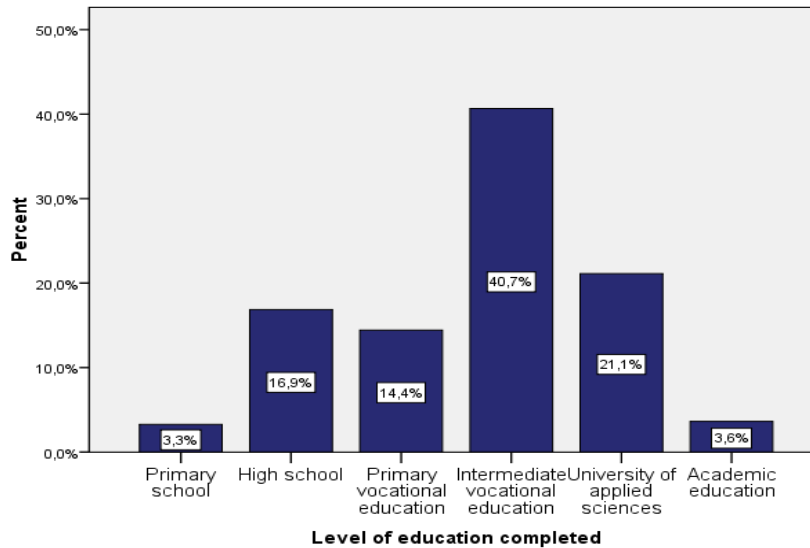
Figure 26. Level of education completed within research sample.

The results from figure 26 can not easily be compared to the data from the CBS since here clusters of level of education are measures whereas in this research individual levels have been reserached. However, it can be argued that the most completed level of education on the national level is the intermediate vocational education or in Dutch; Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs (MBO) (CBS, 2013c). This is consistent with the sample population of this research. It should be noted that this similarity is not conclusive. The income levels of the research population are also argued to be roughly similar to those found in the Dutch population however it should be noted again that this is not conclusive as for example the CBS measures the yearly income of people. The trend that makes these figures roughly similar is the descending frequencies with higher incomes, wheres the figure of the CBS is more nuanced and measured on a yearly basis, still the same trend can be seen.
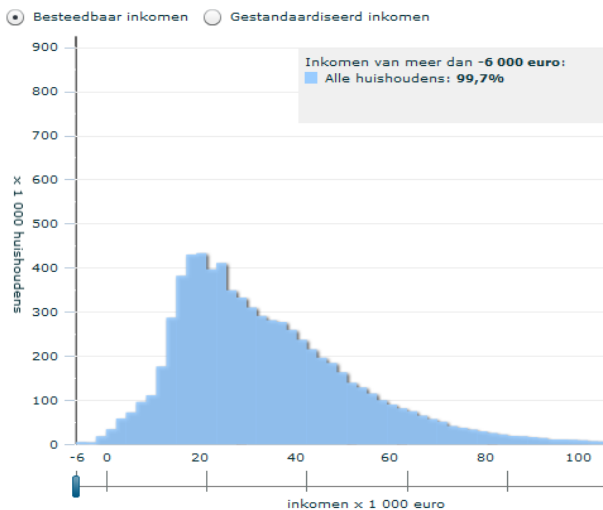
Figure 27. Annual income distribution in the Netherlands(CBS, 2013d)
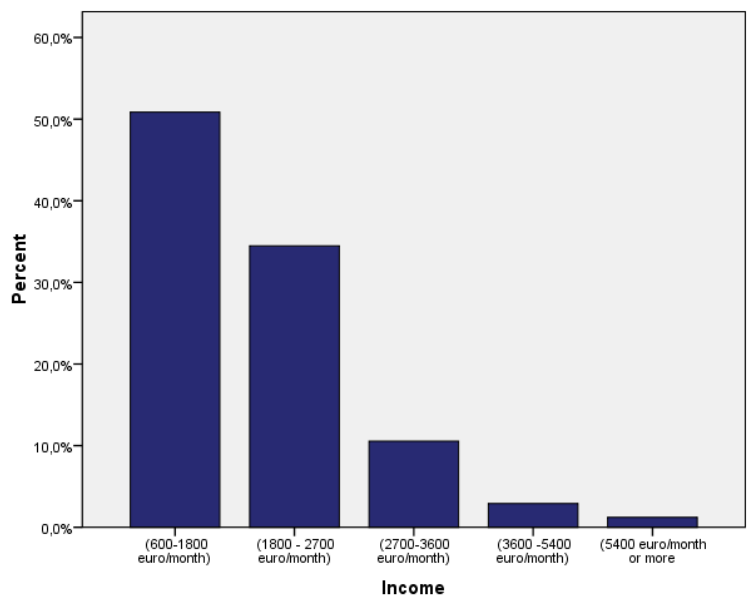
Figure 28. Monthly income distribution research population

Other variables which are important to have some insight in are the variables that determine "loyalty" in this case to IKEA. In the first place it was asked whether they are IKEA family member, since these might have a different idea about IKEA. There are 2.7 million IKEA family-members in the Netherlands which is 16% of the Dutch population(CBS, 2013e) . Therefore it can be noted that in our sample we have a really high percentage of IKEA family-members.
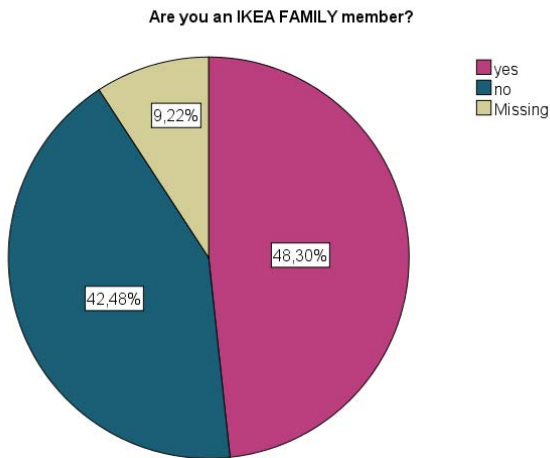
Figure 29. Percentage IKEA Family members in research sample   Figure 30. Frequency of IKEA visits among research sample
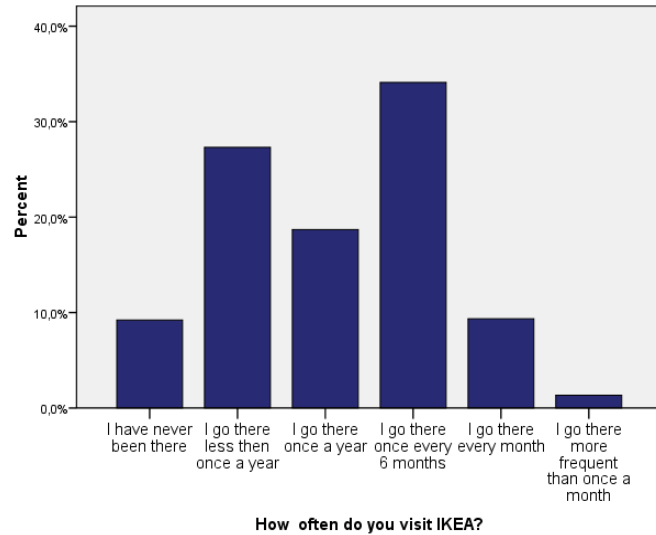
Figure 30 shows the frequency of IKEA visits among the respondents of the research sample. It is however hard to gather national data on how often the Dutch consumer visists IKEA as this is only in the interest of IKEA. The same holds for how often the Dutch consumer buys IKEA products. But just to get an idea of the frequencies these aspects of loyalty towards IKEA are visualized in bar charts.
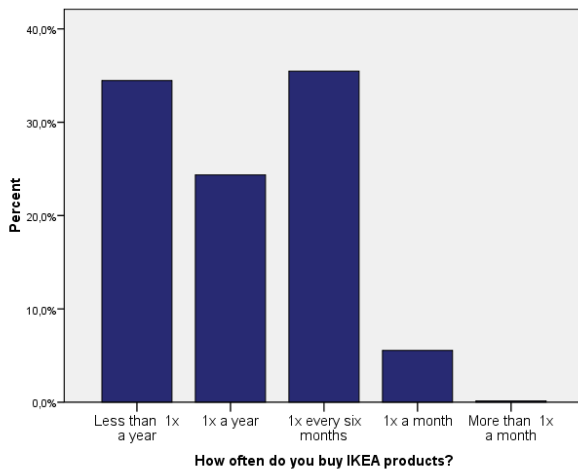
Figure 31. Frequency of buying IKEA products among research sample

5.2 General insights; Frequencies

In this section all the categories with answers on their inherent questions(variables) will be schematically presented. First the frequencies for the category of personal characteristics are visualized.
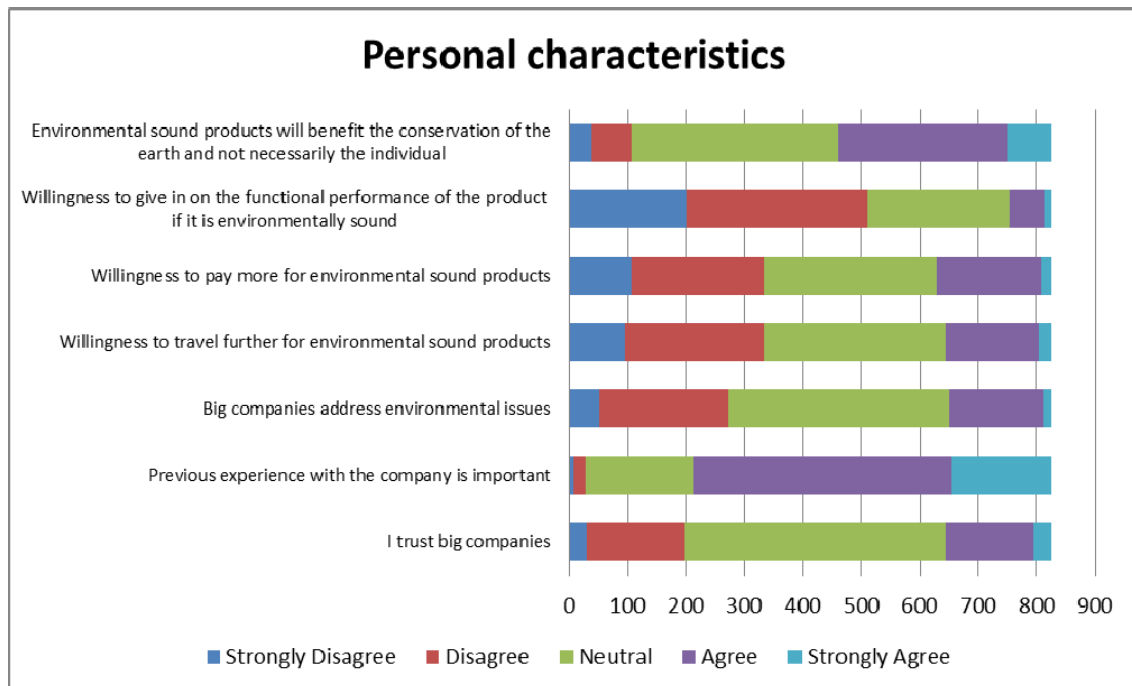
Figure 32. Frequency of answers for the category of Personal characteristics

In figure 32 it can be seen that for all of these questions all repsondents answered. It should be noted that the answer pattern of "previous experience" differs strongly from all others in this category. The second category that is visualised is the worldview category. This category is treated slightly different from the previous one as the division of respondents over the worldviews is based on how they replied to the unerlying theorems. Therefore it is here more interesting to see how the final division is in contrast to discussing the single theorems.
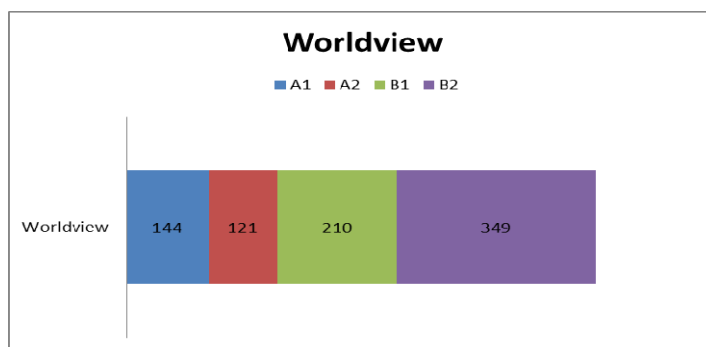
Figure 33. Division respondents over worldviews

As can be seen from figure 33 most, 42,3%, of the respondents (349/824) are located in the B2 worlview which is the local and solidarity oriented worldview. If this is compared to the Dutch population it can be found that most Dutch people also fall within the B2 worldview this is about 45% of the Dutch population (MNP, 2004). On the national level the A2

worldview is the second largest group (27%) in this research this group appears to be the smallest (14,6%). The B1 worldview, which is the second largest within this research (25,4%), is on the national level the third largest group with 22% of the Dutch population fitting into this worldview. Lastly, the A1 worldview is the smallest on the national level (6%) however in this research it is found that 17,4% of the respondents relates most to this worldview. This is argued to be remarkable.

The third category is the "definition of sustainability" which consists of 4 axes which will be individually discussed since the meaning of the answers differs for every axis. The first axis discussed is the one of weak vs. strong sustainability.
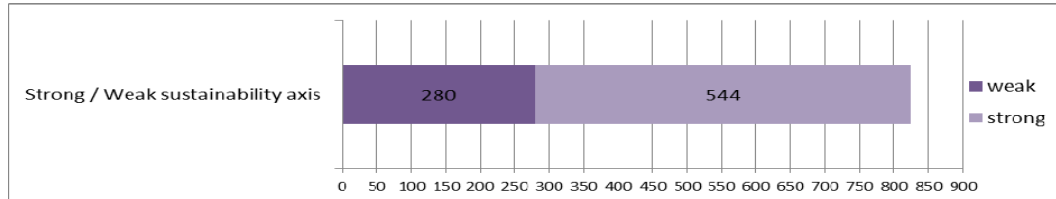
Figure 34. answer pattern strong/weak axis
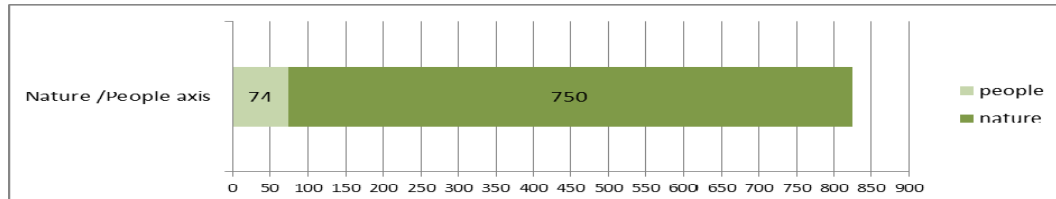
Figure 35. answer pattern nature/people axis

The figure 34 for the first axis, shows that a majority of the respondents relates more to the aspect of strong sustaianbility. The second figure 35, shows that an even greater majority agrees to the more nature oriented sustainability definition. The other two axes are visualised below:
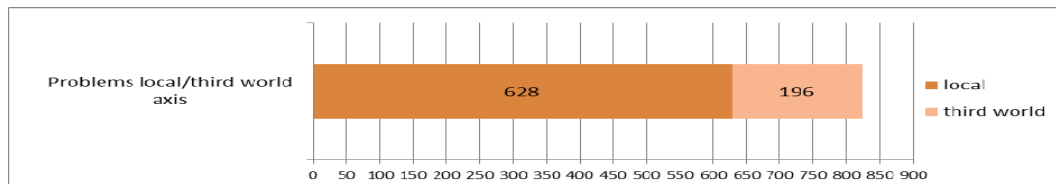
Figure 36. answer pattern local/third world axis
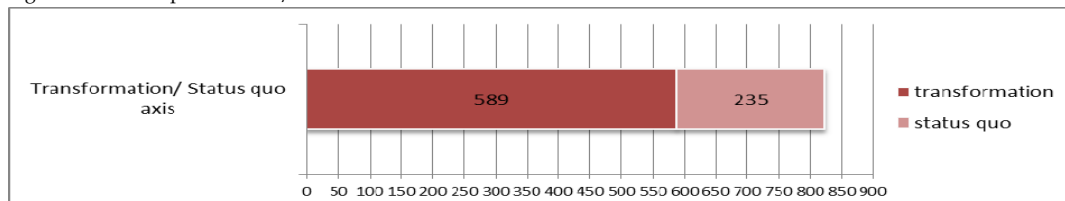
Figure 37. answer pattern transformation/status quo axis

For the axis that discusses where problems should be adressed first the majority of the respondents of this research answered that this should be local (76,2%). Figure 37 shows that the way in which sustainability should be achieved is acccording to our respondents base through thorough transformation of society (71,4%).

The next category is the "sources of information", in this category many different aspects of communication and information are discussed. Firstly the extent to which IKEA messages about their sustainability efforts are noticed is visualized
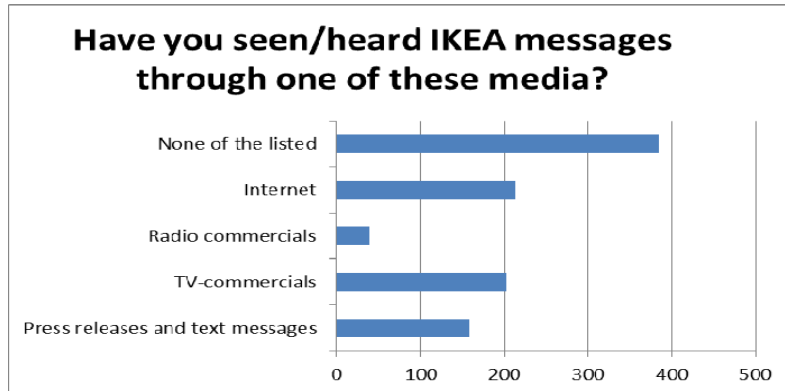
Figure 38. Answer pattern on if IKEA messages are noticed

Here it can be concluded that a majority of the respondents has not noticed that IKEA spread messages about their sustainability efforts. From those messages that were picked up by the respondents of this research, the messages on the internet were noticed most frequent. It should however be noted that respondents were able to select multiple answers to this question. Also included in the category of "sources of information" were the general media; newspapers, television and internet. As we know the tone of content of the different media it is important to know how often these sources are seen by the respondents, therefore this is mapped for newspapers among our respondents. The amount of newspapers read is not equal to 824 as one person can read multiple newspapers.
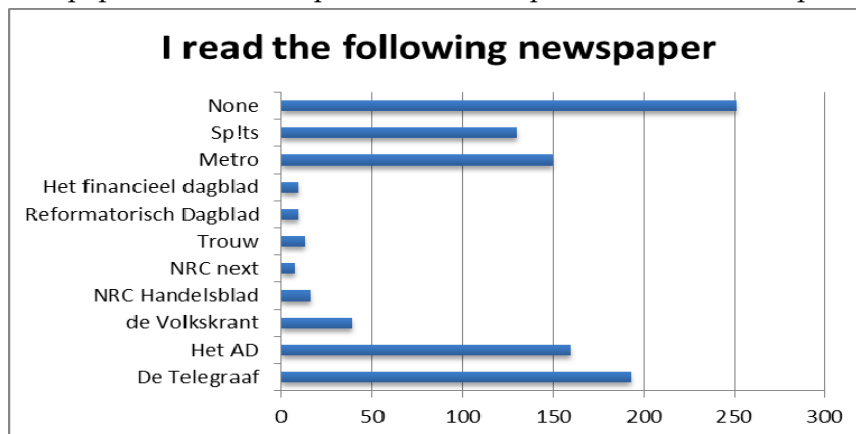
Figure 39. Division of which newspapers are read by the respondents

The other two media taken into account in the general media are tv programs and if people ever searched for messages about IKEA and sustainability on google.nl. Again it should be noted that the tone of content underlying the tv shows or the hits on google is known and one person can watch multiple tv shows.
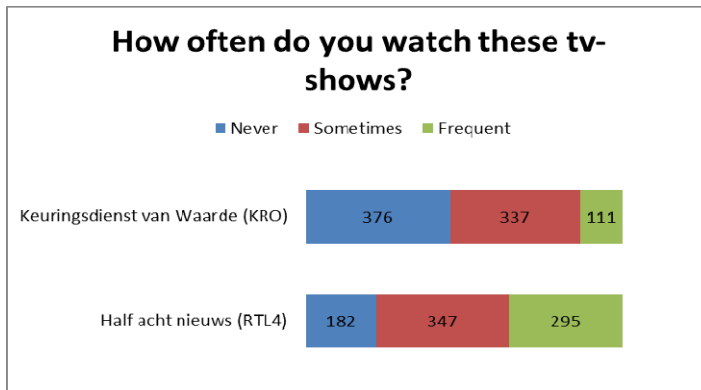
Figure 40. Frequency of watching tv shows
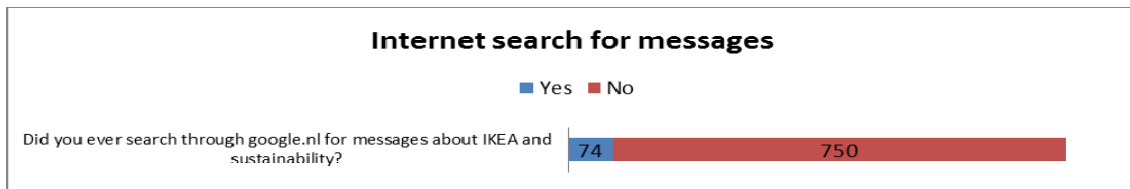
Figure 41. Frequency for internet search on IKEA and sustainability

Last in the category of sources of information are the messages from Dutch NGO's on IKEA and sustainability. It was asked to the respondents what relation they have to one of the major Dutch NGO's. Also here the tone of content of the messages (all positive!) should be noted when looking at the frequencies. The results are visualized below:
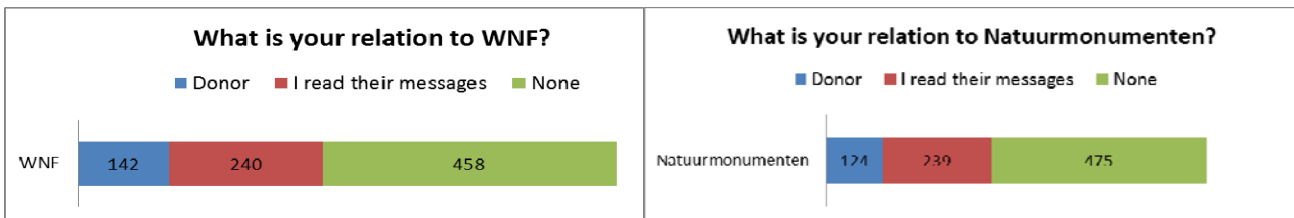
Figure 42. Answer pattern relation respondents to WNF

Figure 43. Answer pattern relation respondents to Natuurmonumenten
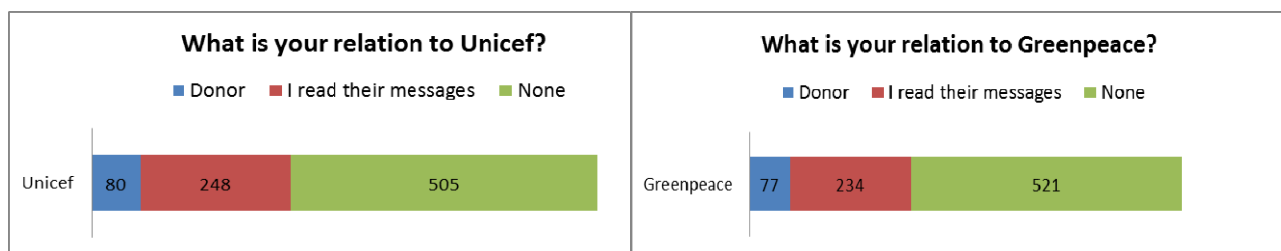
Figure 44. Answer pattern relation respondents to Unicef

Figure 45. Answer pattern relation respondents to Greenpeace

Another category of independent variables is "perceived features of products and services". In order to provide an overview of the answers to those questions that belong to this category the following visualization was made:
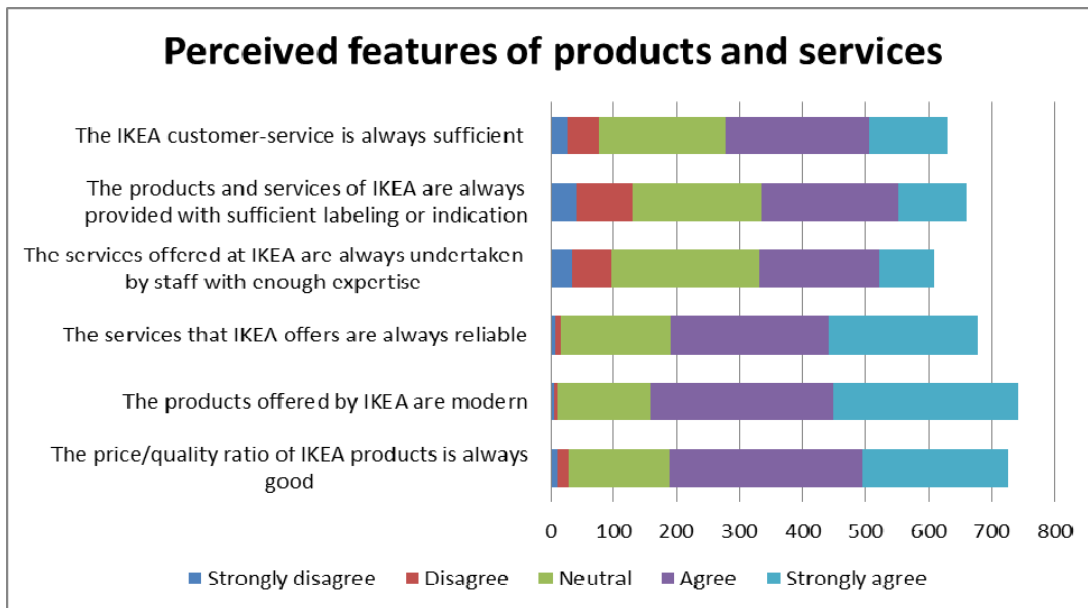
Figure 46. Frequency of answers for the category of perceived features of products and services

It can be noted from figure 46 that not all respondents have answered all questions and that those who answered are relatively positive about IKEA regarding perceived features of products and services. Subsequently there is the category of "perceived features of the company" which is more focused on aspects of the IKEA organisation. Summarizing all questions that make this category we get the following figure:
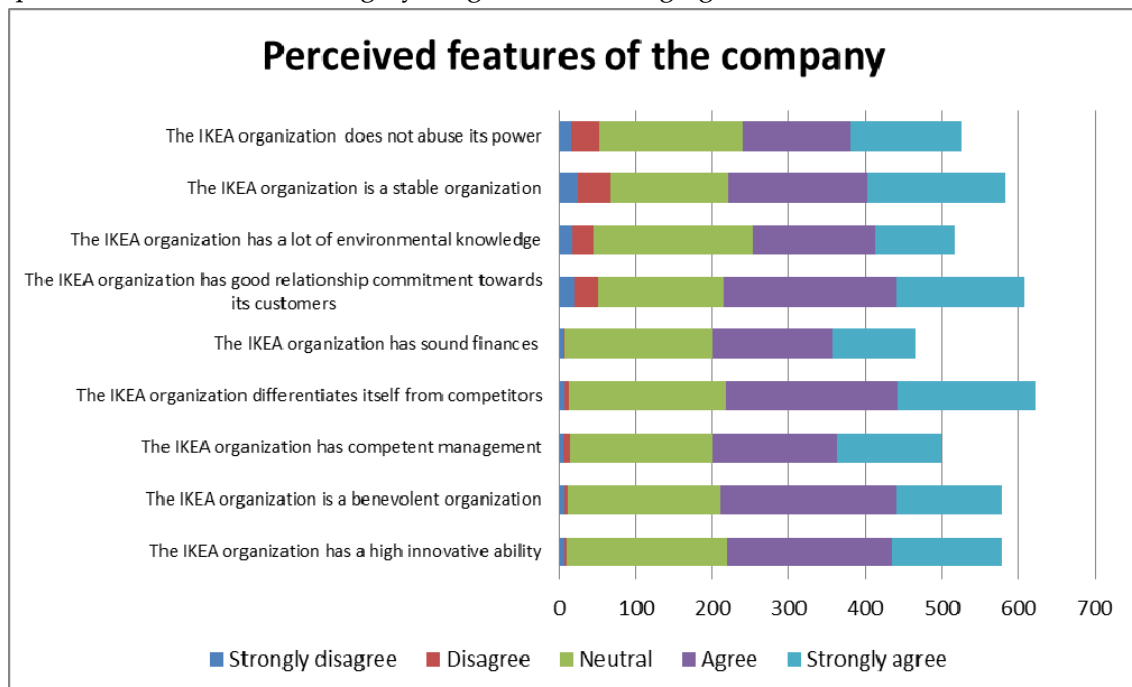
Figure 47. Frequency of answers for the category of perceived features of the company

From figure 47 it can also be noted that in general the respondents of this research are quite positive about the features of the IKEA organization.

Also for the dependent categories of "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities" an overview of the frequencies of the answers to the inherent questions is presented. First the questions that form brand image are visually summarized:
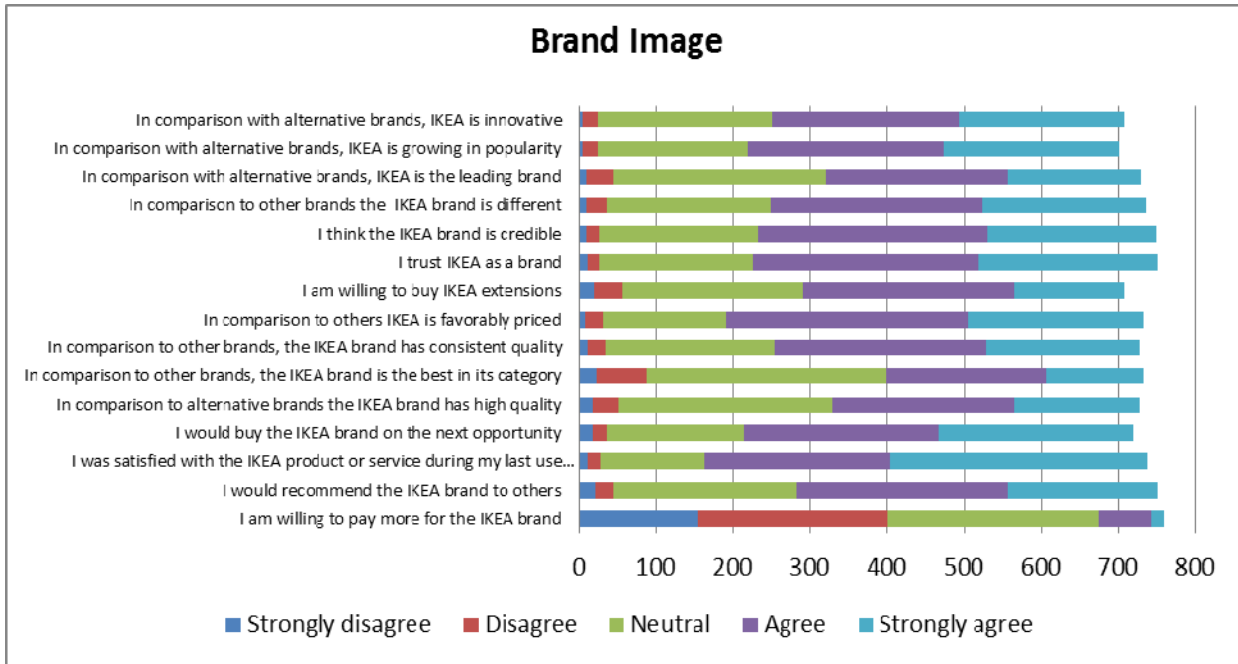
Figure 48. Frequency of answers for the category of brand image

It can be seen from figure 48 that not all respondents answered the questions regarding brand image. In addition it can be seen that the last question varies a lot from the answer pattern that the other variables show. The visualisation of the category "image of sustainability activities" looks like this:
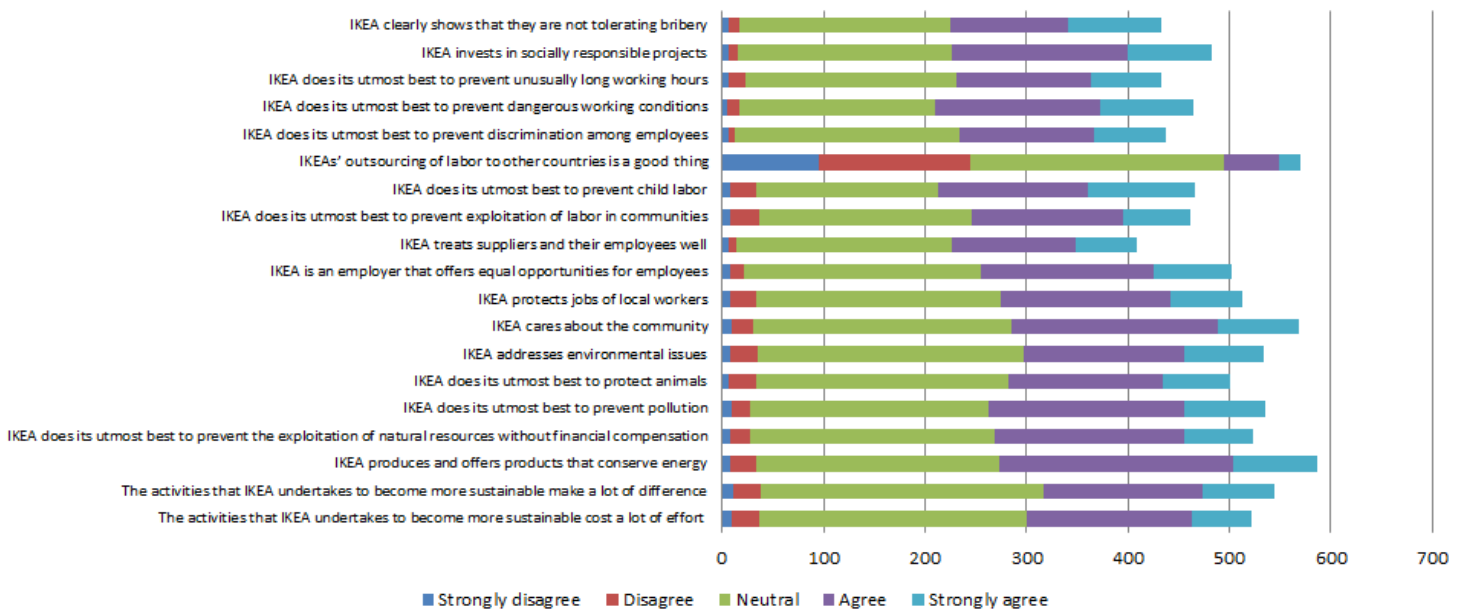
Figure 49. Frequency of answers for the category of image of sustainability activities

Also it can be noted that the question regarding outsourcing deviates from the rest, and not all questions have been answered by all respondents.

5.3 Validation of scales: factor analysis

The choice to conduct a factor analysis as a part of this research is based on the large number of independent variables and the various types of research (literature) from which they have been collected. In order to structure the independent variables, these variables have been grouped into categories based on what is known in literature and on common sense (see operationalization). In order to check if this grouping is statistically correct a factor analysis is necessary. Although, it is argued that the worldview, definition of sustainability and content analysis should be left out of the factor analysis, since these are not obtained in the same way as the other independent categories. Thus, the variables from the categories; personal characteristics, perceived features of products and services and perceived features of the company, are included in this factor analysis. The expected amount of factors is 3, since three initial categories are argued to exist. In order to see if this is true, a factor analysis will be conducted. However, to make sure that the dependent categories are statistically correct too, these will also be checked by means of this factor analysis. The dependent categories will be covered at the end of this section. This factor analysis will be a principal components analysis with direct Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalization. This was done in order to clarify the results of the factor analysis. In addition, variables that have high factor loadings are intentionally left out of the newly constructed factor score. The factors that are detected in the factor analysis will directly be created in SPSS following the regression approach. It is argued that components can be distinguished if they have an eigenvalue higher than 1. In appendix IV scree plots for all factor analyses are presented.

For the category of personal characteristics a factor analysis is conducted with the following outcome:

Table 2. Rotated component matrix of variables "Personal characteristics"

Variables of "Personal Characteristics"	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Willingness to pay more for environmental sound products	**,885**	,044	-,002
Willingness to travel further for environmental sound products	**,850**	-,043	-,031
Environmental sound products will benefit the conservation of the earth and not necessarily the individual	**,725**	,045	,321
Willingness to give in on the functional performance of the product if it is environmentally sound	**,603**	-,093	-,509
Belief that big companies address environmental issues	,049	**,857**	-,034
Trust in big companies	-,020	**,841**	-,017
Previous experience with this company	,126	-,082	**,889**
Eigenvalue	2.455	1.427	1.151
% of explained variance	35.067	20.382	16.438

From table 2 it can be seen that three components are distinguished, from 0.6 it is regarded that a factor loading with that value belongs in that component where it shows this value. Included variables are indicated by means of being bold and underlined. Also the eigenvalue of the component should be larger than 1. Thus it can be argued that the category of "personal characteristics" can be better split up into three factors. The first component will be renamed into: "purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products". The

second component will be named: "attitude towards multinational corporations". Lastly, the third component keeps the name "previous experience with this company" this is the only variable/item within this component and is of a different nature (which could already be seen in the frequency figure 32).

The next category that will be discussed is "perceived features of products and services":

Table 3. Rotated component matrix of variables "perceived features of products and services"

Variables of "perceived features of products and services"	Component 1	Component 2
The products offered by IKEA are modern	,906	-,022
The price/quality ratio of IKEA products is always good	,897	-,012
The services that IKEA offers are always reliable	,892	,040
The products and services of IKEA are always provided with sufficient labeling or indication	-,058	,885
The services offered at IKEA are always undertaken by staff with enough expertise	-,034	,873
The IKEA customer-service is always sufficient	,112	,825
Eigenvalue	2.929	1.743
% of explained variance	48.821	29.049

From table 3 it can be seen that two components have been distinguished through the factor analysis. The first component that is distinguished will be named: "aspects of quality of products and services" and the second component will be named "product support services".

The last independent category included in this factor analysis is "perceived features of the company". For this category the following rotated component matrix is found:

Table 4. Rotated component matrix of variables "perceived features of the company"

Variables of "perceived features of the company"	Component 1	Component 2
The IKEA organization has a high innovative ability	,852	,055
The IKEA organization is a benevolent organization	,895	,040
The IKEA organization has competent management	,933	-,013
The IKEA organization differentiates itself from competitors	,863	,018
The IKEA organization has sound finances	,943	-,078
The IKEA organization has good relationship commitment towards its customers	-,039	,880
The IKEA organization has a lot of environmental knowledge	,001	,914
The IKEA organization is a stable organization	-,030	,882
The IKEA organization does not abuse its power	,098	,834
Eigenvalue	5.212	1.959
% of explained variance	57.915	21.767

Table 4 shows that SPSS distinguishes two components for the category of "perceived features of the company". The first component is named "organizational competences" and the second factor that is found with the other 4 variables is created and named "organizational responsibility."

In order to be sure about the statistical validity of the constructed dependent categories these are also checked by means of a factor analysis. During this factor analysis it became clear that one of the variables had equally high factor loadings on two components, therefore it was removed from the factor analysis. For the first dependent category of "brand image" the following component matrix is displayed:

Variables of "brand image"	Component 1
I trust IKEA as a brand	,884
I think the IKEA brand is credible	,880
In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is innovative	,843
I would buy the IKEA brand on the next opportunity	,839
In comparison to other brands the IKEA brand is different	,836
I would recommend the IKEA brand to others	,825

I am willing to buy IKEA extensions	,822
In comparison to other brands, the IKEA brand has consistent quality	,817
I was satisfied with the IKEA product or service during my last use experience	,802
In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is growing in popularity	,795
In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is the leading brand	,793
In comparison to alternative brands the IKEA brand has high quality	,772
In comparison to others IKEA is favorably priced	,722
I am willing to pay more for the IKEA brand	,348
Eigenvalue	8,837
% of explained variance	63,122

Table 5. Component matrix of variables "brand image"

This table shows us that one component can be distinguished. This factor will therefore retain the name "brand image".

Also during the factor analysis of the dependent category ""image of sustainability activities" some variables were discovered that had high factor loadings on two components, these have been intentionally excluded from further analysis and are not part of the resulting factor. The dependent category "image of sustainability activities" will now be subjected to the factor analysis which is resulting in this component matrix

Table 6. Component matrix of variables "image of sustainability activities"

Variables of "image of sustainability activities"	Component 1
IKEA addresses environmental issues	,899
IKEA cares about the community	,898
IKEA does its utmost best to prevent pollution	,887
IKEA does its utmost best to protect animals	,886
IKEA does its utmost best to prevent the exploitation of natural resources without financial compensation	,883
IKEA protects jobs of local workers	,881
IKEA is an employer that offers equal opportunities for employees	,872
IKEA invests in socially responsible projects	,870
IKEA produces and offers products that conserve energy	,827
IKEA does its utmost best to prevent unusually long working hours	,826
IKEA does its utmost best to prevent dangerous working conditions	,818
The activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable make a lot of difference	,810
The activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable cost a lot of effort	,721
IKEAs' outsourcing of labor to other countries is a good thing	-,341
Eigenvalue	13.091
% of explained variance	68.898

As can be seen from table 6 the factor analysis showed that the category of "image of sustainability activities" remains one component after removal of some variables that had equally high factor loadings on two components. Therefore this component will keep the name "image of sustainability activities".

5.4 Conceptual model after factor analysis

As previously stated, while executing the factor analysis the factors discovered were directly computed by SPSS using the regression approach. An overview of all factors can be found in the conceptual model after the factor analysis presented below.
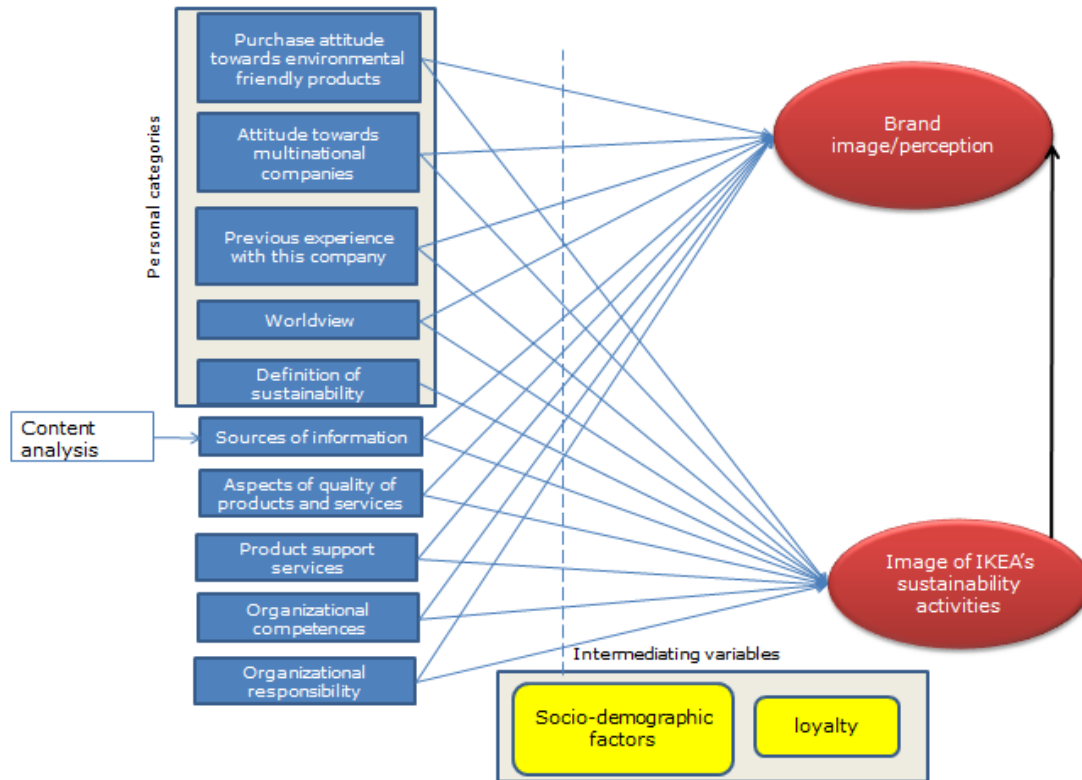
Figure 50. Conceptual model after factor analysis

5.5 Correlations

With correlation analysis there are a few things that should be kept in mind according to Pallant (2011). That is in the first place to figure out which correlation coefficient is applicable, or as Pallant (2011) states this is: "depending on the level of measurement and the nature of your data" (p.128). In our case, first the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is applicable since a part of the data in our data set is measured using a Likert-Scale. The use of Likert-scales has been widely discussed, since some argue that these should be regarded as ordinal variables whereas others argue that these can be regarded as interval variables. In this research however, it is argued that the Likert-scale should be regarded as an interval variable because it is assumed that the distance between the answering options is always equal, or in other words that: "categories are evenly distributed over the whole spectrum of possible answers" (Tilburg University, 2013). This is why in this research the Likert-scale is regarded as interval variable and thus why the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is used for calculating correlations for variables constructed from Likert-scales. However, if there is a different type of answering model it might be the case that the measure of Spearman's rho is used to calculate the correlations, because this is more suitable for different types of variables.

As a first step in the correlation analysis the Pearson's correlations between the independent factors using Likert-scale answer models and dependent categories in this research, have been calculated.

Table 7. Correlations between independent factors (based on Likert-scales) and dependent factors. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Independent factors	Correlation (Pearson)	Significance	Dependent factors
Purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products	,174**	,000	Brand image
	,273**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
Attitude towards multinational corporations	,174**	,000	Brand image
	,233**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
previous experience with this company	,253**	,000	Brand Image
	,263**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
Aspects of quality of products and services	,856**	,000	Brand image
	,694**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
product support services	,186**	,000	Brand image
	,057	,154	Image of sustainability activities
organizational competences	,746**	,000	Brand image
	,777**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
organizational responsibility	,342**	,000	Brand image
	,336**	,000	Image of sustainability activities

The above mentioned significance needs some explanation in order to interpret the results in a proper manner. Significance shows whether there is a trend within our data, as we interpret correlations it can be argued that if a correlation is significant we can assume that the direction (positive or negative) of the correlation indicates a trend (Laerhoven, 2012). Or as Field (2009) puts it "we can have confidence that this relationship is genuine and not a chance result"(p. 5).

From the table 7 it can be seen that in searching for variables that are at the root of a more positive brand image, among these seven factors, it is most likely that these are found in the factors "aspects of quality of products and services" and "organizational competences". This is because the correlations of 0.856 and 0.756, which means that if a person positively perceives the aspects of IKEA products and services and the organizational competences of IKEA, the more positive he or she will be about the IKEA brand. For the image of the sustainability activities of IKEA, these factors are "organizational competences" in the first place and secondly "aspects of quality and services", with a large correlation of respectively 0,777 and 0,694.

According to Pallant (2011) correlations of 0.10-0.29 are small correlations, from 0.30-0.49 are medium correlations and from 0.50-1.00 are large correlations. From the results in the table it can be seen that all types of correlations are found.

In addition, it is also interesting to test the correlation between the image of sustainability activities of IKEA and the more general brand image of IKEA as proposed in hypothesis 8.

Table 8. Correlation between image of sustainability activities and brand image.

Dependent factor	Correlation (Pearson)	Significance	Dependent factor
Image of sustainability activities	0,760	,000	Brand image

By finding this very large correlation hypothesis 8 is confirmed.

The two hypotheses, h.1.a and h.1.b (see p.46), on the category of personal characteristics, which turned into three factors in the factor analysis namely; "purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products"," attitude towards multinational corporations" and "previous experience with this company", are argued to be confirmed if we look at the results in table 7. For the factors "aspects of quality of products and services" and "product support services" (previously perceived features of products and services), the hypotheses h.6.a and h.6.b canbe confirmed. This is because the correlations between "aspects of quality of products and services" and "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities" are positive. But also since the correlations between "product support services" and "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities" are positive. Subsequently for the factor of "organizational competences" and "organizational responsibility" (previously perceived features of the company) the hypotheses h.7.a and h.7.b too can be confirmed (for hypotheses see p.47).

Worldviews have also been tested on correlations with the dependent factors. Therefore a different correlation coefficient is used namely the Spearman Rank Order Correlation.

Table 9. Correlation between worldviews and dependent factors. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Worldview	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
A1 (GE)	-,100*	,012	Brand image
	-,035	,517	Image of sustainability activities
A2 (LE)	-,034	,395	Brand image
	-,060	,275	Image of sustainability activities
B1 (GS)	,059	,144	Brand Image
	,029	,596	Image of sustainability activities
B2 (LS)	,052	,194	Brand image
	,049	,370	Image of sustainability activities

Regarding table 9 it should be noted that there is only one significant correlation. This is the correlation between the A1 worldview and brand image. This correlation is negative which indicates an inverse effect. Thus people with the A1 worldview are less positive about the IKEA brand.

If we now look at the hypotheses drawn for the category of worldviews it can be argued that hypothesis h.2.a. (p.46) should be rejected since the correlation that is found regarding this relationship is negative and significant. For hypothesis h.2.b. (p.46) it can be argued that this hypothesis cannot be confirmed nor rejected since correlations are extremely small and not significant. Hypothesis h.2.c cannot be confirmed nor rejected for the same reason as with hypothesis h.2.b. The last hypothesis regarding this category is hypothesis h.2.d. (p.46) and this hypothesis cannot be confirmed nor rejected too since correlations are extremely small and not significant.

Another independent category that should be discussed is the **definition of sustainability**. Based on the information available in the sustainability strategy of IKEA, there is also an "IKEA definition of sustainability", which is clarified in the methodology chapter. The hypothesis regarding this category is that if a person has the same definition of sustainability as IKEA, the more positive he or she will be about the activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable. Because this category focuses on sustainability, the

hypothesis is only regarding the dependent variable "image of sustainability activities". This hypothesis is: '*the more a respondent's definition of sustainability matches that of IKEA, the more positive the image is that the respondent has of the sustainability activities of IKEA'*. Thus, translating this into the 4 axes, if a respondent has the same score on an axis as IKEA it is expected that these respondents are more positive about the activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable.

Table 10. Correlations between axes of definition of sustainability and "image of sustainability activities" and "outsourcing"
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Axis	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
Weak-strong	-,075	,084	Image of sustainability activities
People- Nature	**-,096***	,039	Image of sustainability activities
Everywhere-South	-,051	,177	Image of sustainability activities
Status Quo-Transformative	,006	,457	Image of sustainability activities

From table 10 it can be seen that there in only one small negative correlation between how people define sustainability and how they view IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. The single significant negative correlation indicates that people who choose people on the people-nature axis do not have a positive image of sustainability activities that IKEA undertakes, despite the fact that IKEA also focuses on the people side of this axis. Since all axes have been transformed in such a manner that a positive score on that axis reflects the conformity with the definition of sustainability that IKEA employs, it is a bit strange that there is no positive relation to how the respondents judge the sustainability activities that IKEA undertakes. That is why hypothesis 3 can be rejected.

As now all variables of the personal categories (as distinguished in the conceptual model) are elaborated upon, we can now address the more general hypothesis 4:"*the better the score on the personal categories, the better the brand image of IKEA and the image of sustainability activities of IKEA*". It is argued that this hypothesis cannot be confirmed nor rejected since three out of five factors that are part of these "personal categories" are in support of this hypothesis while the other two are not.

Lastly, the **content analysis** provides us with a lot of knowledge about the content of various sources of communication and information. Also for this category sometimes dummy variables have to be created in order to calculate correlations (see methodology chapter). The following hypotheses were therefore drawn: "*the more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the brand image* "and "*the more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the image of the sustainability activities of IKEA*". First, all ways of communicating by IKEA are analyzed on the correlation to a more positive brand image or more positive image of sustainability activities. Before interpreting the results, it should be noted that all messages that IKEA communicates about itself and sustainability have a positive tone of content.

Table 11.Correlation between IKEA media messages and aggregated variable Brand image. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Type of IKEA communication	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
Press releases and text messages	,091*	,012	Brand Image
	,255**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
TV-commercials	,040	,157	Brand Image
	,136**	,006	Image of sustainability activities
Radio commercials	-,041	,151	Brand Image
	,049	,184	Image of sustainability activities
Internet	,249**	,000	Brand Image
	,251**	,000	Image of sustainability activities

What can be noted from the correlations found in table 11 is that there only exist small correlations. Press releases and text messages seem to positively correlate with "brand image" and with the image of "sustainability activities". Another positive significant correlation is found between TV-commercials and the "image of sustainability activities". Furthermore it can be seen from table 11 that messages on the IKEA website correlate significantly positive with both dependent factors.

The second type of communication that will be analyzed is newspapers. The ten most read newspapers that have been analyzed in the content analysis, will now be correlated to the dependent factors.

Table 12. Correlation between newspapers and brand image. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Newspaper	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
De Telegraaf	,173**	,000	Brand Image
	,136*	,012	Image of sustainability activities
Het AD	,011	,785	Brand Image
	,055	,317	Image of sustainability activities
De Volkskrant	-,005	,906	Brand Image
	,024	,665	Image of sustainability activities
Het NRC Handelsblad	,083*	,038	Brand Image
	,001	,981	Image of sustainability activities
NRC Next	,015	,711	Brand Image
	,038	,484	Image of sustainability activities
Trouw	,001	,975	Brand Image
	,007	,897	Image of sustainability activities
Reformatorisch dagblad	,055	,174	Brand Image
	,025	,644	Image of sustainability activities
Financieel dagblad	-,066	,102	Brand Image
	,010	,848	Image of sustainability activities
Metro	,073	,068	Brand Image
	,096	,078	Image of sustainability activities
Spits	,119**	,003	Brand Image
	,137*	,012	Image of sustainability activities
Newspaper scale	,155**	,000	Brand Image
	,167**	,002	Image of sustainability activities

As can be seen from table 12 some (very) small significant correlations are present between the newspapers; de Telegraaf, het NRC handelsblad, Sp!ts and the dependent factor "brand image". The newspaper, de Telegraaf and Sp!ts also positively correlate with the dependent factor of "image of sustainability activities". The last section in table 12 shows the correlations of a constructed scale variable for newspapers with the dependent factors, as explained in the methodology chapter. A value on this scale is the net amount of positive messages a person reads. From this it can be seen that the higher a respondent scores on the

"newspaper scale", the higher he or she valuates the brand IKEA and the sustainability activities of IKEA. This is inferred from the two significant small correlations.

Televison is also a medium through which messages about IKEA and their sustainability efforts are spread. The three messages that were broadcasted on national television about IKEA and sustainability are spread over two programs: de Keuringsdienst van Waarde and het half acht nieuws. Two messages in the "half acht nieuws" were negative about IKEA and sustainability related items and the episode of the "Keuringsdienst van Waarde" was positive.

Table 13. Correlation between TV programs and brand image. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

TV-program	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
De Keuringsdienst van Waarde	,176**	,000	Brand Image
	,136*	,012	Image of sustainability activities
Het half acht nieuws	,139**	,001	Brand Image
	,151**	,005	Image of sustainability activities
Television scale	-,075	,061	Brand Image
	-,110*	,045	Image of sustainability activities

It seems from table 13 that the found correlations are small but significant. However it is noteworthy that there is a positive correlation between the "half acht nieuws" and brand image since they have spread only negative messages about IKEA and their sustainability efforts. Therefore it can be argued that this is an indicator for something else. It can be seen in table 13 that watching either one of these shows positively correlates with "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities". In a similar way as for the newspapers a scale was constructed (see methodology chapter). The correlations of this scale with the dependent factors show an inverse effect; the higher the value on the scale the lesser the valuation of the sustainability activities that IKEA undertakes.

If we now take a look at the messages on the **internet** regarding IKEA and their sustainability efforts, we know from the content analysis that most messages (93%) on the internet are positive about IKEA and their activities to become more sustainable.

Table 14. Correlation between internet messages and brand image and image of sustainability activities *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Search for internet messages	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
Yes	,079*	,049	Brand image
	,194**	,000	Image of sustainability activities

From this table it becomes apparent that if people search for and read messages on the internet (through google.nl) about IKEA and their sustainability efforts that this positively influences the image they have of the brand IKEA and their image of the activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable.

The last medium included in the content analysis is the top five of **Dutch NGO's**. Four out of the five largest NGO's published messages about IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable. Almost all messages by all NGO's are positive about IKEA and their efforts to become sustainable. Therefore it is expected that if people are a donor of one of these NGO's or if they read the messages that these NGO's publish that they will be more positive about IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable.

Table 15 Correlation between NGO involvement and dependent variables. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

NGO	Connection to NGO	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
WNF	Donor	,036	,364	Brand Image
In research	Messages read	**_,142_****	,000	
population:	Donor	,087	,112	Image of sustainability activities
Donor: 17,2%	Messages read	**_,142_****	,009	
Messages read: 29,1%				
Natuurmonumenten	Donor	,036	,373	Brand Image
In research	Messages read	*,090**	,025	
population:				
Donor: 15%				
Messages read:29%				
	Donor	,040	,462	Image of sustainability activities
	Messages read	,118*	,030	
Unicef	Donor	,052	,197	Brand Image
In research	Messages read	**_,154_****	,000	
population:	Donor	,097	,074	Image of sustainability activities
Donor: 9,7%	Messages read	*,138**	,011	
Messages read:30,1%				
Greenpeace	Donor	,033	,410	Brand Image
In research	Messages read	**_,132_****	,001	
population:	Donor	,083	,130	Image of sustainability activities
Donor: 9,3%	Messages read	*,127**	,019	
Messages read:28,4%				

In table 15 it can be seen that for WNF small positive significant correlations exist between reading messages and the IKEA brand image, and the image that the respondents have of IKEA and the activities they undertake to become more sustainable. For Natuurmonumenten, Unicef and Greenpeace it can be seen that reading their messages positively correlates with the image of the brand IKEA and also with the "image of sustainability activities". From these results it can be argued that reading the messages of these NGO's has more influence than being a donor of these NGO's, on the brand image of IKEA that consumers hold.

Regarding the hypothesis on the content of media and the influence thereof on brand image and image of sustainability activities: *the more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the brand image* "and "*the more positive the content of the media that reaches the consumer, the more positive the image of the sustainability activities of IKEA"*, it can be argued that these are in most cases confirmed with small but significant correlations. Regarding the second research question; "w*hat is the role of communication/information about IKEA and their sustainability efforts in constructing the consumers' perception of IKEA in terms of sustainability?*". We can argue that the role of communication and information is limited if we look at the existing correlations, since these are small (if at all significant) correlations. By stating this, in combination with the conclusion of the content analysis it can be argued that there is a limited role for communication and information in shaping the consumers' brand image of IKEA and the image that a consumer holds of the sustainability activities that IKEA undertakes.

In order to test the last two hypotheses (h.9.a and h.9.b) on p.48 of this report, a correlation matrix (Spearman) between the control variables of loyalty and the dependent factors is now presented:

Table 16. Correlation matrix of Loyalty variables to dependent factors . **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Control variables	Correlation (Spearman)	Significance	Dependent factors
IKEA family member	,251**	,000	Brand image
	,114*	,042	Image of sustainability activities
How often do you visit IKEA	,425**	,000	Brand image
	,319**	,000	Image of sustainability activities
Did you ever buy IKEA products	,197**	,000	Brand image
	,101	,070	Image of sustainability activities
How often do you buy IKEA products	,339**	,000	Brand image
	,248**	,000	Image of sustainability activities

From this table it can be seen that the hypotheses can be confirmed. This is because we can interpret the results as being in support of the hypotheses and because the results (almost all) are significant.

5.6 Multicollinearity

Before a multiple regression analysis is conducted first a check for multicollinearity is held. Multicollinearity can exist when two independent variables correlate strongly, this means that these two variables explain the same variation in the dependent variable (Leiden Universiteit, 2013). In order to see whether multicollinearity consists between the independent variables and control variables, a correlation matrix was calculated using Spearman's R (because of the variety in types of variables). From this correlation matrix it was concluded that no very high (0.8 or 0.9) correlations can be found (Field, 2009). According to Field (2009) if two variables correlate very highly, then multicollinearity can be expected. However, a more sophisticated measure to discover multicollinearity is present in SPSS; the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Related to the VIF is the tolerance level (1/VIF), there are certain guidelines in order to indicate whether there is multicollinearity. These are that the value for VIF should not be greater than 10 and that the value for tolerance should not be below 0.1 and 0.2 can also be problematic (Field, 2009, p.242). In the case of this research no VIF values above 10 were found and no variables are below the tolerance value of 0.2. Therefore it is assumed that multicollinearity is not the case in our dataset.

5.7 Multiple regression

The multiple regression analysis is conducted in order to see what variables or combinations of variables predict the outcome on either of the two dependent variables (after factor analysis was applied). The independent variables are called predictors in multiple regression and have a related β-value (beta). This β -value (parameter) "quantifies the relationship between that predictor and the outcome" (A. Field, 2012).

If we conduct a normal multiple regression it is possible to uncover, which independent variables offer the largest contribution in explaining the dependent variables (brand image and image of sustainability activities). As Pallant (2011) states "which of the variables included in the model contributed to the prediction of the dependent variable" (p.161). In order to find which variables are more important than others in predicting the outcome variable it is necessary to look at the "standardized" coefficients since these are adjusted in order to be compared to each other (Pallant, 2011). The β-value tells us about the contribution of that variable in predicting the outcome variable. Therefore it can be argued

that with finding the largest beta value that "variable makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled for" (Pallant, 2011, p.161). However, it should not be forgotten that those values should also be significant in order to claim that variables make significant unique contributions in explaining the dependent variable. Therefore an overview of those factors that significantly (thus significance value under 0.05) contribute to predicting the dependent variables "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities" will be presented.

5.7.1 Multiple regression analysis

In the search for what determines a consumers' brand image and a consumers' image of sustainability activities of a big company, in this case IKEA, some variables have been thoroughly researched. In order to discover their strength in predicting the outcome of the dependent factors a multiple regression analysis was conducted. As stated before, we should look at the highest values of the standardized beta (β) to determine the explanatory strength of the variables. Additionally, in order to make sure that this contribution is unique we also have to check the significance (<0.05). If the value for the standardized Beta is not significant this might indicate that there is overlap between the independent variables in the analysis (Pallant, 2011, p.161). In this multiple regression analysis the socio-demographic variables and loyalty variables were included in order to control for the effect of these variables.

From table 17 it can be seen that all variables can explain 78,6%(R Square value) of the variance in the dependent factor: brand image (after factor analysis was applied). However, only the variables that contributed significantly are presented. The "image of sustainability activities" can be explained for 71,9% by the included explanatory variables.

Table 17. Significant unique contributions found in multiple regression analysis of possible explanations for the dependent factors (values are significant <0,05).

Dependent factors →	Brand image		Image of sustainability activities	
	R^2= 0,785		R^2= 0,719	
Explanatory variables	β	Sig.=0.000	β	Sig.=0.000
Frequency of IKEA visit	,108	,002		
Ever purchased IKEA products			-,091	,010
Purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products			,143	,000
Attitude towards multinational companies			,119	,001
IKEA information press release			,122	,001
WNF messages	,087	,039		
Aspects of quality of products and services	,645	,000	,174	,006
Organizational competences	,207	,000	,579	,000

The variables that have a significant unique contribution to explaining the variance in "brand image" will now be briefly discussed. The variable "aspects of quality of products and services "has the largest unique significant contribution in explaining the variance in "brand image". The β-value of 0,612 indicates a large positive contribution, thus if something changes in a positive sense in this variable it also has a positive effect on the score of the dependent factor. Furthermore, "organizational competences" also contributes, but to a lesser extent, to explaining variance in "brand image". In addition, as can be seen from table 17 the frequency of visiting IKEA and reading messages about IKEA published by WNF are explanatory for the brand image of IKEA that people hold.

Some of the variables that have significant unique contributions to explaining the variance in "image of sustainability activities" are discussed. First of all, the variable that has the largest share in explaining "image of sustainability activities" is "organizational competences" which entails elements like competent management, benevolence and innovativeness of the organization and some others. Also, "aspects of quality of products and services" contributes to explaining the variance in "image of sustainability activities". More personally related explanations can be found in the variables "purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products" and "attitude towards multinational companies". What can also be noted from table 17 is that the IKEA press releases on sustainability seem to significantly contribute to explaining the "image of sustainability activities" of IKEA. Additionally, the smallest significant unique contribution is a negative one. In this case it means that those respondents who have bought IKEA products are less positive about the "image of sustainability activities".

Conclusion of the survey results chapter

At the beginning of this research some research questions were drawn in order to provide the research some structure. At that time a question was drawn which was supposed to be answered with the outcome of the statistical analysis; *what are the most influential, elements or combinations of elements, in the process of explaining a perception in consumers' minds regarding the corporate sustainability image of IKEA?* .Through interpretation of the results of the various statistical tests that have been conducted in this chapter it can be argued that this sub-research question is answered. In general it can be argued that for the general "brand image" and the "image of sustainability activities" the same variables offer the largest share in explaining the variance of the two dependent variables. However, for the different dependent variables the two explanatory variables have different weights. For brand image "aspects of quality of products and services" explains most of the variance. Whereas, for "image of sustainability activities", the variable "organizational competences" explains most of the variance.

6. Discussion

In this chapter all critical considerations regarding this research are discussed. Therefore at first the methodology of the different parts of the research will be discussed. Thereby the question is raised if all sub-research questions have been answered in an appropriate way? Were the right analyses chosen and do the results really provide an answer to the questions? Regarding these questions we will follow the research structure.

Thus the first chapter is the literature review; the literature review was mainly used in order to discover factors that are influential in the process of shaping a certain perception of a company by consumers. Since much has been written about corporate image/brand image/corporate sustainability etc., it seemed as if this was the right decision. However it could be argued that in this phase of the research in addition to the extensive literature review also exploratory interviews with consumers could be held in order to supplement what is found in literature. On the other hand the literature on this topic was quite extensive and studied from many perspectives that additional interviews might not have contributed that much and within the time frame of this research it might not have been possible to also conduct exploratory interviews. Therefore the choice was made to leave it at an extensive literature review, which provided enough information to answer sub-research question 1.

As it became clear from the literature review that information is crucial in shaping a consumers' perception of a company, whether or not in terms of sustainability, it was necessary to include this in the research. This was done by means of a content analysis; this resulted in a sub-research within this research. In order to be as inclusive as possible most sources that provide of content of all messages and the pillar of sustainability it addressed, were communication and information on IKEA and their sustainability efforts were included in the content analysis. In short these were: messages by IKEA itself, messages in Dutch newspapers, messages on Dutch television, messages on internet and messages by Dutch NGO's. The tone of content the messages are analyzed and are schematically presented in the content analysis chapter. This provides the research with insight in what information and communication is available and what the overall tone of content of the different types of media is. However it can be argued that this content analysis could have been more extensive. But choices had to be made with respect for the time span of this study, therefore for every medium a certain number of sources have been analyzed. Nevertheless, the insights gained after this content analysis contributed to partially answering sub-research question 2.

The last phase of the research is the statistical analysis of the results of the survey. In the survey the factors found in the literature review have been translated into a questionnaire. This questionnaire was eventually sent out to 824 people which are regarded to be a sample of "Dutch consumers". When the results returned, statistical analysis was applied to the data. First, a factor analysis was conducted in order to see if the constructed categories from the literature study also had a statistical foundation. After this some adjustments were made to the conceptual model since some old factors needed to be split up into two or more new factors. These new factors formed the input for the correlation and multiple regression analysis Secondly, correlations were calculated in order to test the hypotheses drawn after the operationalization. Then these new factors formed the input for

multiple regression analysis which in addition to the correlation analysis provides the research with explanatory factors. All these analyses were conducted in order to see what role the different distinguished factors had on the dependent variables of "brand image", and most importantly "the image of sustainability activities". It could be argued that even more and detailed analyses could have been conducted, but in order to provide an answer to sub-questions 3 and 4 these analyses were sufficient. Therefore it is argued that the appropriate statistical tests were chosen in order to get the results that are needed in order to answer the main research question, which will be addressed in the conclusion.

6.1 Causality
In every research there is the issue of pursuing causality, as research attempts to find out the truth and this is a complicated matter. Therefore there are the three preconditions for claiming that a causal relation is found; non-spuriousness, covariance and asymmetry. First of all it should be noted that methods are used in order to get as close to a causal relationship as possible.

Therefore if we firstly address the issue of asymmetry which is that the cause should precede the effect (x comes before y in time) (Laerhoven, 2012). This is always hard to prove, but still this is taken into account in this research since correlations (some) have been calculated one-tailed, which indicates a direction within the relation and with the multiple regression analysis it can be seen that much of the variance in the dependent variables can be explained by the independent variables. Therefore asymmetry is assumed.

Secondly, the issue of covariance; is the cause in any sense related to the effect? (Laerhoven, 2012). In this case it can be said that covariance is addressed, since all variables have been tested for correlations to the independent variables and some were found to correlate positively, some negatively and some did not correlate at all with the dependent variables. As correlations are a standardized form of covariance it can thus be argued that this has been accounted for.

Non-spuriousness is the third and last precondition of causality which means that: "we can find no other plausible explanation for the effect, other than the cause" (Laerhoven, 2012, sheet 21/53). This is of course really hard to claim, since it is not possible to include all possible causes for the effect in a research. Often, so called "control variables" are included in the research in order to, at least control for things such as age or gender. In this research also control (or intermediating) variables were taken into account next to the straightforward causes (factors/variables) found in literature. But it can be seen from the multiple regression analysis that the variables that were found in literature and tested through the survey in order to explain the dependent variables, could explain respectively 72,9% and 64,4% of the variance in "brand image" and "image of sustainability activities". Those percentages can be argued to be very decent scores. However, it is not possible to be absolutely sure that there are no other explanations for the result that is found.

Above all, it should be noted that research is conducted and methods are used in order to approach the truth. True causality is (almost) impossible. In this research various research methods are applied in order to account for all preconditions of causality.

7. Recommendations

At the beginning of this research IKEA the Netherlands was interested in which factors determined the image that consumers have of their company in terms of sustainability since their current "sustainability image" was not what they aimed for. Therefore the question was raised by IKEA "which things should we change in order to improve our image in the field of sustainability". In the course of this research some factors were identified that play a role in forming a consumers' perception of a company in terms of sustainability. In order to test whether these factors were truly determinative of the consumer perception an extensive large scale survey was held. However, after thorough analysis of these factors, by means of content analysis and several types of statistical analysis, it became clear which of these factors have the greatest explanatory power.

These recommendations will provide the research with an answer to the fourth and last sub-research question; "w*hich factors should be addressed and above all, how could these be addressed, in order to create an improved image of IKEA in terms of sustainability among consumers?* ". The factors that are to be addressed can be derived from the multiple regression analysis, since the individual explanatory strength of each of the factor is calculated. Those factors (after factor analysis) that can explain the variance in "image of sustainability activities", in order of magnitude, are; *organizational competences (β 0.579), aspects of quality of products and services (β 0,174), purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products (β 0,143), IKEA information through press releases (β 0,122), attitude towards multinational companies (β 0,119) and "ever purchased IKEA products" (β -0,091).*

As it is almost impossible to change those factors that are personal, which are "purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products" and "attitude towards multinational companies", no recommendations on those factors will be formulated. However, the importance of these factors should be kept in mind while thinking about or conveying the image of IKEA in terms of sustainability.

Thus in order to improve the perceived image of IKEA in terms of sustainability the following recommendations are formulated:

❖ *1. As the factor of "organizational competences" has the greatest explanatory strength regarding the perceived image of IKEA in terms of sustainability, that image could probably be improved by addressing the elements that form the factor of "organizational competences". Insight in those competences might be achieved by being transparent about the business operations and will probably contribute to an even higher valuation of these competences resulting in a better "image of sustainability activities". This transparency offers the consumer a way to get an understanding of the versatility of subjects that the IKEA organization has to address. However, transparency should be as objective as possible since there is a risk for green washing which has an adverse impact on "image of sustainability activities".*

❖ *2. Aspects of quality of products and services are the second determinant when it comes to the perceived image of IKEA in terms of sustainability. Improving the quality of products will thus be beneficial for the perceived image of IKEA in terms of sustainability. As well as improving the quality of services. Improving the quality of products will probably lead to higher durability of products which makes them more sustainable (since fewer items have to be produced in the first place). However, prices should stay low and modernity should be ensured since otherwise it*

would not be following the IKEA business idea: "offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them."(IKEA, 2012). It should be noted that the Dutch IKEA organization cannot change production by itself, but it can send an advice or request to IKEA of Sweden (design and development) to put quality aspects on the agenda.

- ❖ *3. Quality of services could be improved by expanding services that make shopping at IKEA even more comfortable and sustainable. This could be done for example in terms of offering end-of-life solutions for IKEA products, recycling of materials or other services that contribute to a more sustainable shopping experience.*

- ❖ *4. The third explanatory factor is "IKEA information through press releases", it should however be noted that this only has a small, but significant, unique contribution in explaining "image of sustainability activities". Thus communication from IKEA about their efforts to become more sustainable is most effective when carried out by press releases. Therefore more thorough use of that communication channel is recommended, however caution should be exercised because of the risk of "green washing".*

- ❖ *5. Whether people have ever bought IKEA products also seems to explain a little bit of the variance in "image of sustainability activities". This explanation is in a negative direction. Thus those consumers who have ever bought IKEA products have a less positive image of the sustainability activities that IKEA undertakes. As this explanatory factor is about IKEA products it can be argued that the cause of this less positive image of IKEA and their activities to become more sustainable, also should be sought in aspects of the product. However, more in depth research is necessary to find what is exactly at the root of this explanatory factor.*

Another recommendation apart from the recommendations regarding the factors from the multiple regression analysis is made:

- ❖ *6. As argued in the discussion, research is an attempt to uncover causality and therefore it should be noted that further research on the perceived image of IKEA and their efforts to become more sustainable is necessary in order to determine the absolute effects of the findings of this study. In other words; measure whether the "image of sustainability activities" has improved. This could be in the form of an evaluation of this research after implementation of the recommendations or as IKEA did before in the form of the frequent Brand Capital research.*

8. Conclusion

In this conclusion chapter an answer to the main research question is provided. This will be an amalgamation of the answers to the sub-questions since these have been drawn in order to divide the research process in several steps. The main research question is formulated as: "What determines the perception that consumers have of a large international company (IKEA) in terms of sustainability and how can a company (IKEA) effectively steer towards an improved perception by consumers in terms of sustainability?"

Previous research provides us with many variables that are argued to be of influence on the perception that consumers have of companies and more specifically on those activities that companies undertake to become more sustainable. These "many" variables from literature have been reduced to three categories and are subsequently supplemented by three other categories in the process of operationalization. Eventually the categories, on which the research builds are: personal characteristics, worldviews, definition of sustainability, sources of information, perceived features of products and services and perceived features of the company. A special category is "sources of information". This is a special category because in literature information is argued to be one of the main determinants of a consumers' perception since the image that a company wants to have is conveyed through communication. Therefore a content analysis of various media is conducted in order to get a sense of what is out in the media about IKEA and sustainability. In order to gather data on these, partially from literature derived, independent categories and dependent categories (brand image and image of sustainability activities) an extensive large scale survey was held (824 respondents). Subsequently, in order to determine the strength of each of these categories statistical analysis is required.

First, the categories that were constructed during the operationalization phase are tested on statistical consistency by means of factor analysis. As a result of the factor analysis some categories had to be split into two categories. These new categories (factors) are the input for calculating correlations and multiple regression analysis in which the relations and explanatory strength of each of the factors becomes clear. Secondly, correlations have been calculated in order to see if there are relations between the independent and dependent categories at all. Subsequently, the final statistical analysis is: multiple regression analysis. From this we find that the factors (in order of magnitude); organizational competences, aspects of quality of products and services, purchase attitude regarding environmental friendly products, IKEA information through press releases, attitude towards multinational companies and "ever purchased IKEA products", are the factors that have significant explanatory strength in explaining the variance in the dependent variable image of sustainability activities. As argued in the recommendations, the factors of this enumeration that are attitudes are part of the "personal categories"(see conceptual model figure 50) and are therefore hard to change for IKEA. Therefore it is not attempted to formulate recommendations regarding these factors. However, the other factors can be adjusted by IKEA. Thus these three factors are argued to determine for a large share the perception that consumers have of IKEA in terms of sustainability.

In the recommendations ways in which these factors can be addressed are presented. In short, the recommendations are; to be transparent about the IKEA business operations as this creates higher valuation of organizational competences resulting in a better "image of

sustainability activities", product quality improvement while ensuring low prices and modernity, expand services range with services that make the shopping experience at IKEA more sustainable, more thorough use of IKEA press releases to convey sustainability messages and more research regarding the experience that consumers have with IKEA products. The sixth recommendation of this research poses that an evaluative study after implementation of the recommendations of this study can determine whether the recommendations have been effective, thus have led to a better image of the activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable.

Concluding this research it can be said that IKEA has done a good job so far but following the IKEA spirit it can be argued that:

__Most things still remain to be done. A glorious future!__
(Ingvar Kamprad, founder of IKEA)

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Appendices

Appendix I

Operationalization table

Independent Variables	Operationalization	Question in survey	Answer model	Statistical test
Personal characteristics	General attitude to brands (and companies)	General 1. I do not trust big multinational companies 2. The previous experience I have with a brand is important Sustainability related 3. I do not think that big companies address environmental issues 4.When buying/shopping for an environmentally sound product and brand I am willing to: - travel further than absolutely necessary - pay more than absolutely necessary -give in on the functional performance of the product 5. When buying a product with a reduced environmental impact, I do not mind that there is no individual benefit for me	Likert-Scale From totally agree to totally disagree	
Worldview	General identification with one of the 4 worldviews. Based on two axes that form the rough division between 4 worldviews	Government 1.1 Europe is a large and powerful player in the world and the Dutch government stimulates expansion of the European Union 1.2 The role of the European Union is restricted and international politics of the Dutch government should only address key tasks Technology 2.1 Energy shortage is resolved by new inventions and technology, and people are wherever possible replaced by machines and software 2.2 Technology will primarily be used in solving (global) societal problems and it will be used to improve our mutual collaboration and communication Economy 3.1 Successful global liberalization of trade has taken place and large multinational companies are of great influence on the economy, corporate social responsibility is the new standard and companies are internationally oriented 3.2 There is less international trade and therefore there is less competition from other countries. The Dutch citizens buy mainly Dutch and regional food and trade liberalization is limited, there is policy to protect domestic industries Ecology 4.1 Companies and citizens themselves are responsible for the environment and nature conservation is important as long as it does not hinder economic growth, hence only cheap environmental measures are taken 4.2 People think that nature is important in itself without a predetermined function and citizens and the government put more effort into the prevention of environmental problems.	Compulsory choice	

Definition of sustainability	general attitude towards sustainable development (4 definitions possible)	1. 1The earth provides us with a number of things, such as clean water and air, which cannot be replaced by human interventions. If we want to keep these "things" , the rich people in the world should live less luxurious lives(strong) 1.2 Human interventions such as the development of new technologies can replace natural resources and growth of the global market does not necessarily mean that there is more pressure on the environment (nature, resources etc)(weak) 2.1 Animals and plants have the same rights as humans and are equally important as humans for the existence and preservation of this earth. (nature) 2.2 We should only focus on the current generation of people and on how justice and resources are distributed among those people(people) 3.1 In order to keep this earth as it is, we need to primarily solve issues in third world countries(south) 3.2 Everywhere in this world there are issues that need our attention if we want to preserve the earth for future generations (everywhere) 4.1 In order to preserve the earth, it is unavoidable that this should be done in a way that creates market opportunities (Status quo) 4.2 If we want to preserve this earth for future generations it is necessary to change the way in which we do business(economy) and how we govern this earth (power). (transformative) 5. I think we should preserve the earth for future generations	Compulsory choice	
Sources of information	Contact with the different analyzed media	1 .In what way do you receive messages about IKEA and sustainability? 2. What newspaper do you read? 3. Did you see one of the (analyzed) TV programs? 4. Did you ever search for information on IKEA and sustainability on google.nl? 5. Are you a donor of one of the 5 largest Dutch ngo's or do you read their messages?	various	
Perceived features of products and services	Image of products and services of IKEA (value)	1.The price/quality ratio of IKEA products is always good 2.The products offered by IKEA are never modern 3. The services that IKEA offers are always reliable 4.The services offered at IKEA are always undertaken by staff with too little expertise 5.The products and services of IKEA are always provided with sufficient labeling or indication 6.The IKEA customer-service is always poor	Likert-Scale From totally agree to totally disagree also include a category "I don't know"	
Perceived features of the company(organization)	Image of the maker, the IKEA organization (value)	1. The IKEA organization has a poor innovative ability 2. The IKEA organization is a benevolent organization 3. The IKEA organization has incompetent management 4. The IKEA organization differentiates itself from competitors 5. The IKEA organization has poor relationship commitment towards its customers 6. The IKEA organization has a lot of environmental knowledge 7. The IKEA organization is an unstable organization 8. The IKEA organization has sound finances 9. The IKEA organization abuses its power	Likert-Scale From totally agree to totally disagree also include a category "I don't know"	
Dependent variables				
Brand image/perception	The valuation of the IKEA brand (Brand Equity)	1. I am willing to pay a price premium for the IKEA brand 2. I would recommend the IKEA brand to others 3. I was satisfied with the IKEA product or service during my last use experience 4. I would buy the IKEA brand on the next opportunity 5. In comparison to alternative brands the IKEA brand has high quality 6. In comparison to other brands, the IKEA brand is the best in its category 7. In comparison to other brands, the IKEA brand has consistent quality 8. In comparison to others IKEA is favorably priced	Likert-Scale From totally agree to totally disagree + (weet niet/ niet van toepasing)	

		9. I am willing to buy IKEA extensions 10. I trust IKEA as a brand 11. I think the IKEA brand is credible 12. In comparison to other brands the IKEA brand is different 13. In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is the leading brand 14. In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is growing in popularity 15. In comparison with alternative brands, IKEA is innovative		
Image of IKEA's sustainability activities	The valuation of the efforts of IKEA to become more sustainable	General 1.The activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable cost a lot of effort 2. The activities that IKEA undertakes to become more sustainable make a lot of difference Planet 3. IKEA produces and offers products that conserve energy 4. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent the exploitation of natural resources without financial compensation 5. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent pollution 6. IKEA does its utmost best to protect animals 7. IKEA addresses environmental issues People 8. IKEA cares about the community 9. IKEA protects jobs of local workers 10. IKEA is an employer that offers equal opportunities for employees 11. IKEA treats suppliers and their employees well 12. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent exploitation of labor in (overseas) communities 13. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent child labor 14. IKEAs' outsourcing of labor to other countries is a bad thing 15. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent discrimination among employees 16. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent dangerous working conditions 17. IKEA does its utmost best to prevent unusually long working hours Prosperity 18. IKEA invests in socially responsible projects 19. IKEA clearly shows that they are not tolerating bribery	Likert-Scale From totally agree to totally disagree + (weet niet/ niet van toepasing	

Appendix II

Globalisering

Prestatiemaatschappij

"Zolang het met onze economie goed gaat, gaat het goed met ons en andere (ook arme) delen van de wereld'.

We moeten zorgen dat we blijven groeien, presteren, sneller en vooruit gaan en mooier en beter zijn. Concurrentie tussen landen, mensen en bedrijven is alleen maar goed; het verhoogt de kwaliteit en de efficiency en houdt de prijzen scherp. Ook biedt het meer mogelijkheid tot zelfontplooiing.

Presteren en/of geld verdienen is belangrijk. We willen een luxe, comfortabel en vooral ook stimulerend leven leiden zowel zakelijk als privé. Een omgeving hebben die veel kansen en uitdagingen biedt.

Te veel bemoeienis en betutteling van de overheid stellen we niet op prijs. Meer efficiency betekent ook een kleinere overheid dus meer privatiseren en minder uitkeringen.

Iedereen moet voor zichzelf zorgen en voor zichzelf opkomen. We regelen onze zaakjes zelf wel, je moet het zelf doen!".

Het internationale en nationale gemeenschappelijk welzijn

"Geld alleen maakt niet gelukkig", ook kwaliteit van het leven (van jezelf en van anderen in de wereld) is belangrijk. Je hebt wat voor anderen in de samenleving over en bent er ook verantwoordelijk voor. Je bent bereid daar iets van jezelf voor in te leveren.

Maatschappelijke problemen als veiligheid, zorg voor ouderen en kinderen, honger in de derde wereld en milieu kunnen niet door de marktwerking worden opgelost. Overheden en maatschappelijke instellingen moeten hiervoor zorgen. Collectieve voorzieningen zijn onmisbaar.

Vrijheid en materiele welvaart zijn belangrijk, maar binnen bepaalde, geaccepteerde grenzen."

Efficiency ←→ **Equity**

Een samenleving met gevoel voor gemeenschapzin

"We maken ons zorgen om onze veiligheid en onze welvaart. We moeten meer opkomen voor onszelf en onze eigen cultuur en onze normen en waarden niet laten verwateren. De politiek moet goed naar de problemen van de mensen luisteren.

Nederland is Nederland niet meer. Het toenemend terrorisme, de toenemende criminaliteit, de open grenzen etc. vormen een bedreiging voor ons allen en onze economie. De politiek moet deze bedreigingen wegnemen; de overheid heeft als taak ons te beschermen. De verzorgingsstaat is niet meer van deze tijd en maakt mensen lui. Laat maar meer aan de markt over: loon naar werken. We willen geen belasting betalen zonder daar daadwerkelijk iets voor terug te zien. Onze eigen problematiek is belangrijker dan die van Europa en de rest van de wereld. Van een verenigd Europa is toch geen sprake daarvoor lopen de meningen, visies en belangen van de landen te veel uiteen. We zijn niet verantwoordelijk voor het oplossen van de sores van een ander; bovendien is het de vraag of we de ander wel kunnen helpen.

Op deze manier behouden we wat we hebben en kunnen we een leuk en comfortabel leven leiden.

De besloten, veilige en leefbare samenleving

"We willen de 'menselijke maat' weer in ons leven terugbrengen. We kunnen ons zorgen maken om de hele wereld en Europa, maar daar hebben we als individu toch niet veel invloed op. Dat staat veel te ver van ons af. Veel belangrijker is dat het met onszelf en onze eigen directe sociale leefomgeving goed gaat. Er is meer aandacht voor elkaar.

De overheid staat dichter bij de mensen; de lokale overheid speelt een grote rol. Het hoeft allemaal niet verder, uitdagender, hoger, meer en sneller.

We zijn meer op elkaar ingesteld en vrijwilligerswerk is ook belangrijk in de voorziening van allerlei behoeften op het gebied van zorg. Elkaar aanspreken op elkaars gedrag; meer sociale controle.

We hebben behoefte aan meer gemeenschapszin; met eigen initiatieven komen om anderen te verzorgen en om de kwaliteit van onze eigen woon – en leefomgeving te verbeteren. We moeten niet meer zo langs elkaar heen leven; we moeten iets voor een ander over hebben zonder dat je daar iets voor terugvraagt. Het vertrouwen in elkaar moet weer terugkomen"

Regionalisering

Worldview descriptions. (Milieu- en Natuurplanbureau, Waardenoriëntaties, wereldbeelden en maatschappelijke vraagstukken, 2006, p.39).

Appendix III

The Survey (Questionnaire)

Survey Consumentenperceptie

Welkom bij dit onderzoek, leuk dat u mee wilt doen!
Het onderzoek zal tussen de 10 en 15 minuten van uw tijd in beslag nemen. Uw antwoorden zijn van grote waarde voor ons en u blijft anoniem.

De onderstaande survey vormt een belangrijk onderdeel van een onderzoek naar de consumentenperceptie van inspanningen van grote bedrijven, gericht op behoud van de kwaliteit van de natuurlijke omgeving en welzijn van mensen op de gehele aarde, voor nu en toekomstige generaties. In deze survey wordt onderzocht welke factoren een rol spelen bij het vormen van deze specifieke perceptie.

De survey bestaat uit een aantal vragen en een aantal stellingen met meerkeuze antwoorden. De vragen en stellingen zijn gebaseerd op een uitgebreid vooronderzoek naar mogelijke factoren die een rol kunnen spelen in het perceptievormingsproces.

Deze eerste vragen betreffen vragen over sociaal demografische gegevens.
Q1.Wat is uw leeftijd?
......
Q2.Wat is uw geslacht?
Man / Vrouw

Q3.Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde opleiding?Vink aan wat van toepassing is.	
Basisonderwijs	
Middelbare school	
LBO	
MBO	
HBO	
WO	

Q4.Wat is uw woonsituatie? Vink aan wat van toepassing is.	
Alleenstaand zonder kinderen	
Alleenstaand met kinderen	
Samenwonend/getrouwd zonder kinderen	
Samenwonend/getrouwd met kinderen	
Anders	

Q5. Wat is uw netto inkomen per maand? Het bedrag dat u maandelijks op uw rekening gestort krijgt. Vink aan wat van toepassing is.	
Minimumloon – modaal (600-1800 euro/maand)	
Modaal tot 1,5 keer modaal (1800 - 2700 euro/maand)	
1,5 keer modaal – 2 keer modaal (2700-3600 euro/maand)	
2 keer modaal – 3 keer modaal (3600 -5400 euro/maand)	
Meer dan 3 keer modaal (5400 euro/ maand of meer)	

De volgende drie stellingen zijn een algemene peiling naar de perceptie die u heeft van IKEA en hun inspanningen om de aarde en het welzijn van de mensen te behouden voor toekomstige generaties. In het geval u geen ervaring heeft met IKEA vul dan "weet niet" in.

Stelling: "IKEA"	Helemaal oneens	Enigszins oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins eens	Helemaal eens	Weet niet
Q6_1. Zorgt ervoor dat werknemers bij toeleverende fabrikanten over de hele wereld goed worden behandeld						
Q6_2. Is een onderneming die praktisch laat zien dat zij verantwoordelijkheid accepteert voor het milieu						
Q6_3. Is een onderneming die praktisch laat zien dat zij verantwoordelijkheid accepteert voor de gemeenschap						

Nu volgen er een aantal stellingen over uw houding tegenover grote bedrijven waarbij u kunt aangeven in hoeverre u het eens bent met deze stellingen.

Stelling	Helemaal	Enigszins	Neutraal	Enigszins	Helemaal

	oneens	oneens		eens	eens
Q7_1. Ik vertrouw grote internationale bedrijven nooit					
Q7_2.De eerdere ervaring die ik heb met een merk is belangrijk					
Q7_3. Ik denk niet dat grote bedrijven de milieuproblematiek aanpakken					
Q7_4. Voor het kopen van een milieuvriendelijk product ben ik bereid om verder te reizen dan strikt noodzakelijk					
Q7_5. Voor het kopen van een milieuvriendelijk product ben ik bereid om meer te betalen dan strikt noodzakelijk					
Q7_6. Voor het kopen van een milieuvriendelijk product ben ik bereid om genoegen te nemen met minder goede functionele prestaties van het product					
Q7_7. Ik koop milieuvriendelijke producten omdat het bijdraagt aan het behoud van de aarde					

De volgende stellingen gaan over hoe u denkt dat ontwikkelingen met betrekking tot het behoud van de aarde en bescherming van het welzijn van de mensen zouden moeten plaatsvinden.
Er worden twee stellingen gepresenteerd waarbij het de bedoeling is dat u die stelling kiest (aankruist) die het meest bij u past, dus een van beide (a OF b).

Q8. "Ik vind dat":

a. De Nederlandse overheid de uitbreiding van de Europese Unie (EU) zou moeten stimuleren	
b. De internationale politiek van de Nederlandse regering zich zou moeten beperken tot kerntaken	

Q9. "Ik vind dat":

a. Technologie, menselijke taken zou moeten kunnen vervangen en energietekorten zou moeten kunnen oplossen	
b. Technologie, zou kunnen worden ingezet ter ondersteuning van menselijk werk en kan helpen bij het oplossen van maatschappelijke problemen	

Q10. "Ik vind dat":

a. Uitbreiding van internationale handel plaats zou moeten vinden waarbij grote internationale ondernemingen dan veel invloed hebben op de economie	
b. Beperking van internationale handel plaats zou moeten vinden en regionale producten en productiewijzen voorzien dan in het aanbod	

Q11. "Ik vind dat":

a. De economische groei belangrijker zou moeten zijn dan bescherming van het milieu en natuurbehoud	
b. De natuur belangrijk zou moeten zijn voor mensen zonder dat we er direct een functie aan toekennen (bijvoorbeeld recreatie)	

De volgende stellingen gaan over hoe u vindt dat we de aarde moeten behandelen en wat de verantwoordelijkheid van de mensen daarbij is. Er

worden twee stellingen gepresenteerd waarbij het de bedoeling is dat u die stelling kiest (aankruist) die het meest bij u past, dus een van beide (a OF b).

Q12.*"Volgens mij"*:

a. Levert de aarde ons hulpbronnen (aardolie, gas en schoon water), deze zullen niet kunnen worden vervangen door menselijk ingrijpen	
b. Zullen nieuwe technologieën, natuurlijke hulpbronnen (aardolie, gas en schoon water) kunnen vervangen	

Q13. *"We nemen onze verantwoordelijkheid voor de aarde wanneer we"*:

a. Evenveel aandacht schenken aan dieren en planten als aan mensen want deze hebben dezelfde rechten en zijn net zo belangrijk voor het voortbestaan van de aarde	
b. Ons alleen te richten op de huidige generatie mensen	

Q14." *Om deze aarde te houden zoals deze nu is, ben ik van mening dat*":

a. het nodig is dat we in de eerste plaats problemen in derde wereld landen zouden moeten oplossen	
b. het nodig is dat we eerst de problemen thuis, ofwel lokaal zouden moeten oplossen	

Q15." We kunnen de aarde behouden door:"

a. marktwerking, dit behoud zou samen moeten gaan met kansen voor de markt en bedrijven	
b. het drastisch veranderen van economische- en machtsstructuren in onze samenleving	

Q16. Ik vind dat we de aarde en de gemeenschap dienen te behouden voor toekomstige generaties

helemaal niet mee eens - niet mee eens – neutraal - mee eens -helemaal mee eens

----

Vanaf dit moment zullen er specifieke vragen gesteld worden over het woonwarenhuis IKEA. De volgende vragen zullen gaan over hoe vaak u een IKEA winkel bezoekt en of u wel eens IKEA producten aanschaft.

Q17. Hoe vaak komt u bij IKEA ? Vink aan wat van toepassing is.	
Ik ben er nog nooit geweest (ga door naar vraag 21)	
Ik kom er minder dan eens per jaar	
Ik kom er eens per jaar	
Ik kom er eens per half jaar	
Ik kom er eens per maand	
Ik kom er meer dan een keer per maand	

Q18.Bent u lid van IKEA FAMILY?
- Ja
-Nee

Q19. Heeft u ooit IKEA producten aangeschaft?
- Ja (ga door naar vraag 20)
-Nee (ga door naar vraag 21)

Q20. Hoe vaak schaft u IKEA producten aan? Welke frequentie is het beste van

toepassing?	
Minder dan 1x per jaar	
1x per jaar	
1x per half jaar	
1x per maand	
Meer dan 1x per maand	

De volgende stellingen gaan over uw waardering van het IKEA merk. Wanneer u geen ervaring heeft met het IKEA merk, kies dan de antwoordmogelijkheid "weet ik niet". Als u denkt aan IKEA, in welke mate bent u het dan eens of oneens met de volgende beweringen? Het gaat er dus niet om wat u feitelijk weet over IKEA.

Stelling	Helemaal oneens	Enigszins oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins eens	Helemaal eens	Weet ik niet
Q21_1. Ik ben bereid om een hogere prijs te betalen voor het IKEA merk						
Q21_2. Ik zou het IKEA merk aan anderen aanbevelen						
Q21_3. Ik ben tevreden met het IKEA product op basis van mijn laatste ervaring						
Q21_4.Bij een volgende gelegenheid zou ik opnieuw IKEA producten kopen						
Q21_5. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, heeft het IKEA merk een hoge kwaliteit						
Q21_6. Voor woninginrichting is IKEA het beste merk ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken						
Q21_7. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, heeft het IKEA merk een constante kwaliteit						
Q21_8. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, is het IKEA merk gunstig geprijsd						
Q21_9. Ik ben bereid om uitbreidingen op mijn IKEA product te kopen						
Q21_10. Ik vertrouw het IKEA merk						
Q21_11. Ik vind het IKEA merk geloofwaardig						
Q21_12. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, onderscheidt het IKEA merk zich						
Q21_13. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, is IKEA het toonaangevende merk						
Q21_14. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, groeit IKEA in populariteit						
Q21_15. Ten opzichte van vergelijkbare merken, is IKEA innovatief						

De volgende stellingen gaan over de inspanningen van IKEA om de aarde en het welzijn van de mensen te behouden voor nu en toekomstige generaties. *Als u denkt aan IKEA, in welke mate bent u het dan eens of oneens met de volgende beweringen?*

Stelling	Helemaal oneens	Enigszins oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins eens	Helemaal eens	Weet ik niet
Q22_01. De activiteiten die IKEA onderneemt om de aarde te behouden kosten veel moeite						
Q2_02. De activiteiten die IKEA onderneemt om de aarde te behouden maken een groot verschil						
Q22_03. IKEA produceert en verkoopt voldoende producten die energie besparen						
Q22_04. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om de exploitatie van de natuurlijke hulpbronnen zonder financiële compensatie te voorkomen						
Q22_05. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om vervuiling te voorkomen						
Q22_06. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om dieren te beschermen						
Q22_07. IKEA besteedt voldoende aandacht aan het oplossen van milieuproblemen						
Q22_08. IKEA draagt voldoende zorg voor de gemeenschap						
Q22_09. IKEA beschermt banen van lokale werknemers voldoende						
Q22_10. IKEA is een werkgever die gelijke kansen voor werknemers biedt						
Q22_11. IKEA behandelt leveranciers en hun medewerkers goed						
Q22_12. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om de uitbuiting van arbeid te voorkomen						
Q22_13. IKEA doet zijn uiterste best om kinderarbeid te voorkomen						
Q22_14. De uitbesteding van arbeid naar andere landen door IKEA is een slechte zaak						
Q22_15. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om discriminatie tussen werknemers te voorkomen						
Q22_16. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om gevaarlijke werkomstandigheden te voorkomen						
Q22_17. IKEA doet haar uiterste best om ongewoon lange werkdagen te voorkomen						
Q22_18. IKEA investeert in maatschappelijk verantwoorde projecten						
Q22_19. IKEA laat duidelijk zien dat ze omkoping niet tolereren						

De onderstaande vragen gaan over op welke wijze u informatie, over IKEA en hun inspanningen om de aarde en het welzijn van de mensen te behouden voor toekomstige generaties, ontvangt.

Q23. Wanneer ik berichten van IKEA ontvang over de inspanningen van IKEA om de aarde en de gemeenschap te behouden (bijvoorbeeld energiezuinige producten), dan is dit via de volgende media: (vink aan wat voor u van toepassing is, er zijn meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

Medium	Van toepassing
Pers en tekstberichten van IKEA	
TV commercials van IKEA	
Radio commercials van IKEA	
De website van IKEA	
Geen van bovenstaande	

Q24. Welke krant leest u regelmatig? Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk. Vink alleen die kranten aan die u leest.

Krant	Ik lees deze krant
De Telegraaf	
Het AD (Algemeen Dagblad)	
De Volkskrant	
NRC Handelsblad	
NRC next	
Trouw	
Het Reformatorisch dagblad	
Het Financieele Dagblad	
Metro	
Spits	
Geen	
Anders namelijk:……………………	

Q25. Kijkt u wel eens naar, en zo ja met welke regelmaat, naar een van de volgende informatieve- of consumentenprogramma's?

Programma	Nooit	Af en toe	Regelmatig
Q26_1 Half acht nieuws (RTL 4)			
Q26_2 Keuringsdienst van Waarde (KRO)			

Q26. Heeft u zelf wel eens via google.nl gezocht naar berichtgeving over IKEA en hun inspanningen tot het behoud van de aarde en de gemeenschap, voor toekomstige generaties?

-Ja
-Nee

Q27. Geef van onderstaande maatschappelijke organisaties aan, door middel van het aanvinken van de optie die van toepassing is, of u er
a. Donateur van bent
b. Wel eens berichten van leest

NGO	Donateur?	Ik lees hun berichten
Q27_1 WNF		
Q27_2 Natuurmonumenten		
Q27_3 Greenpeace		
Q27_4 Unicef		

28. Op welke manier zou u het liefste geïnformeerd willen worden over de inspanningen van IKEA om de aarde te behouden voor toekomstige generaties? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk, vink aan wat van toepassing is)

Op de website van IKEA (www.ikea.nl)	
Reclame op de televisie	
Reclame op de radio	
Huis-aan-huis folder	
Online IKEA FAMILY nieuwsbrief	
Ik word hier liever niet over geïnformeerd, als ik hierover wil lezen zoek ik dit zelf op de IKEA website op	
Ik word hier liever niet over geïnformeerd	

Q29. In hoeverre vind u het belangrijk dat een bedrijf over haar inspanningen om de aarde en gemeenschap te behouden, communiceert?

Zeer belangrijk	belangrijk	Niet belangrijk/niet onbelangrijk	onbelangrijk	Zeer onbelangrijk

----

De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op de producten en services van IKEA, als u niet bekend bent met producten en services van IKEA is er de antwoordmogelijkheid :" weet ik niet". Als u denkt aan IKEA, in welke mate bent u het dan eens of oneens met de volgende beweringen?

Stelling	Helemaal oneens	Enigszins oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins eens	Helemaal eens	Weet ik niet
Q30_1. De prijs / kwaliteit verhouding van IKEA producten is altijd goed						
Q30_2. De producten die worden aangeboden door IKEA zijn modern						
Q30_3. De services die IKEA aanbiedt zijn altijd betrouwbaar						
Q30_4. De services die worden aangeboden bij IKEA worden altijd uitgevoerd door personeel met te weinig kennis						
Q30_5. De IKEA producten zijn						

voorzien van onvoldoende etikettering					
Q30_6.De IKEA klantenservice is ontoereikend					

De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op het bedrijf zelf. Als u niet bekend bent met de IKEA organisatie is er de antwoordmogelijkheid :" weet ik niet". Als u denkt aan IKEA, in welke mate bent u het dan eens of oneens met de volgende beweringen?

Stelling	Helemaal oneens	Enigszins oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins eens	Helemaal eens	Weet ik niet
Q31_01. De IKEA organisatie heeft een hoog innovatief vermogen						
Q31_02.*De IKEA organisatie is een welwillende organisatie*						
Q31_03*. De IKEA organisatie heeft bekwaam management*						
Q31_04*. De IKEA organisatie onderscheidt zich van concurrenten*						
Q31_05*. De IKEA organisatie voert een gezond financieel beleid*						
Q31_06*. De IKEA organisatie heeft een slechte verhouding met haar klanten*						
Q31_07*. De IKEA organisatie beschikt over weinig kennis van het milieu*						
Q31_08*. De IKEA organisatie is een instabiele organisatie*						
Q31_09*. De IKEA organisatie maakt misbruik van haar macht*						

Q32. Komt in uw omgeving (familie, vrienden) IKEA wel eens ter sprake? vink aan wat van toepassing is	
Nooit	
Soms	
Regelmatig	
Vaak	

Q33 Zo ja, wat waren de 3 onderwerpen waarover werd gesproken?

………

………

………

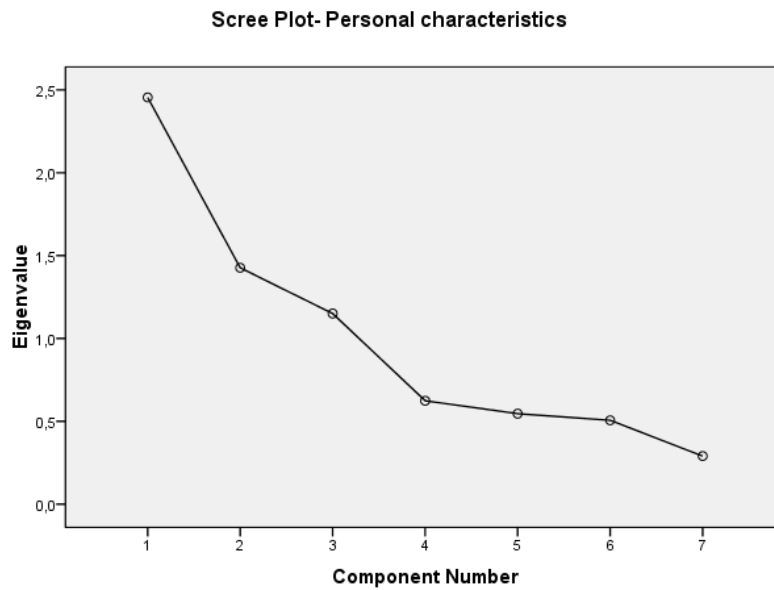………

…………………………………………….

Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst, hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking aan dit onderzoek!

Appendix IV

Scree plots of factor analysis
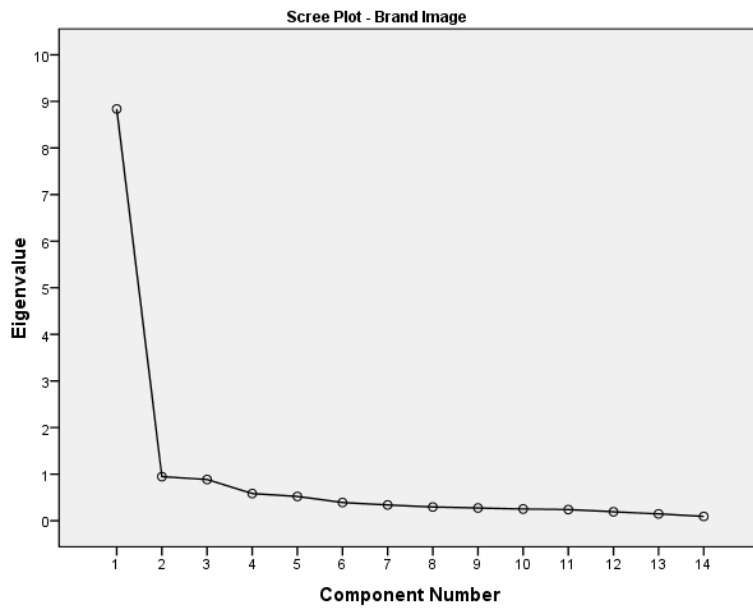
For the category of "Personal characteristics"

Scree Plot- Personal characteristics

For the category of "perceived features of products and services"

Scree Plot- Perceived features of products and services

For the category of "perceived features of the company"
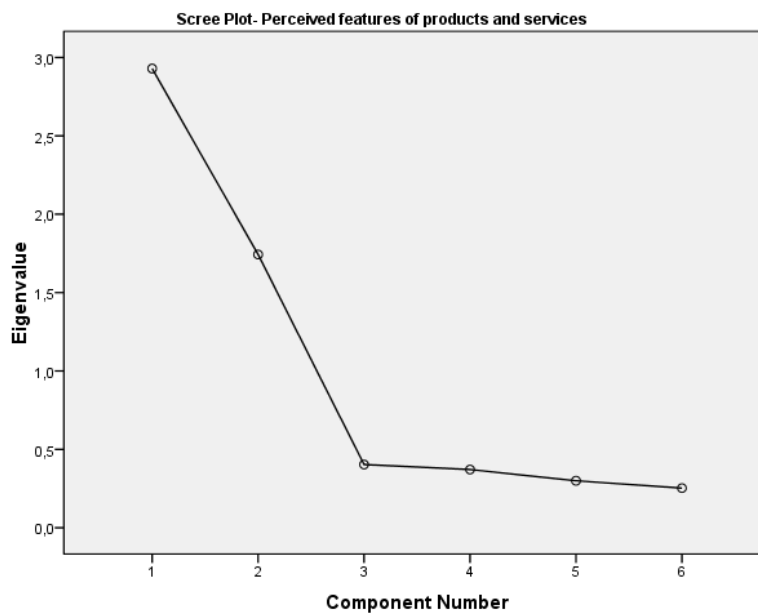
Scree Plot - Perceived features of the company

For the category of "brand image"
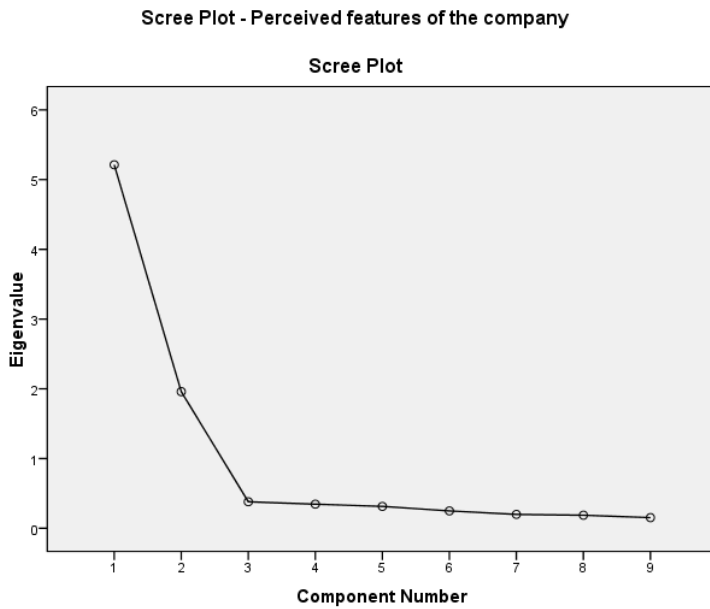
Scree Plot - Brand Image

For the category of "image of sustainability activities"

Scree Plot- Image of sustainability activities