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Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry – The Flipside of the Sustainability Trend from the Perspective of Generation Z

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Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

The sustainability trend of recent years is reflected in society's growing environmental awareness and the increasing promotion of green products and services in the market. The flip side is that most advertisements and green branding originate from companies that still have a negative impact on the environment. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how greenwashing marketing campaigns are perceived despite increasing environmental awareness in society.

This study answers how greenwashing is perceived, whether the perception differs depending on the degree of environmental consciousness, and which effects the perception has.

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative study via expert interviews with participants belonging to Gen Z has been conducted, making specific reference to the "Conscious Spring" greenwashing campaign by H&M.

The qualitative content analysis showed that the majority of participants recognized greenwashing through misleading word choice and contradictory actions that are advertised in the campaign. Nevertheless, there were also interviewees who were misled by the campaign. The campaign had an effect on the participants' attitudes towards the brand, both on their feelings and beliefs about the brand, as well as on their behavioral intentions.

The findings are largely used to understand the advertising impact of greenwashing, but they will also be helpful for sustainable clothing companies in creating green campaigns or for NGOs working to combat greenwashing and educate consumers.

1   Introduction

The past twenty years have been characterized by a growing awareness in western society with regard to the importance of environmental protection and the tremendous impact of human consumption on our environment (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020). This environmental awareness also materializes in changing consumer behavior, such as purchasing more consciously and an increased willingness to pay a price premium for sustainable products, as also shown by the Consumer Barometer of KPMG (2020a). As a result, green advertising increased almost tenfold within the last 20 years and has already tripled in the period between 2006 and 2011 (Agarwal & Kumar, 2021); Delmas and Burbano (2011); (TerraChoice, 2010), and supposedly sustainable products are sprouting up in various industries. Words like "organic", "natural", "recyclable", "sustainable" and expressions such as "environmentally friendly" are used in almost every advertisement while unaware consumers are confronted with terms like "organic cotton", "recycled polyester", "paper bags", or "reduced water consumption" on their shopping trip online or offline. In the fashion industry, even fast fashion companies like H&M, Zara and brands such as Nike advertise with their "Conscious" and "Join Life" collection or the "Flyleather" campaigns, e.g., using 50% organic material or designing a shoe 50% out of recycled leather fibers (Inside H&M, 2019; Nike, 2021; Zara, 2021).

Unfortunately, most of the advertising and green branding originates from companies with a negative impact on the environment, also referred to as brown firms, as many of them try to leverage the increasing interest of consumers taking advantage of people's ignorance. This leads to companies selling products as green even though they are not sustainable at all or have not been produced in an eco-friendly way (Lane, 2010; Pedersen & Andersen, 2023), which is already becoming a widespread problem (Luo et al.; TerraChoice, 2007; Yu). The Terra-Choice report in 2008/09 discovered that over 95% of the products used in their survey can be categorized as greenwashed (TerraChoice, 2010), while Schmidt and Donsbach (2012) found out that around 85% of green German advertisements consist of potentially misleading wording. More recently, Kwon (2023) showed for social media ads that 70% of claims are misleading.

In addition, researchers observe a problem on the consumer side. Although society is becoming more aware of its responsibility towards the environment, this is only slightly reflected in its purchasing behavior, especially when it comes to the consumption of clothing (Co-op, 2019). This is known in the literature as the attitude-behavior gap or the value-action gap (Goworek et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010). Additionally, it seems difficult for the consumers to boycott a brand, although they know that its standards regarding sustainability are low (Joergens, 2006). Nevertheless, the skepticism towards green advertising is increasing strongly as more recent studies indicate (Luo et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019; Syadzwina & Astuti, 2020; Yu, 2020) and the attitude-behavior gap is closing (Farooq & Wicaksono, 2021).

While a lot of research has already been done on the topic of greenwashing (Agarwal & Kumar, 2021; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Furlow, 2010; Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015; Parguel et al., 2011) and a large part of the advertising impact research has also been examined (Bodkin et al., 2015; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Hüsser, 2015), only some publications deal with the perception of greenwashing (Martinez et al., 2020; Nyilasy et al., 2013) or the potential for greenwashing Y. Kim and Oh (2020); (Pedersen & Andersen, 2023). In particular, the perception of greenwashing in the area of fast fashion and the connection to environmental awareness are largely unexplored but important to research, as the consumption of clothing can be impulsive and irrational despite a sustainable attitude, as shown by an attitude-behavior gap (Nguyen et al., 2019). Finally, Pereira (2020) argues that even certificates can only partially close this gap, in part since it is a question of (green) trust (Aji & Sutikno, 2015; Chen & Chang, 2013) and brand authenticity (E. Kim et al., 2022; Shin & Ki, 2019).

The study asks whether and to what extent greenwashing in the fashion industry is acknowledged by consumers belonging to generation Z (Gen Z). The potential link between the perception of greenwashing and the general attitude towards environmental consciousness is also examined. Lastly, it is being studied whether the perception of greenwashing has an effect on the attitude towards the brand and therefore also on the purchase intention of consumers belonging to Gen Z.

Following this introduction, the second section presents a brief definition of green marketing and greenwashing, illustrating it with the example of H&M, and closes with a brief section on green buying behavior in the fashion industry. In the methodological third chapter, the design of the research instrument is presented, and the fourth chapter presents the results of the qualitative study, i.e., the consumer interviews that have been conducted. The study concludes in the fifth chapter with a discussion of limitations, an outlook for research, and practical implications.

2   Theoretical Background

2.1   Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

While the fashion industry is primarily characterized by fast fashion (Greenpeace, 2017), it is also increasingly responding to the growing interest in the topic of sustainability (Mukendi et al., 2020).

Patagonia serves in this paper as an example of a sustainable fashion brand and a representative of the slow fashion movement (Rattalino 2017; Hira/Benson-Rea 2017) The outdoor clothing brand pursues the strategies of pollution prevention, product stewardship and sustainable development (Fowler & Hope, 2007) and is often cited as one of the leading companies in the sustainability field (Elkington, 1998; Rattalino, 2017). In 2017, Patagonia won the Accenture Strategy Awards for Circular Economy Multinational, which emphasizes their contribution to the move towards a circular economy and the conservation of natural resources (Byars, 2017). In addition, they launched the "Common Threads Initiative" with the cornerstones "reduce, repair, reuse and recycle" and shortly afterward in 2011, published the campaign "Don't buy this jacket", with which they tried to influence consumer behavior sustainably by criticizing the consumerist society. Furthermore, they created the "1% for the Planet" alliance by either donating 1% of their total sales or 10% of their profit year after year, depending on what was greater, to environmental initiatives since 1985 (Rattalino, 2017).

Analogously to the "Don't buy this jacket" campaign by Patagonia, Greenpeace started a "Detox campaign" targeting the garment industry by calling for no more hazardous chemicals to be used in the production of textiles. A total of 80 companies have committed to phasing out the eleven most hazardous chemicals by 2020, including fast fashion giant H&M (Greenpeace, 2018a, 5–9).

NGOs, the government and retailers are further promoting labels that identify sustainable clothing and also ensure that the incentive to comply with social and environmental standards is perceived as higher. Their goal is to simplify the purchasing process for consumers. The best labels and certifications in the fashion industry ranked by Greenpeace are "IVN Best" (Internationaler Verband der Naturtextilwirtschaft), "GOTS" (Global Organic Textile Standard), and "Made in Green" by Oeko-Tex. Those are considered to be the strictest and most independent seals at the moment. "IVN" prohibits the use of chemicals throughout the value chain, defines strict social standards and only allows natural fibers from organic cultivation; "GOTS" also regulates minimum social standards, and bans particularly hazardous groups of chemicals but does not check factory emissions. They require at least 70% organic natural fibers plus up to 30% recycled fibers, such as recycled polyester, which means that the clothing is not completely biodegradable. "Made in Green" factories are subject to a strict sustainability program covering both chemicals and occupational safety. Consumer products

are tested for harmful substances and may only contain low levels of chemical residues, although natural fibers, recycled fabrics and blended fabrics are permitted (Verbraucherzentrale, 2021; Wahnbaeck, 2019).

Transparency in supply chains is also expected by consumers. According to the EHI customer survey in 2020, almost half of the respondents now expect complete transparency (KPMG, 2020b, 51). That's why even the biggest fast fashion retailers like H&M Group and Inditex try to develop more sustainable ways within their supply chains, and especially H&M tries to become more transparent, as shown in the fashion transparency index report.

With the "Detox Campaign" and the spread of certified labels, more and more attention has been paid to the composition of garments. Fast fashion companies are now also working on the use of more sustainable materials to reduce their climate impact. E.g. H&M has set itself goals in its CSR strategy, such as the elimination of all hazardous chemicals or the use of exclusively more sustainable cotton by 2020. Consequently, today only certified organic cotton, recycled cotton or cotton from the "Better Cotton Initiative" (BCI) is used. All materials, including synthetic materials, are to be used only in recycled form by 2030, and innovative fibers such as bloom-foam or vegan leather made from pineapple fibers can also be found in the new "Conscious Collection".

In addition, H&M's CSR system also addresses so-called "social aspects". H&M implemented a policy of full disclosure of information within its supply chain. However, this imposes considerable challenges in checking for adherence to CSR values throughout the whole supply chain, especially as they do not produce themselves but outsource production. H&M allegedly rewards those suppliers with better sustainability performance with larger orders and takes action to help others become increasingly socially responsible. According to Ksiezak, they are also committed to fostering the payment of "fair living wages", which they are trying to calculate and advocate locally for legal frameworks with regard to enforced minimum wages. CSR practices have been studied in more detail by Ksiezak (2016)Ksiezak (2016). However, she points out that the information only comes from H&M itself and is therefore one-sided (Ksiezak, 2016).

It can be stated that the fashion industry is responding to the trend of increased awareness of sustainability aspects and is undergoing a transformation. Both big movements like the slow fashion movement and sustainable concepts like ethical clothing are developing, and even fast fashion lighthouse companies, which are still very much in the negative because of their pollution, cannot avoid becoming more sustainable.

2.2   Green Advertising and Greenwashing

2.2.1   Green Advertising and Greenwashing in Theory and Practice

Cause-related marketing describes, e.g., a cooperation between a company and a non-profit organization around "a good cause", creating multiple benefits: while the fashion company improves its image, the NGO is provided at the same time with resources, and further, the consumer is offsetting some guilty conscience accumulated through buying conventional products. Especially fast fashion companies seem to leverage this strategy to offset some negative connotations with their brand. With regard to cause-related marketing campaigns, Müller et al. (2016) distinguish between product-related and non-product-related campaigns. Their research showed that cause-related marketing campaigns that are not related to the problems of the purchased product have a positive influence on the purchase intention of a conventional "brown" product in comparison.

The two largest fast fashion companies, Zara and H&M, advertise sustainability claims, while H&M is more active than Zara. In 2010, H&M launched its first "Conscious Collection", made with more sustainable fibers by using organic cotton and recycled polyester. In 2019, they launched the "Conscious Spring" collection. Conscious Collection garments are required to be made of at least 50% sustainably sourced materials, such as organic cotton or recycled polyester. H&M also advertises the recycling of clothes that can be returned to the store in return for a voucher and, more recently, the collection of "Conscious Points" by shopping garments belonging to the Conscious Collection or simply by consumers bringing their own bags along. In addition, they claim on their website that they were ranked first in the Fashion Transparency Index in 2020, which can be classified as image-oriented in relation to Carlson et al. (1993). Since 2013, H&M has worked with UNICEF, and money can be donated to the organization for children in need at the checkout, where it is often suggested that customers round up the amount (H&M, 2020a). This is a typical example of cause-related marketing not being product-related (Müller et al., 2016).

Zara, as part of the Inditex Group, is also introducing a more sustainable collection called "Join Life" and distinguishing here between care for fibers, care for water and care for the planet.

Their product requirements are similar to those of H&M (the minimum outside and filling must contain at least "125%" out of "200%" sustainable fibers). They even offer an old clothes collection service. The considerable difference between H&M and Zara is that they do not actively use classic advertising channels (Inditex, 2021).

While most companies advertise with the words "sustainable", "organic" and "recycled", H&M has opted for the term "conscious". Nevertheless, the universal use of the terms and their overuse in advertising are causing some green advertisements to lose credibility, and not without reason. It is difficult for customers to distinguish between

genuine and misleading green advertising. If a company only pretends to be sustainable in its advertising, this is called greenwashing.

This section summarizes what greenwashing actually is and what it includes. When conducting a cross-disciplinary literature review like Lyon and Montgomery (2015) did, it is striking that greenwashing can be both vague statements and long-term actions. Nevertheless, the definitions vary depending on the research paper. Following, a few existing definitions will be reviewed to conclude on a suitable definition for further common understanding.

According to Greenpeace (2014) and TerraChoice (2007), a Canada based environmental marketing agency, greenwashing is defined as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service". In a study of environmental claims in the North American consumer market, TerraChoice found that over 95% of the 1,018 researched products sold in big-box retailer stores committed greenwashing. More than 967 products consisted of claims that were either false or misleading for the consumer (TerraChoice, 2007). Delmas and Burbano (2011, 65), talking about companies who greenwash as "vocal brown firms" defined "greenwashing as the intersection of two firms' behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance". Lyon and Montgomery (2015) criticize that this definition would presuppose that the company and its communication can be classified as either positive or negative. Another definition they criticize is the one by Lyon and Maxwell (2011, 9), stating that greenwashing is the "selective disclosure of positive information about a company's environmental or social performance, without full disclosure of negative information on these dimensions, to create an overly positive corporate image".

Lyon and Montgomery (2015) state that this definition would not take images and vague statements into account but only published information. In return, they argue that greenwashing is an umbrella term including a variety of misleading communication and define the term as "communication that misleads people into forming overly positive beliefs about an organization's environmental practices or product" (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015, 3). Thus, compared to Greenpeace's and TerraChoice's definitions, Lyon and Montgomery just imply misleading by vague or false communication.

What most definitions have in common, however, is that they assume an asymmetry of information, exploiting the ignorance of the principle, in this case the consumer. Nevertheless, the most suitable definition for this research proposal seems to be the one made by TerraChoice and supported by Greenpeace.

As a result of the study about environmental claims in big-box stores conducted by TerraChoice the so-called "Seven Sins of Greenwashing" developed. The seven sins,

originally developed as six sins, should help consumers evaluate and identify products whose advertising misleads them about sustainability claims.

Futerra is adding the suggestive picture, pictures suggesting a positive effect on the environment, although it is not true. A typical example of this kind of greenwashing is the image spot of the energy supply company RWE, in which a giant runs through an idyllic green landscape and erects wind turbines. In order to determine whether certain brands are greenwashing, the authors uses the abovementioned definition of greenwashing by TerraChoice (2007) and Greenpeace (2014).

Research on the perception of greenwashing was conducted by Martinez et al. (2020) and Nyilasy et al. (2013). While Martinez et al. (2020) worked on a system to make predictions about consumer behavior and to evaluate linguistic variables related to environmental behavior, they observed that greenwashing leads to confusion and influences the confidence the consumer has regarding green products. Nyilasy et al. (2013) studied the effect of green advertising and environmental performance on the brand attitude and purchase intention of the consumer.

Finally, Wu et al. (2020) argue that greenwashing in any form is simply a focus on the exaggeration of a company's observable CSR endeavors. Diffenderfer and Baker (2011) refer to it as eco-exaggeration.

2.2.2   The Case of H&M

Although Inditex, and therefore Zara, produces even more collections and waste and contradictorily introduces more sustainable collections under the name "Join Life", they do not advertise it the way H&M does. Y. Kim and Oh (2020), in their study, however, attest both to an opportunistic view of greenwashing in general. Since greenwashing is defined as "the act of misleading", H&M is analyzed in terms of greenwashing.

Promotion

H&M advertising is all about "Conscious Collection" and sustainability. The images shown in TV-Spots and online are clean and most of the time take place in nature, e.g., at the sea or a cornfield; the impact of the industry is not shown (H&M, 2021; Inside H&M, 2019). H&M, as the second-largest fast fashion brand, has been trying to become more sustainable for a few years. In the course of this, they have launched the "Conscious Collection" and also offer an old-clothes collection. The results are published every year in the form of a sustainability report.

Conscious collection (synthetic fibers)

In 2011 they published their first "Conscious Collection". The criterion for a conscious garment is that it must consist of at least 50% sustainably sourced materials. According

to H&M, this includes recycled material as well as "sustainably sourced material". Regarding cotton, this means belonging to the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). However, clothing made from recycled cotton only has to consist of 20% of these fibers; otherwise, the quality would be compromised, according to the website. Clothes that meet these requirements may carry a green label created by H&M and call themselves "conscious", regardless of what the other 50-80% are made of. Clothes from the conscious collection therefore contain 50% sustainably sourced materials, but can also contain 50% toxic materials when, for example, they remain synthetic.

Besides that, the clothes that are not part of the collection are still made of polyester and other synthetic materials that are not biodegradable and are responsible for a large proportion of microplastics. The website often states that alternatives are being worked on, such as viscose fibers, although alternatives already exist, such as LivaEco viscose, which is already used for some garments in the "Conscious Collection".

Better Cotton Initiative

One of H&M's goals was to use only "more sustainable" cotton by 2020. They have achieved the target, with 1.8% of it being recycled cotton and the majority of 78.3% being cotton from the BCI. The initiative is controversial, however, as it is a multi-stakeholder label and the cotton is clearly distinguishable from certified organic cotton, according to Greenpeace. The criteria of BIC are not nearly strict and trustworthy enough from an environmental point of view (Greenpeace, 2018b, 19 f.).

Transparency regarding the supply chain & working conditions

With regard to working conditions in the factories, the sustainability report only makes reference to the fact that they are working on a new living wage strategy. In addition, winning the fashion transparency index suggests that the consumer can find out something about the supply chain, but the website only publishes the name of the factory and the number of employees, and the usefulness of this information is questionable.

Clothing collection I:CO

In addition, the fast fashion company has used clothing collections in their sustainability strategy since 2013. In return for the clothes handed in, a 15% voucher is issued by H&M as a reward, which continues to promote the excessive purchase of fast fashion clothes (H&M, 2020b). However, with this, H&M suggests to the consumer that most of the clothes are reused by I:CO when they are provided to H&M. Of course, handing in clothes at H&M or old-clothes collections is better than disposing of clothes directly in the company's own rubbish. According to a study on textile waste in Europe by the sustainable Amsterdam based fashion start-up Labfresh every German discards 4.7 kilos of clothing per year and about 1.3 million metric tons of clothing in total in Germany, which means that the secondhand markets are saturated (Labfresh, 2021). On

their website, they even address the problem that less than 1% of the materials from which clothes are made are recycled per year (Dunkel, 2020). However, this is mainly due to the synthetic blended fibers that retailers like H&M produce themselves, which make it nearly impossible to make new fibers from them. On the website, H&M refers to three scenarios for the clothes handed in: wear again, reuse and recycle. Recycling, or the transformation of fabrics for new clothes, however, hardly takes place at all. The aspect of reuse is usually understood to mean shredding and processing into cleaning rags, which only means a short-term extension of life.

Comparing all of this with the seven sins of greenwashing and the definition used in this work, the conclusion can be drawn that H&M is greenwashing.

2.3   Purchasing Fashion: Theory and Impact Factors

A distinction can be made between extensive, limited, habituated and impulsive purchase decisions, whereby the first two are made predominantly in a cognitively controlled manner, while the last two are made with little cognitive control.

In extensive purchasing decisions, the buyer takes time to examine information, weighs it up on the basis of certain evaluation criteria, and chooses the product with the highest benefit for him. Expensive investments, like buying a luxury handbag, can become extensive.

Habituated purchase decisions are based on entrenched behavioral patterns and are particularly easy. Total cognitive relief usually results in repeat purchases. While often food is bought in a habituated way, underwear or socks can become habituated too (Pepels, 2005, 21 f.; Spindler, 2016, 45 f.).

In impulsive buying decisions, the buyer is typically accompanied by emotions, and decisions are made reactively, driven by stimuli, without thinking further about the product, e.g., socks at the cash deck (Pepels, 2005, 21 f.; Spindler, 2016, 45 f.).

The examples show that clothing purchases can serve all types of purposes. But it is even more important what influences such a clothing purchase decision and an ethical purchase decision in particular. Kotler et al. (2008, 239) divide the factors influencing such a purchase decision into social, personal, psychological and cultural factors.

Niinimäki (2010) dealt with ethical purchase decisions and stated that they are based on one's social orientation, ideals and ideology. She states that consumers' choices are more based on their inner motivations and needs than on being rational and connected to their values. When it comes to fashion, Joergens (2006) discovered that price and style affect the purchase decision the most, although they might know about the ethical issues caused by the production. Participants of the study by Joergens (2006) participants described that a concern regarding ethical issues has only a low influence

on the purchase behavior because it is almost impossible to boycott buying fast fashion that suits the aesthetic needs. Being fashionable is often weighted heavier than being sustainable (McNeill L. & Moore, 2015). Nevertheless, Niinimäki (2010) discovered that ethical commitment and values are driving the purchase decision as well, but only in exceptional cases. The issue with ethical clothing is that it is only seen as stylish by a few people, called "ethical hardliners", who value their ideology highly when buying clothes.

If looking at the relationship between attitude and behavior and the prediction of it, there is no getting around the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and its extension, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

The TRA is based on the assumption that attitudes predict a certain behavior and that people therefore have complete volition over their behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory tries to explain the relationship between attitude and behavior by using intention as a mediator. The intention and therefore the behavior are influenced by two components: the attitude towards the behavior and the subjective norm, which includes all the surroundings of the individual, like social networks, cultural norms and beliefs (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Meaning a person has a positive attitude towards the brand H&M, and people in his environment are also wearing clothes from H&M, so the person will buy their garment at the store. The theory had to face a lot of criticism by not explaining behavior as accurately as it should by assuming that behavior is under complete volitional control. That is when Ajzen introduced the TPB, which additionally includes the perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1991).

The patterns of behavior described by Niinimäki (2010) and Goworek et al. (2012) can be described by the attitude-behavior gap, also known as the intention-behavior gap or the value-action gap. Taking into account the attitude-behavior gap, it can therefore be assumed that Gen Z's interest in issues such as environmental pollution and climate change are not necessarily reflected in their behavior.

2.4   The Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), has the general purpose of explaining attitude changes. Attitude change occurs when an occurance "modifies a person's self-reported attitudes" (Petty et al., 2003, 358).

According to the ELM, the degree of involvement with an attitude object determines the path of information processing. If the level of involvement is high, the consumer is more likely to take the central route, which is cognitively more time-consuming because arguments are processed and their quality checked. If the level of involvement

is low, the peripheral route is taken and the quality of the argument is not checked, as is the case with the central route. The attitude is formed on the basis of simple cue stimuli (Hüsser, 2015). The degree of involvement depends not only on personal relevance but also on the quantity of confrontations with the ad (the mere exposure effect) (Wirth & Kühne, 2013). If the consumer feels little personal responsibility, he will be more inclined to choose the peripheral route to attitude change, but an advertising object can also be evaluated increasingly positively simply through repeated contact with the advertising message.

An attitude formed or changed on the central route is more durable and resistant than those on the peripheral route, which are mostly short-lived and changeable. Scholten (1996) states that the change of attitude caused by processing information on the central route predicts behavior more than processing information on the peripheral route.

The use of advertising can change this attitude. That is why most attitude change models, like the Dual Process Theory ELM, are used in advertising effectiveness research (Hüsser, 2015).

Oh and Jasper (2006) investigated the effect of apparel advertisement with the help of the ELM. Asking whether the level of involvement and product type (utilitarian or expressive) influence how participants process the argument and background picture in the advertisement, they found that participants with high involvement devoted a higher cognitive workload to information processing than those with low levels of involvement.

The ELM could therefore serve as one explanation for the attitude-behavior gap when referring to Scholten (1996). The ELM applies to the subject of this study because it examines how persuasive messages are processed and change attitudes depending on the involvement of the recipient.

When examining the impact of green advertising and especially greenwashing campaigns, it can be deduced from theory that an ethical hardliner would choose the central route due to its high personal relevance and responsibility towards the environment. A non-ethical consumer, on the other hand, would rather choose the peripheral route due to their lack of sense of responsibility and form or change their attitude based on peripheral cues such as the quantity of arguments, colors, pictures or the attractiveness and trustworthiness of the communicator instead of the argument quality.

Thus, interviewees with low environmental awareness who take the central route evaluate a campaign on the basis of emotional stimuli, and interviewees with high environmental awareness evaluate a campaign in terms of the quality of the arguments. If the perception of greenwashing depends only on emotional stimuli, it could be that

greenwashing is less often recognized by those who evaluate the campaign on the basis of the quality of the arguments.

2.5 Research Questions

Following, the three research questions are formulated:

Building on the discussion above and the seven sins of greenwashing the first research question can be formulated as:

RQ 1: How and to what extent does Gen Z perceive greenwashing?

Considering that, the personal situation of a participant can impact how strongly he or she is educated regarding issues of greenwashing and therefore has the theoretical background required to evaluate a respective campaign. To be able to point out different dimensions of greenwashing, the participants first and foremost need to have a general understanding of them. This line of argumentation results in the second research question posed:

RQ 2: To what extent is the perception of greenwashing related to how environmentally conscious members of Gen Z are?

Finally, the marketing literature discusses how far negative reporting about brand's doings impacts their customers' attitudes and actual behavior (Chen et al., 2014; Chen & Chang, 2013), resulting in the third research question considered in this study.

RQ 3: How and to what extent does greenwashing influence the affection, cognition, and behavior of Gen Z towards the brand?

3   Methodology

3.1   Expert Selection

The study sets its focus on the younger more environmentally conscious generations. Ten participants have been recruited for in-depth interviews following in part the study by Brouwer (2016), who in a similar context relied on a focus group discussion and Aakko and Koskennurmi-Sivonen (2013), who determine factors of sustainable fashion via in-depth expert interviews as well. Table 1 summarizes the ten participants regarding general characteristics. Since all ten experts are of German origin, this study expands the one by Schmuck et al. (2018), who offer a rare perspective on the German perception of greenwashing.

Table 1:   Overview Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Professional Situation	Level of Environmental Consciousness
B1	Female	Student	Low
B2	Male	Student	Low
B3	Female	Apprentice	Average
B4	Male	Student	Average
B5	Male	Student	High
B6	Female	Apprentice	High
B7	Female	Student	High
B8	Male	Student	High
B9	Female	Apprenticeship	High
B10	Female	Finished High School	Average

Source: Own conception

3.2   Research Design and Conception of the Interview Guide

The interview guide consists of 22 questions, whereby the last two questions were not intended to directly address the research questions.

The first question already serves to get to know the interviewee and to find out how environmentally conscious the consumer is. For a deeper entry into the topic, three questions on the topic of sustainability in relation to clothing consumption follow in the guide. These questions also serve to better classify the interviewee in terms of his or her environmental awareness.

The core part of the interview consists of eight questions that refer to the selected greenwashing campaign of H&M and are intended to examine the perception of the campaign. Before that, however, there are four questions in the guide that refer to a second campaign that does not engage in greenwashing and are intended to serve for comparability.

The interviewee is first shown the "Buy less, demand more" campaign of the sustainable brand Patagonia. This is followed by the four questions on perception in the guide before the "Conscious Spring" greenwashing campaign of H&M is shown, and the same questions follow. Afterwards, the interviewee is informed about the greenwashing activities of the brand and the same questions are asked again in order to be able to recognize a change in perception.

This is followed by two more questions in the guide that also address the perception of campaigns, but detached from the two concrete examples. The two concluding questions then serve as discussion and food for thought.

In order to examine how and to what extent H&M's greenwashing campaign is perceived, the attitude towards the brand is firstly asked and the perception of an authentic green campaign by Patagonia is examined for comparability. Accordingly, some categories are used for comparability and do not directly address the research questions.

The perception of greenwashing and thus the answer to the first research question is the focus of this study. To answer this research question, seven questions were included in the interview guide and address greenwashing at H&M.

The second research question, which deals with the connection between environmental awareness and the perception of greenwashing, is broken down into seven interview questions.

The third research question deals with the question of how and to what extent greenwashing has an influence on the three behavioral components affect, cognition and behavior. For this purpose, six questions were included in the guidelines, which directly serve to answer the third research question, but another five serve for comparability and thus only indirectly to answer the research question referring to the Patagonia campaign.

The interview was previously tested with the help of a pre-test, whereupon a few changes were made to the interview guide. On the one hand, the wording of individual questions was adjusted, and on the other hand, based on the feedback from the interviewee, the information that the interviewee receives about the brand's greenwashing activities was significantly shortened in order to ensure the interviewee's attention.

3.3   Analysis of the Interviews

This study follows a deductive approach, whereby categories are given via the proposed research questions. Thus, a total of three main categories are used; the perception of greenwashing, the environmental consciousness and effects of greenwashing

on brand perception. Note that research question RQ2 can be answered by combining the answers to the perception of greenwashing and the environmental consciousness. The category of the perception of greenwashing is sub-divided into sub-categories following the seven sins of greenwashing introduced in section 2.2.1. While the second category stands on its own and interviewees are assigned to groups of low, medium or high consciousness based on their answers and ELM introduced above. Finally, the third category can be divided into three sub-categories; the affective perception to the campaigns, the cognitive perception to the campaigns and the planned behavior resulting from the perception of the campaigns.

4   Analysis

RQ 1: How and to what extent does Gen Z perceive greenwashing?

The study by TerraChoice (2010) already shows that greenwashing is widely practiced, and it has also been argued that H&M is greenwashing with its campaign. Schmidt and Donsbach (2012) found that 77% of green advertising contains potentially misleading wording. The fact that H&M makes use of the sin of vagueness in their campaign has already been argued in a previous chapter. However, this sin has also been specifically discovered and criticized by B1, B2, B7 and B9 when viewing the campaign. B1 has emphasized that the text of the campaign "rambles on§ (B1 l. 185) and that the words are "euphemistic" (B1 l. 188). B2 has described the campaign as a "marketing strategy" and says that the choice of words is illusionary (B2 l. 184) and wrong (B2 l. 185), as it also has a "whitewashing effect" (B2 l. 188). He has questioned words like "conscious" (B2 l. 206) and "at least 50 percent" (B2 l. 258), while B7 has also noticed contradictions in the text. She has criticized the fact that "H&M says on one page that they cannot make everything sustainable, but in another text they write that everything is sustainable" (B7 l. 280 ff.). She also has described other passages in the text as "glossed over" (B7 l. 300) and has questioned woolly phrases such as "more sustainable" and "close the loop" (B7 l. 323) in connection with fast fashion, as well as B9 (B9 l. 306 ff.).

So while many terms have been questioned and the sin of vagueness has been discovered by most, none of the other sins have been specifically identified in the campaign excerpt and addressed.

However, some have identified "the act of misleading consumers" as such, two of those who have already recognized the misleading wording. B1 has said that "H&M is deliberately misleading the target group with its 50% sustainable collection" (B1 l 271 ff.). The interviewee B2 actually called the campaign a "marketing strategy to sell more" (B2 l. 189), while B3 also insinuated that the brand only wants "to get more people into the shop with the campaign" (B3 l. 160). B8 has also recognized that the vouchers are meant to mislead about the sustainability intention and are only meant to promote consumption (B8 l. 131), as has B10 (B10 l. 153). Moreover, even before seeing the campaign, B10 suggested that H&M is mostly greenwashing (B10 l. 136). And was thus the only one who had previously described H&M's marketing activities as "greenwashing".

Contradictions in the campaign, either in the form of misleading wording or misleading actions in general, could therefore be recognized by seven experts.

Accordingly, they are skeptical about the campaign and do not trust it. In this context, B1 has spoken of a contradictory brand image (B1 l. 214) and controversial things (B1 l. 223) that the brand does. Furthermore, the opinion is also shared by B10, who has

also described the campaign as "paradoxical" (B10 l. 155). B2's statement also empha-sizes the skepticism towards the campaign (B2 l. 182-190)

B4, B5 and B6 are the only ones who have not accused the campaign of having wrong intentions when viewing it. While B9 only lacked more information (l. 143). However, after receiving information about H&M's activities, all of them agreed that it was greenwashing. B5 even described H&M's campaign as "a super phenomenon of green-washing" (B5 l. 338), as has B6, who thought of absolute greenwashing when hearing the information (B6 l. 261).

All in all, after seeing the campaign, at least five people have recognized that consum-ers are being misled, and at least four have recognized that the words are deliberately vague. Three people have been fooled by the campaign, whereby two, after receiving further information about the campaign, have described the activities themselves as greenwashing and thus have perceived greenwashing, albeit somewhat later.

The different perceptions of greenwashing in the campaign can thus be detailed at different levels, which were inductively added to the category "Perception of Green-washing": Strong, medium and weak. The perception of greenwashing is called strong when even the term "greenwashing" has been mentioned, so this includes not only B10 but also later B5 and B6. The perception of greenwashing is medium if the person has become skeptical and has rejected the advertising, in this case, if the person has recognized fuzzy wordings or generally that the campaign wants to mislead the person. B1 and B2, have recognized both while B3, B7, B8 and B9 recognized at least part of it. The perception of greenwashing is weak if the interview partners even had positive associations with the campaign, liked the campaign and trusted it. This initially includes B4, B5 and B6, whereby B5 and B6 have strongly perceived greenwashing after they have received the information about H&M's activities, as they have also described the campaign as "greenwashing".

All interviewees have agreed with the statement that every type of green advertising in fast fashion is greenwashing, except for B5, who has denied supporting the state-ment one hundred percent (B5 l. 403). Although he has emphasized that for him, H&M is greenwashing, in his eyes, the H&M campaign would not be greenwashing if the conscious collection was 100% sustainable. Regardless of the fact that the rest is still not sustainably produced, companies have to be able to develop step by step. In that case, promoting the Conscious collection would not be greenwashing for B5 (B5 l. 403-413).

Unlike B5, B6 has agreed with the statement because she thinks that fast fashion is "about economy rather than ecology", but she also thinks that "it would be okay to advertise the collection as soon as it is 100% sustainable" (B6 l. 376-380).

Overall, B4's attitude towards greenwashing has differed from that of the others. He knows that greenwashing gives consumers a false impression and has also described H&M's collection as greenwashing, but he has not considered greenwashing in general to be particularly bad. For him, the term has a negative connotation, but he is of the opinion that "companies are allowed to advertise with it as long as companies like H&M do not claim to be the most sustainable company in Germany" (B4 l. 329-338; l. 256-259).

B9 has also been quite bullish about fast fashion companies and believes that they should still be given the opportunity to improve. However, if the company does not really change sustainably in the long run, it would be greenwashing (B9 l. 243-248).

B1, B2, B3, B6, B7, B8 and B10 have had a somewhat clearer opinion on the statement. For them, fast fashion and sustainability are not compatible with each other (B1 l. 349-360; B6 l. 338; B8 l. 218-221), on the one hand because the primary goal of the company will be to maximize profits (B1 l. 351; B2 l. 88 f.) and, in contrast to ecology, economy comes first (B6 l. 379 f.) and, on the other hand, because the concept is based on the fast-moving nature of trends and the stimulation of consumption. That is why B8 is convinced that fast fashion companies are not interested in optimizing the longevity of clothing (B8 l. 218-221).

Nevertheless, B1, B2 and B4 have emphasized that despite greenwashing, it is better to have a supposedly sustainable collection than none at all (B1 l. 355 f.; B2 l. 285; B4 l. 236 f.). B1 has argued that it would probably be better to simply introduce it but not advertise it (B1 l. 363).

Overall, most interview partners had a very negative attitude towards greenwashing and associated green advertising in the fast fashion sector with greenwashing. Two interviewees, B4 and B9, are a bit more tolerant and think greenwashing is okay as long as the fast fashion company has the intention to improve and become more sustainable in the long run. At the end, eight out of ten interviewees had associated H&M with greenwashing and named the brand as an example in the context of greenwashing in the fast fashion industry, so the perception had solidified.

In summary, the first research question can be answered as follows: As Furlow (2010) argues in his paper that greenwashing leads to people questioning the brand and becoming skeptical, H&M's greenwashing campaign has been directly questioned by most interviewees, and it has been recognized that the campaign is intended to mislead the consumer. The majority has perceived greenwashing medium strong, while one interviewee even has perceived greenwashing strongly, which later on has solidified, so that towards the end, eight out of ten interviewees have associated H&M with greenwashing and have named the brand as an example in the context of greenwashing in the fast fashion industry. Almost everyone who has perceived greenwashing

moderately to strongly has a negative attitude towards greenwashing, except B9, who is somewhat more tolerant.

Only three of them initially perceived the campaign as positive, which is categorized as a weak perception of greenwashing. It should be mentioned here that B4, one of them, has a much more positive attitude towards greenwashing than the others. Which may explain why he has not accused the campaign of deliberately misleading people.

RQ2: To what extent is the perception of greenwashing related to how environmentally conscious members of Gen Z are?

As stated in the theory section, the ELM examines attitude change in relation to the degree of involvement with the attitude object. If the level of involvement with the attitude object is high, the person is more willing to cognitively engage with the arguments and form their attitude through the central route. The attitude is relatively stable. If the involvement is low, the attitude object is not really relevant to the individual, the peripheral route is taken, and attitude is simply built on emotional stimuli. The attitude can then change quickly again.

Applying the model to the present work, the focus is on involvement in environmental consciousness. If one assumes that interview partners with low awareness take the peripheral route and evaluate the campaign only on the basis of emotional stimuli, one could assume that they would have to perceive greenwashing less frequently than those with high environmental awareness, who accordingly take the central route with high involvement and evaluate arguments cognitively. Furthermore, one could assume that interview partners with higher environmental awareness perceive greenwashing in general more negatively than people with low environmental awareness. The second research question therefore deals with whether the perception of greenwashing is related to environmental awareness.

In order to answer the question, the interviews were used to measure how environmentally conscious the interviewee is. When selecting the interviewees, care was already taken to ensure a certain heterogeneity by asking them what their attitude to fast fashion was. In the interview itself, the interviewee was asked where they buy clothes, how sustainable they consider their clothing consumption to be, in which areas they pay the most attention to sustainability, and which factors influence the purchase of their clothes. However, other statements that also provide information about how sustainable the person is are also included in the evaluation. As in research question 1, different levels of environmental awareness can be defined and inductively assigned to the category "Degree of environmental consciousness": Low, medium and high environmental consciousness. When buying fast fashion on a regular basis, the interviewee has low environmental consciousness. People who are concerned about a

more sustainable lifestyle and already buy secondhand clothes but cannot yet refrain from buying fast fashion or consume a lot fall under the category of medium environmental consciousness. But also those who do not buy fast fashion and consume little, but the idea of sustainability is not the decisive point for their behavior but only a side effect. When mainly consuming secondhand, someone is highly conscious. Therefore, the interview partners are divided into the categories.

B1 and B2 have low environmental consciousness. They mostly buy fast fashion clothes, whereby the price plays a decisive role (B1 l. 9, l. 43; B2 l. 9, l. 24). B1 does not buy secondhand clothes for the sake of sustainability, but to have something special (l. 74 ff.). Both have not considered their clothing consumption to be sustainable (B1 l.73; B2 l. 83). B1 also noted that she prefers to buy a lot of clothes instead of an expensive sustainable piece (l. 137 ff.).

On the one hand, people who are concerned about a more sustainable lifestyle and already buy secondhand clothes, but cannot yet refrain from buying fast fashion or consume a lot, fall under the category of medium environmental conscious. But also for those who do not buy fast fashion and consume little, the idea of sustainability is not the decisive point for their behavior but only a side effect. B3, B4 and B10 belong to medium environmental consciousness. B3 buys mostly secondhand, although the poor quality of fast fashion is also to blame, but he cannot yet completely free himself from fast fashion (B3 l. 5-8, l. 220 ff). B4 does not buy fast fashion, but for the reason that he believes that "branded clothes are durable and of good quality" and prefers to "buy a few high-quality items of clothing instead of many" (B4 l. 19-23, l. 26-29). Meanwhile, he himself has considered his clothing consumption to be relatively sustainable (l. 96). However, he does not buy secondhand or fair-trade fashion (l. 98 ff.).

B10 buys a lot of secondhand (l. 6-10) and also claims that she has an awareness of sustainable clothing consumption (l. 63), but her clothing consumption is only moderately sustainable (l. 73), as she also buys basics from fast fashion companies (l. 13 f.) and buys a lot (l. 74).

The remaining five interview partners (B5, B6, B7, B8 and B9) can be categorized as highly environmentally conscious. All of them mainly consume secondhand, which is the most sustainable way in their eyes and with which they joined the slow fashion movement, whereas B5 and B6 completely avoid fast fashion and even buy underwear fairly (B5 l. 5 f.; B6 l. 5 ff., l. 10-16). B7, B8 and B9 only buy their underwear from fast fashion shops like H&M but otherwise secondhand (B7 l. 19 ff.; B8 l. 12 ff.; B9 l. 12 ff., l. 68 ff.).

Applying this division to the ELM, B1 and B2 have a low involvement in the attitude object of environmental awareness and B5, B6, B7, B8 and B9 have a high involvement.

Whether the degree of environmental consciousness is related to the perception of greenwashing is examined in the following ways:

The interview partners with the lowest environmental awareness, B1 and B2, who regularly buy fast fashion, have recognized the sin of vagueness from the vague wording, the strategy (B2 l. 189), or the inconsistent brand image behind it (B1 l. 214). In addition, both are of the opinion that any green advertising in the fast fashion sector is greenwashing and have confirmed the statement accordingly. For them, fast fashion and green advertising do not go together. In the end, both have associated H&M with greenwashing in the fashion sector (B1 l. 358; B2 l. 317), but they have also emphasized in their interviews that they find the introduction of the collection better than no change at all. What is striking, however, when the two describe their perception of the advertisement is that B1 particularly emphasizes the length of the text (l. 199-202) and B2 first emphasizes the design and the color combination (B2 l. 176 f.), both of which can be interpreted as emotional stimuli. After that, they both focused strongly on the choice of words and only on the quality of a few arguments.

The interviewees with medium environmental consciousness are B3, B4 and B10, with B4's behavior being the least conscious, as his clothing consumption is sustainable but not for ecologically driven reasons, as he prefers to buy little and more expensive branded clothing. He does not have such a negative attitude towards greenwashing as the others, but he still calls H&M's campaign greenwashing. B4 was also one of the few interviewees who, when viewing the campaign, has not implied anything negative about the brand or has not implied misleading consumers, but has only expressed positive perceptions (B4 l. 176-186). He first emphasizes the visuals of the campaign, especially the choice of colors and images, and then the length of the texts (B4 l. 176-183). He thus only focused on emotional stimuli and not on the quality of the arguments. B3 and B10, on the other hand, have recognized that H&M is trying to mislead consumers with their campaign. B10 has even accused H&M of greenwashing before. Both have agreed that any green advertising in the fast fashion sector is greenwashing. B10 only weights the quality of the arguments in the assessment, especially the used materials and the action of old clothes in exchange for a voucher, as B3. Compared to the others, who are less environmentally conscious (see B1, B2 and B4), they have not focused on emotional stimuli at all (B3 l. 158-164; B10 l. 150-155). B3's reaction to the campaign follows as an example, whereby the interviewee, in contrast to B4, weighed the arguments and checked their quality and did not react at all to emotional stimuli (B4 l. 158-161).

Among the remaining interview partners with high environmental consciousness, the perception of greenwashing has been very different. B7, B8 and B9 have recognized the intentions of being misled by the campaign, while B5 and B6 have not accused the campaign of deception in the first place and only have perceived it positively, like B4

(medium environmental consciousness). However, after receiving the information about H&M's greenwashing activities, they both called the activities "greenwashing". In general, the interviewees have been more or less convinced that it is greenwashing when fast fashion companies do green advertising. Only B5 and B9 have not completely agreed. B5 has noted that it is "not greenwashing as soon as the sustainable collection is 100% sustainable", while B9 has noted that "fast fashion companies need an opportunity for development". B6, B7 and B8, however, are convinced, in comparison to B5 and B9, that it is always greenwashing. It is interesting that only B6 from the group is more concerned with the stimuli, such as the natural colors and the use of an influencer (B6 l. 197-200, l. 204-205). All the others have exclusively weighted the quality of the arguments and questioned their credibility. It is also noticeable that two interviewees from this group, namely B7 and B9, even demanded more information in order to be able to check the quality of the arguments more closely (B7 l. 314 f.; B9 l. 142 ff.).

It was expected that B1 and B2 with low environmental consciousness would take the central route, focusing on emotional stimuli and that they would therefore perceive greenwashing less or less strongly when viewing the campaign and that B5, B6, B7, B8 and B9 would perceive greenwashing most strongly, assuming that they would take the peripheral route by being highly involved in environmental consciousness.

The results show that B1 and B2 with low environmental awareness have recognized the intentions of the campaign, both the vague wording and the strategic actions. So they have perceived greenwashing at least moderately strongly. On the other hand, the interviewees with high environmental awareness have perceived greenwashing in the same way as B1 and B2, or initially not at all (B5, B6). With B4, they initially perceived the campaign positively and have not recognized greenwashing, meaning their perception has been weak.

Only when they have received information about H&M's actions have B5 and B6 described the campaign as greenwashing and even named it, thus changing their perception from initially weak to strong. Overall, however, no connection between the perception of greenwashing and the level of environmental awareness could be established.

However, based on the results, it can be stated that in the present study, the interview partners with low environmental awareness have indeed formed their attitudes via the peripheral route on the basis of emotional stimuli (B1, B2 and B4).

In this context, B1 has particularly criticized the length of the texts, while B2 has emphasized the design and the color combination. B4 is the least environmentally conscious participant in the medium environmental conscious group and has also focused

only on emotional stimuli such as the images, color choice and length of the texts when perceiving the campaign.

All the other more environmentally conscious interview partners have taken the central route, weighed up their arguments and checked their quality.

It was also assumed that interview partners with higher environmental awareness perceive greenwashing in general more negatively than people with low environmental awareness. This assumption could not be confirmed either. All interview partners have perceived greenwashing negatively. Only B5, B9 and B4, two of whom have high environmental awareness and only one medium, have not perceived greenwashing so negatively.

RQ3: How and to what extent does greenwashing influence the affection, cognition, and behavior of Gen Z towards the brand?

The aim was to investigate the influence of the greenwashing campaign on the affective component, or the emotional attitude of the interviewees. For this purpose, the feelings towards the H&M campaign were differentiated from the feelings towards the Patagonia campaign.

Most of the interviewees were previously reluctant to buy fast fashion, except for B1 and B2, who are basically emotionally neutral towards fast fashion.

Overall, seven out of ten interviewees have reacted skeptically to the H&M campaign and have found it unconvincing (B8 l. 145) or have attributed a "bitter aftertaste" to it (B9 l. 193 f.). It is striking that, in contrast, the campaign has triggered positive feelings in B4 and B5, while B6's reaction has been neither positive nor skeptical.

The wording chosen and the old clothes' voucher strategy have received the most responses. Seven interviewees have expressed their feelings about the wording, and five of them have reacted skeptically to it and have questioned it, while B4 and B10 have been quite positive. On the one hand, the length of the texts has been criticized, which is perceived as exhausting (B1 l. 199-201). B1 has described the choice of words as "rambling and euphemism" (B1 l. 203, l. 188), while B2 even went so far as to call the choice of words "an illusion and a construct of an illusory world§ (B2 l. 184). Sentences and words such as "our more sustainable products" (B7 l. 290 f.), "more sustainable" (B7 l. 323), "conscious" (B2 l. 206), "at least 50 percent" (B2 l. 258) or "let's close the loop" (B7 l. 306-312) have been emphasized and criticized because of their imprecise and vague wording.

The old clothes voucher strategy has been reacted to six times and B3, B7 and B10 have reacted particularly skeptically. They have criticized in particular the promotion of excessive consumerism and the fast fashion industry, as in return for the donated

clothes there is a voucher for the next purchase (B3 l. 159-161, l. 167-169; B7 l. 284-290; B10 l. 152-155).

Furthermore, three interviewees have reacted confused and skeptically because of the use of a well-known face for the 2016 collection. The cooperation with the testimonial Sara Nuro has been understood by B2 and B3 as a tactic for sales. B2 has felt a sense of skepticism because "they need the help of a well-known person to sell the collection" (B2 l. 197-201) and B3 has understood this as proof that H&M's main goal with the collection is not sustainability but "to get people into the shop" (B3 l. 161-164).

B1 has also reacted skeptically to the low price and has questioned in how far something can be actually be conscious if it is so cheap (B1 l. 191-194). In turn, the visuals, especially the pictures and colors of the conscious line (B2 l. 176 f.; B4 l. 177 f.; B6 l. 204 f.) and the idea of collecting old clothes without issuing a credit note (B4 l. 186; B9 l. 139 f.; B10 l. 151 f.), have triggered positive feelings.

In comparison, they have all reacted positively to Patagonia's authentic campaign, although B3 and B6 are still somewhat skeptical about advertising in general and would have liked more information on the actual implementation (B3 l. 128 f.; B6 l. 154-156) and B5 has reacted negatively to the campaign and has described it as not so approachable (l. 207) and not particularly sustainable (l. 210). The campaign has been most praised for its words, concise facts and the information it contains. The campaign has appealed to most of the interview partners (B1 l. 132; B2 l. 111 f., l. 130; B3 l. 112-114; B4 l. 134, l. 186).

While the Patagonia campaign has triggered mainly positive feelings, the H&M greenwashing campaign has mostly triggered feelings of skepticism among the interviewees and therefore has a negative impact on the emotional attitude towards the campaign and brand, except for B4 and B5, for whom the positive feelings predominate. Therefore, the results support Furlow's findings that greenwashing usually translates into a feeling of skepticism (2010).

The difference between H&M and Patagonia is that in the case of Patagonia, all the interviewees had previously been quite neutral towards the brand except for B8, who has been extremely positive. Even B5, B6 and B7, who basically have an aversion to buying new clothes, have felt addressed by the campaign.

At H&M, most of the interviewees have previously been reluctant to buy fast fashion, except for B1 and B2, who are basically emotionally neutral towards fast fashion. Nevertheless, B4 and B5 have felt positive about the campaign, while B1 and B2, as the ones with the lowest environmental consciousness, have been skeptical. Even so, two interviewees have changed their emotional attitudes to the positive after seeing the H&M campaign.

In principle, however, it should be mentioned that both interview partners have not been confronted with the H&M brand for a long time and have distanced themselves from fast fashion or advertising altogether. They seem to be positive about the progress in the fast fashion industry, in the case of the conscious collection and the collection of old clothes, which has seemed to them as if H&M is doing a lot for sustainability.

On the basis of the results, it can be assumed that pictures, colors and the use of facts in advertising trigger particularly positive emotions, while the actions written about in the campaign must fit the sustainability concept and the words must not be vague; otherwise, this will trigger negative emotions like the H&M campaign did.

After examining the influence on the affective component by analyzing the statements regarding the emotional reaction to the H&M campaign, the influence on the cognitive component is examined. For this purpose, the perception of the brand in general before and after the confrontation with the campaign was recorded based on opinions and arguments about the attitude object, in this case H&M.

All interviewees had a negative perception of the brand based on opinions and arguments before seeing the H&M campaign, the only positive argument from B1, B2 and B9 has been the low price (B1 l. 229; B2 l. 278; B9 l. 71). Overall, the perception of most interviewees has only strengthened or even worsened in intensity, as no positive arguments have been found (B1 l. 294). The brand has therefore been dubbed a final stage or "sketchy brand" (B3 l. 222-224) and has been described as untrustworthy due to its controversial brand image (B1 l. 262; B1 l. 283 f.; B8 l. 181). The perception of two interview partners has not changed at all, while the perception of B4 has been the only one that has improved. Although he has not perceived H&M as a sustainable brand despite the campaign (B4 l. 242 f.), he is convinced that "it is good to have a sustainable line" (B4 l. 236 f.) and advertise it (B4 l. 246), as it is the customer's task to recognize that a line is not completely sustainable (B4 l. 248-253). For him, the fact that H&M has a sustainable line and offers an old-clothes collection are arguments that influence the cognitive component.

B5 and B9 have been initially deceived by the campaign and have gained a more positive image of the brand, which has briefly changed their perception (B5 l. 288 f.; B9 l. 156). It adjusted after they have been informed about H&M's greenwashing activities and thus have been provided with new arguments (B5 l. 348 f.; B9 l. 198), whereby their perception of the brand has only been reinforced in intensity. In their opinion, the initial arguments in favor of the brand in the campaign have been refuted. To illustrate: B5 has rated H&M on a ten-point-scale, while he initially rated the sustainability of the brand a three or four (B5 l. 249), after seeing the campaign, he has thought that H&M is sustainable and has rated it an eight, nine (B5 l. 288 f.). However, after he has been informed about the campaign and greenwashing activities, his perception has

worsened again and has ranked a two to three (B5 l. 348 f.), refuting the sustainability argument. In comparison, after viewing Patagonia's authentic green campaign, the perception has only worsened for interviewee B5. For most of them, it has only intensified positively (five interviewees) or has remained the same (four interviewees). In advance, all have had a positive green image of the brand, except for B4, who has had no image at all (B4 l. 118), and B10, who has perceived the brand as not particularly sustainable (B4 l. 88), but has been convinced of the opposite afterward. B5, who has been the only one to deteriorate his knowledge and belief about the brand, has criticized the superficiality (B5 l. 214) and would not think, based on the campaign, that Patagonia is that sustainable but rather "a brand that goes with the flow" (B5 l. 210 f.).

It can therefore be concluded that H&M's campaign has an impact not only on the affective component but also on the cognitive component. It can be assumed that the feeling of initial skepticism towards the H&M campaign, which has been predominant for most, has been confirmed by arguments that have had an effect on cognition. However, there is no strong change in beliefs and knowledge, but more of an intensification of the previous cognition, which can still be interpreted as change according to the definition of Petty et al. (2003).

Except in the case of B4, where the cognitive component has changed positively, it can be assumed that interview partners such as B1 and B2, who are in principle negative towards the brand, but nevertheless cite the low prices as an argument for the purchase, give more weight to the price argument despite further negative arguments and accordingly do not change their cognition sufficiently. In the case of the Patagonia advertisement, only one of the respondents has changed their beliefs and knowledge, while otherwise only the previous cognitive attitude has been reinforced, but, as expected, the cognitive attitude has been much more positive than in the case of H&M.

The next step is to analyze the behavior and examine whether the H&M greenwashing campaign also has an impact on the brand perception and the participants' planned behavior.

In general, it can be said that the attitude is largely reflected in the behavior before viewing the campaign. Most of the interview partners have an environmentally conscious attitude and do not buy from fast fashion shops, but some buy their underwear fast fashion because they do not want to buy it secondhand and fast fashion is cheaper than fair underwear (B7 l. 19-21; B9 12-14, 68-71). With this, however, they deviate slightly from the expected behavior. Compared to this, B3 and B10 have described their attitudes as moderately sustainable, which is also reflected in their behavior. They occasionally buy clothes at fast fashion shops like H&M (B3 l. 7; B10 l. 9). B3 has already reduced his consumption because of the poor quality of the garment (B3 l. 221 f.), and B10 only buys basics there (B10 l. 13).

The attitude of B1 and B2, on the other hand, is not sustainable, which is also reflected in their behavior as they consume fast fashion (B1 l. 11; B2 l. 9).

After the campaign, B1 commented on her change in behavior as follows: "So I wouldn't say it changed my buying behavior, but definitely my attitude." (B1 l. 303 f.), with which she has described the phenomenon of the green gap in a nutshell.

While B1 and B2 regularly shopped at fast fashion companies like H&M before the campaign, they would still do so after seeing the campaign and would also recommend the brand as long as their friends needed cheap clothes and were not looking for sustainable clothing (B1 l. 307; B2 l. 277-279). So, the behavior has not changed at all. B10 has already only bought basics from H&M and would not have recommended the brand before, but wants to distance herself from the brand even more after seeing the campaign and continues not to recommend it to her friends (B10 l. 206, l. 213). So, the behavior has slightly changed because the campaign has influenced the intensity of the behavior in that she wants to reduce the purchase further, just as with B3. B3 has already reduced her consumption of H&M clothes mainly because of the poor quality and the resulting lack of durability of the clothes, and after seeing the campaign, she is even more convinced that she should no longer shop there, as they only "try to lure her into the shop with the campaign and sustainable line" (B3 l. 215 f., l. 220-222). B7 and B9 have already only bought underwear at H&M because they do not want to buy it secondhand. They would both not recommend the brand after seeing the campaign, and B7 has been again encouraged not to buy from H&M (B7 l. 335 f.). All the other four interviewees have already stopped buying clothes from H&M and have not been changed or even encouraged in this respect. B5, B6 and B8 would also not recommend the brand to friends when they are looking for a piece of clothing, whereas B5 would even advise against it (B5 l. 354). While B4 has not changed his own buying behavior, he would mention the brand if friends were looking for cheap clothing disregarding its sustainability. However, the interviewee explicitly made the distinction between mentioning and recommending (B5 l. 277-279).

Based on this, it can be assumed that if the interviewees have already reduced their consumption at H&M, such as B10, B3 or B7, they will be tempted to reduce their consumption even more when confronted with the campaign. It can thus be stated that for all interview partners with medium and high environmental consciousness who already did little or no shopping at H&M, the behavioral intention has adapted even more to the attitude, especially for B5. The behavioral intention is intensified. Interview partners who regularly shop there, like B1 and B2, will not change their buying behavior in the same way as the interview partners who already do not shop there. In the case of B4, the intention not to support H&M flattens out somewhat. However, it must be emphasized that his environmental consciousness is relatively low.

In comparison, the impact of the Patagonia campaign on behavior has also been examined. All interview partners have been familiar with the brand name, but B9 and B10 only know the brand superficially, and B4 has not really known the brand, which is why he has no image of the brand. Apart from B8, however, no one has shopped at the brand before, which can probably be attributed to the fact that the majority of the interview partners buy their clothes secondhand (B3, B5, B6, B7, B8 and B9). Overall, however, nine out of ten would recommend the brand to friends after seeing the campaign, although B10 would have done so before because of the quality and not because of the campaign (B10 l. 129 f.). B1 and B2 have emphasized that they must be willing to pay a high price. B2 would only recommend the brand if someone is willing to spend that much money and if he would go climb Mount Everest, but not if he just needs a rain jacket for work (B2 l. 144 ff.). B4 and B6, on the other hand, do not want to recommend the brand until they have looked more closely at the brand and its trustworthiness (B4 l. 152 ff.; B6 l. 165). So here again, the affective component, especially skepticism, has played a role. B5 is the only one who would not recommend the brand after viewing the campaign, as he then classifies the brand as less sustainable (B5 l. 222 ff., l. 232). However, no one except B8 has expressed an intention to buy, and B7 even commented that she only just realized that it is not her type (B7 l. 237-240). B1 has also emphasized that despite the positive perception, she would buy more with poor quality, and if she already spent so much money on clothes, she would tend to buy a designer jumper that is not necessarily sustainable (B1 l. 148 ff., l. 137 ff.).

Overall, it can be said for Patagonia that a slight change in behavioral intention can be demonstrated due to the campaign. A slightly positive influence on behavior can be assumed, as only one would not recommend the brand afterward. However, it can be assumed that the campaign has no influence on the actual intention to buy since very few have commented on it and B7 and B1 have emphasized that they would continue not to buy there, one for the reason that it is new merchandise and the other because it is too expensive (B7 l. 237-240; B1 l. 137 ff.). The price has also been criticized by B2 and B3 (B2 l. 144 ff.; B3 l. 91 f.).

Both campaigns, be it the greenwashing campaign or the real green Patagonia campaign, have not changed the direction of behavioral intention. Nevertheless, the behavioral intention has been reinforced. Especially in the case of H&M, it can be seen that interviewees, who have already reduced their consumption of the brand and are environmentally aware, want to reinforce their behavior in this direction. However, it is also clear that people with a low level of environmental awareness, such as B1, B2 and also B4, do not want to change their behavior, irrespective of the greenwashing action, as also quoted by B1 at the beginning.

However, when it comes to a real green campaign, even the interview partners with low environmental awareness are willing to recommend the brand.

How the interviewees actually behave after seeing the H&M campaign when they go shopping or when their friends ask them for recommendations cannot be determined within this framework. Nevertheless, according to Scholten (1996), the attitudes changed by taking the central route, and therefore evaluating the arguments should predict behavior more. Accordingly, it is not impossible that B1, B2 and B4 change their attitude again, including their planned behavior.

In summary, the third research question can now be answered as follows: The three components affect, cognition and behavior together form the attitude towards the campaign and the brand H&M and have an influence on the actual behavior, but behavior is never completely predictable, as the attitude-behavior gap shows. Nevertheless, the H&M greenwashing campaign has had a negative influence on the interviewees' attitudes. As greenwashing has been perceived by many interviewees, the campaign, especially through the choice of words and the contradictory actions promoted, such as the vouchers, ultimately triggered skepticism in most of them, with two exceptions. In addition to the emotional attitude, the campaign has also had an impact on the cognitive component, as it has provided new negative arguments, so that most interviewees have increased their knowledge about the brand and greenwashing activities of H&M and have intensified their negative beliefs towards the campaign and brand. Only the least environmentally conscious interviewees seem to attach a significant role to the price factor. According to the behavioral component, i.e., how people want to behave in the future, the interviews have shown that the campaign has an influence on planned behavior, especially for those who shop at H&M from time to time but are actually environmentally aware and now want to further reduce their consumption.

However, the campaign has no influence on the planned behavior of those who are less environmentally conscious or who already do not shop at H&M at all.

In comparison, real green advertising, such as that of Patagonia, led to a slight attitude change, has a more positive effect on emotional attitudes towards the campaign and brand, and provides positive arguments for the cognitive component. However, since many people have not yet had any knowledge, beliefs and knowledge have been formed here for the first time. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees would not shop there because it is too expensive or it is not secondhand, but the behavioral component has changed to the effect that most interviewees would recommend the brand, regardless of their environmental awareness.

Therefore, the findings by Nyilasy et al. (2013) that green advertising always has a negative impact on attitudes in both high and low environmental-performing companies can only be partially confirmed, while H&M's green advertising has a negative impact and Patagonia's advertising has a positive impact at first glance.

5   Conclusion

5.1   Insights Gained

On the one hand, there is the unpredictability of human behavior, especially when it comes to fashion purchasing decisions. This means that despite the ethical consumerism trend and the environmentally conscious Gen Z, not only sustainable fashion is bought, although society may be more environmentally conscious, as presented in this work as the attitude-behavior gap (Niinimäki, 2010). Buying decisions in the fashion sector in particular are influenced by many factors other than attitude, such as aesthetics, price, quality, brand, compatibility and condition. Especially the young generation, i.e., generation Z, is influenced by the latest fashion trends, although they know about the ethical issues of the fast fashion industry (Joergens, 2006).

The H&M greenwashing campaign in this paper served as an example to illustrate that even companies built on one of the most resource-wasting and polluting frameworks also try to use the trend to their advantage and therefore mislead consumers.

With the help of the interviews, an answer to the research question of how and to what extent Gen Z perceives greenwashing was found. The results are summarized in concise form in Table 2.

Table 2:   Synopsis of the Analysis

Research Questions	Results
RQ 1	Respondents mostly questioned the greenwashing campaign - Fuzzy terms - Contradictory wording - Contradiction between fast fashion and sustainability - Conscious collection should be 100% sustainable or not advertised Some respondents were misled by the campaign - More tolerant of greenwashing
RQ 2	No significant relation between greenwashing perception and environmental awareness; only a tendency Environmental awareness is related to more general attitudes towards greenwashing
RQ 3	H&M's campaign triggered mostly negative feelings Reasons - Non-specific phrases - Promotion of actions in exchange for new fast fashion - Lower opinion of the brand Consequences - No change for people with low awareness - Stronger intention to change with high awareness The authentic campaign uniformly triggers positive feelings

Source: Own conception

All in all, Gen Z perceives greenwashing skeptically. In this study, H&M's greenwashing is not related to the person's environmental awareness but caused a negative attitude change towards the brand. This illustrates that a sustainable brand name must be earned the hard way, but can easily be destroyed by the wrong policy.

5.2   Limitations and Outlook

Since this is an empirical study, the investigation is subject to certain limitations.

First, the work only refers to greenwashing in the fashion industry and, in particular, to the perception of H&M's greenwashing campaign, which is why the transferability to other greenwashing campaigns in the fast fashion industry should nevertheless be treated with caution. Since the work deals with the perception of the campaign among Gen Z, no reliable statements can be made about the perception of the campaign among other generations. Nevertheless, the sample presents a contrasting picture of Gen Z due to its heterogeneity.

Another limitation of this study is that actual behavior after viewing the campaign could not be recorded with the survey method; accordingly, the work always speaks of behavioral intention. Although, according to Scholten (1996) attitude and, as part of it, planned behavior predict actual behavior in a more precise way when changed by the central route, it must be stressed that only statements about the intended behavior can be made.

Due to the given scope of the scientific work, certain aspects such as advertising research, attitude change, e.g., with regard to implicit and explicit attitudes and clothing consumption, which are suitable for an even more detailed understanding of the perception of greenwashing, could not be illuminated in their entirety. For example, trying to understand human behavior is a complex field of research, and many approaches besides the attitude-behavior gap exist. The study therefore focused on individual models relevant to answering the research questions, presented them and incorporated them into the interviews in order to be able to explain Gen Z's perception of greenwashing.

In a first approach, the paper tries to close the research gap between advertising impact research consumer behavior of Gen Z, taking into account the attitude and greenwashing in fast fashion organizations, and therefore enrich the academic study of greenwashing.

To further fill the research gap, some implications for future research can be derived. In terms of examining greenwashing in fast fashion, it may be useful to examine perceptions of other campaigns besides that of H&M. To find out whether perceptions of

greenwashing counteract the attitude-behavior gap, further research needs to investigate whether planned behavior is reflected in actual behavior. Furthermore, future research could follow up on the fact that there were interviewees who were fooled by the greenwashing campaign and who recognized the greenwashing by examining in more detail what the determining factors were in the campaign that made them perceive it in the way they did.

But initial implications for practice can also be derived for all those who want to understand the influence of greenwashing. The results may be useful for sustainable fashion companies and marketing specialists who want to implement a sustainable campaign, avoiding possibilities for misinterpretation and greenwashing and therefore misleading the customers or making them skeptical towards the brand. Besides that, the findings may also help stakeholders, especially NGOs, who want to take action against greenwashing and educate consumers not to fall for it. They will gain a better understanding of the influence greenwashing has on consumers and why.

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