

GREENWASHING AND THE NATURE OF EDUCATION IN RELATION TO CONSUMER TRUST IN FAST FASHION MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT:

The fashion industry has long been known as one of the most polluting industries in the world. The urgent need to improve the current critical situation has given rise to a number of global initiatives, organisations and movements that highlight and at the same time, are involved in the sustainability of the fashion industry. As pressure from consumers and businesses is constantly growing, fast fashion brands are introducing their own sustainable fashion collections which, however, are likely to deceive consumers and, when combined with green marketing, are merely used just to reach their business goals. Environmental education as a key determinant is the way to eliminate deception and properly assess messages by consumers. The main goal of the study is, through neuromarketing research, to define the impact of the studied sample of informed and uninformed consumers from Generations Y and Z when it comes to customer loyalty to the marketing communication of fast fashion brands.

KEY WORDS:

education, fast fashion, greenwashing, marketing communication, sustainability, trust

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1 Introduction

Consumerism and consumption behaviour are integral parts of young people's lives today. They are made to think that they have everything at their fingertips and are often unaware of the impact of their purchasing behaviour and decision-making on the environment. One of the main possible causes of this global problem is insufficient environmental education or improper and incorrectly set communication towards the young generation, specifically in the area of the fashion industry. The fashion industry is currently one of the most polluting industries in the world. Therefore, in recent years, many clothing companies, including fast fashion brands, have committed themselves to produce sustainable fashion goods, use recyclable textile materials, or as part of their business activities, they have taken several sustainable steps to eliminate textile waste. However, many fast fashion brands perceive the environmental pressure from organisations and consumers as a new business opportunity, in which, in order to avoid a drop in their sales, they tend to use deceptive and



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misleading advertising, via which they sell 'sustainable' goods with no or only minimal positive environmental impact. In his study, Solík claims that advertising communication has the following characteristics: the communicator (fast fashion brands) is the author or sponsor of the advertisement; the recipient is the potential consumer; and the transmitted message is a commercial item that aims to fulfil the advertising objective.¹ In this case, to sell the goods to the consumer at a higher price with minimal environmental impact.

Due to the widespread nature of green advertising, consumers face difficulties in assessing received advertising messages, which undermines their trust not only in fast fashion brands but also in sustainable fashion brands as such. Therefore, even a slight solution to this situation and the conscious behaviour of consumers will be a big global shift in this area in the 21st century and will teach, especially young people, responsible behaviour towards our planet. As part of our study, we focus primarily on consumers from Generations Y and Z in relation to education in the environmental field.

In general, these generations are considered a single cohort group, which is limited in time and conditioned by a single style of thinking or acting while experiencing a significant period of socialisation within the same historical, social or cultural conditions. Members of these generations are similar in certain features, values, lifestyles or interests and it is possible to define their common generational identity, which remains the basis for decision-making and the creation of management processes.²

These generations are increasingly led to environmental behaviour due to the growing pressure from companies or individuals. Within the scope of our research, we found that the difference between these two generations lies in the fact that whereas Generation Z grew up with digital media and online technologies, Generation Y learned to use them while they were growing up. The main reason why we focused our research on the above-mentioned generations is that Generations Y and Z represent a strong economic opportunity to companies, and the direction of their purchasing decisions may emphasise the need for the environmental transformation of companies, including fashionable ones. Despite the fact that fashion is a daily part of our lives, many of us do not possess any knowledge of for who, in what environment and under what conditions our clothes were produced. Furthermore, fashion and the expression of one's own identity or personal style primarily concern younger people. Younger generations try to express their personality through their clothes; they follow current trends that change more often than ever before. Clothing produced by fast fashion chains is cheap and easily available. However, the price of these fashionable goods does not cover production costs, ethical treatment of production workers, distribution or marketing. However, younger and older generations hardly ever think about this when buying clothes. As part of our study, we are therefore focusing on the educational factor in connection with the trust of Generations Y and Z towards sustainable fashion due to the omnipresence of greenwashing. The study focuses on the resistance and emotions of Generations Y and Z towards misleading advertising messages from the fashion brand H&M showing signs of greenwashing.

2 Greenwashing and Consumers' Trust in Sustainable Fashion

In connection with the issue of the climate crisis and the support of the philosophy of environmental sustainability in various areas of life, companies have come up with many creative and innovative solutions. Many of these companies are serious about this ecological transformation within their processes, for others this 'ecological packaging' is just one of the many deceptive tools of their marketing strategy. Zhang et al. define "greenwashing" as excessive communication by a company about its environmental behaviour.³ Delmas and Burbano define the term as an intersection of two types of corporate behaviour: weak environmental

performance and a company's positive communication about its environmental performance.⁴ In other words, it is a form of misleading consumers, which represents a certain gap between the symbolic and material activities of the company to be implemented within the sustainability approach.⁵ It basically relates to promoting ecological initiatives or pictures its implementing business processes that would really minimise environmental impact.⁶ All these definitions are united by one common essence – deceptive presentation and misrepresentation. Greenwashing is used by companies in various fields of activity, including fashion. Fashion companies are increasingly aware of the pressure from consumers who constantly demand greener products, produced in safe working conditions with respect to the environment, in which employees receive fair pay for the work done. The beauty of the fashion industry lies in its high focus on the customer and extreme competitiveness. That is why many fashion companies are willing to do whatever their customers want. Customers therefore have to be very careful so that they do not become victims of such widespread "greenwashing". Trust, as defined by Foroudi et al., is primarily understood as a state of mind that involves adopting sensibility focused on favourable motives.⁷ Sustainability, green marketing and consumers has given rise to the concept of so-called green trust. "Green trust" is crucial for companies, including fashion companies, in the context of strict international environmental regulations and environmentalism favoured by customers. When making environmentally-friendly decisions, consumers usually rely on corporate advertising and information, while greenwashing undermines this trust. Otherwise, they are unable to decide about their ecological purchase, which might be a significant threat to the market for environmentally friendly fashion goods.⁸

In their study, Sirdeshmukh et al. proved that attributed environmental value defines the positive relation of customers to products of a certain brand regarding the trust they have in such products.⁹ However, greenwashing as such has increased consumer scepticism and undermines their trust in environmental products from sustainable brands, thereby reducing consumer demand for these products. If corporations with similar problems cannot eliminate the trust crisis caused by greenwashing and cannot succeed in renewing consumer trust at the same time, their competitive advantage in the market will inevitably be affected.¹⁰ A typical example of practicing greenwashing in the fashion industry is the fashion brand H&M, with its deceptive green advertising being further specified and examined below.

Consumers are becoming more and more aware of environmental issues and are therefore more sensitive to greenwashing. As a result, environmental organisations and NGOs are strengthening their investigations and reporting of cases of greenwashing and holding corporations accountable. Greenwashing can have serious consequences in terms of shareholder confidence, as socially conscious investors avoid green investments in such cases. Greenwashing is therefore risky when stakeholders begin to question a company's environmental claims and are reluctant to reward companies for environmentally favourable results.¹¹ Several studies suggest that greenwashing could have a negative impact on consumers, with negative effects on green trust, green word-of-mouth and green purchase intentions.¹² We consider the loss of trust in sustainable brands as a result of deceptive advertising spread primarily by large corporate companies and in the fashion industry to be a serious problem in the perspective of proper environmental purchasing decisions made by consumers. The possible answer and solution to this problem can be found in the following chapter.

1 SOLÍK, M.: Semiotic Approach to Analysis of Advertising. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 212.

2 PAVELEKOVÁ, J., ČÁBYOVÁ, E., HRUŠKOVÁ, A.: Reading Behaviour in the Digital Age: Impact of Covid-19 on Consumer Behaviour. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 29.

3 ZHANG, L. et al.: The Influence of Greenwashing Perception on Green Purchasing Intentions: The Mediating Role of Green Word-of-Mouth and Moderating Role of Green Concern. In *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 2018, Vol. 187, No. 3, p. 745.

4 DELMAS, M. A., BURBANO, V. C.: The Drivers of Greenwashing. In *California Management Review*, 2011, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 66.

5 *The Fashion Law*. [online]. [2023-01-16]. Available at: <<https://www.thefashionlaw.com/learn/greenwashing/>>.

6 *Greenwash*. [online]. [2023-01-16]. Available at: <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095906807>>.

7 FOROUDI, P. et al.: The Effect of Fashion E-Blogs on Women's Intention to Use. In RANA P. N. (ed.) et al.: *Digital and Social Media Marketing*. Cham: Springer, 2020, p. 20.

8 CHEN, Y. S., CHANG, C. H.: Greenwash and Green Trust: The Mediation Effects of Green Consumer Confusion and Green Perceived Risk. In *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2012, Vol. 114, No. 3, p. 489.

9 SIRDESHMUKH, D., SINGH, J., SABOL, B.: Consumer Trust, Value, and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges. In *Journal of Marketing*, 2002, Vol. 66, No. 1, p. 21.

10 YANG, B.: Working of Green Food Market and Consumers' Choice in the Low Trust Condition on Eco-Label. In *Economic Survey*, 2015, Vol. 32, No. 166, p. 79.

11 CONCA, L. et al.: The Impact of Direct Environmental, Social, and Governance Reporting: Empirical Evidence in European-Listed Companies in the Agri-Food Sector. In *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 2021, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 1085.

12 ATKINSON, L., ROSENTHAL, S.: Signaling the Green Sell: The Influence of Eco-Label Source, Argument Specificity, and Product Involvement on Consumer Trust. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2014, Vol. 43, No. 1, p. 35.

3 The Role of Education in Relation to Customer Loyalty to Sustainable Fashion

The subject of our research is the very issue of consumer trust of Generation Y and Z in relation to the deceptive and misleading advertising of the selected corporate clothing company. If we want to help increase sales of sustainable fashion products, we need to increase consumer confidence in sustainable fashion brands based on appropriate communication tools and education. Knowledge and trust in organic products were found to be highly positively correlated.¹³ As stated by Liu et al. in their studies, only after consumers had gained more practical knowledge about the eco-friendly variations of fashion products, they expressed willingness and intention to learn more about the fashion and even engage in future fashion purchases. At the same time, Bonn et al. argue that sustainable fashion expertise also increases trust in sustainable brands, which can play an important role in improving consumers' behavioural intentions.¹⁴ Existing studies have shown that knowledge influences consumer decision-making processes. The level of knowledge of consumers and their attitude towards organic products are directly related to consumers' intention to buy. Wang et al. also suggest that trust in ecological products and consumers' perceived effectiveness can effectively explain the internal mechanism of transforming knowledge about ecological products into ecological purchase intentions. Perceived consumer efficiency is defined as an individual's belief that the efforts of their actions can have an impact on solving environmental problems.¹⁵ There are also several studies claiming that from an attitudinal aspect, consumers are willing to buy sustainable fashion goods, while other studies suggest that consumers may be distrustful of sustainable fashion brands due to external factors such as the aforementioned greenwashing. The result indicates that, in addition to cost-related and functional disadvantages, consumers may feel reluctance to buy sustainable clothing products mainly because of a lack of information and the resulting mistrust.¹⁶ We can eliminate this by properly set marketing communication and providing relevant information, and for consumers to have better access to and knowledge regarding the claims about business practices of many companies, more and more transparency in the supply chain is required, especially in case of clothing companies. Ultimately, companies should invest in their green image as well as in gaining and maintaining the trust of environmentally aware customers to support their green purchasing intentions. In fact, some authors have already established a positive relationship between green trust and the green purchase intention. Green trust influences environmental purchase intentions because customers liaise with trustworthy ethical businesses and avoid questionable ethical activities. Greenwashing generally damages consumers' trust in a company and consequently their intention to go green. Zhang et al. report that this lack of trust created by perceived greenwashing may ultimately lead to a decline in consumers' green purchase intentions, assuming that green trust mediates the relationship between greenwashing perceptions and the green purchase intention.¹⁷ This means that in order to promote consumers' green purchase intentions, companies should avoid activities that may lead to green scepticism and should focus on developing good relations with consumers through information/education and building green trust.¹⁸ In our study, we fully agree with the opinions of the above-mentioned authors on the relevance of education and trust within the framework of sustainable fashion.

13 LIU, Y. et al.: The Importance of Knowledge and Trust for Ethical Fashion Consumption. In *Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 2020, Vol. 33, No. 5, p. 1182.

14 BONN, M. A., CRONIN, J. J., CHO, M.: Do Environmental Sustainable Practices of Organic Wine Suppliers Affect Consumers' Behavioral Intentions? The Moderating Role of Trust. In *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 26.

15 WANG, H., MA, B., BAI, R.: How Does Green Product Knowledge Effectively Promote Green Purchase Intention? In *Sustainability*, 2019, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 3.

16 LIU, Y. et al.: The Importance of Knowledge and Trust for Ethical Fashion Consumption. In *Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 2020, Vol. 33, No. 5, p. 1182.

17 ZHANG, L. et al.: The Influence of Greenwashing Perception on Green Purchasing Intentions: The Mediating Role of Green Word-of-Mouth and Moderating Role of Green Concern. In *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 2018, Vol. 187, No. 3, p. 745.

18 GUERREIRO, J., PACHECO, M.: How Green Trust, Consumer Brand Engagement and Green Word-of-Mouth Mediate Purchasing Intentions. In *Sustainability*, 2021, Vol. 13, No. 14, p. 5.

4 Methods

In the introductory part of the study, we mentioned information and knowledge from presently available domestic and foreign secondary sources based on the content analysis of several authors from relevant database studies and magazines (Web of Science, Scopus), scientific blogs or articles. The theoretical basis of the study was also supported by the description and comparison of the authors' opinions in the field of greenwashing in the fashion industry, consumer trust in sustainable fashion, environmental consumer behaviour or the relevance of education in relation to consumer trust in the field of sustainable fashion. The aim of the theoretical part of the study was to provide a comprehensive, broader overview of the issue in the given area based on the data obtained. The theoretical part thus represented the basis for our further investigation in the empirical part of the study.

The research was conducted as a part of the investigation of the relationship between consumers' trust of selected generations and education in the field of sustainability and deceptive advertising through neuromarketing research, which examined the emotional activation and attention of the selected respondents when watching an H&M advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing. This neuromarketing research was conducted face-to-face on selected samples of respondents (informed respondents, uninformed respondents) and data was obtained through dermal encephalography and emotional valence.

Exactly 14 deliberately selected respondents representing Generations Y and Z took part in the neuromarketing research. The selected sample of respondents, which met the prescribed requirements, was also divided into 2 groups for the purpose of attaining the main goal of the study. The first group consisted of 'informed/educated' respondents who were sent a document with information regarding the issue of greenwashing, greenwashing in connection with H&M and specifically in connection with their 'conscious' collection before the implementation of the neuromarketing survey. The document represents a certain educational tool that served as a dividing determinant thanks to which 7 respondents formed the 'informed' sample. The second group consisted of respondents from Generations Y and Z, but they were not provided with any information regarding the issue of greenwashing and of H&M's deceptive advertising prior to the inquiry. As part of the evaluation of the results of the neuromarketing research, from a methodological point of view, various means and methods were used, such as dermal encephalography and emotional valence, through which we monitored emotional activation of both samples of respondents. This research was subsequently supplemented by a qualitative investigation in the form of a written supplementary questionnaire focusing on personal perception of the presented advertising spot by individual respondents within both samples. The questionnaire was presented to the respondents immediately after watching the advertising spot in a separate room to eliminate distracting elements. For the purpose of results interpretation, right at the beginning of the research, we presented the studied H&M advertising spot and then, through dermal encephalography and emotional valence, we used the method of description or comparison of the results obtained within a sample of informed and uninformed respondents. At the same time, we interpreted the results into figures, pictures or tables for clarity of description. As part of the evaluation, at the end of the research, due to the complexity of all obtained knowledge and information, we summarised the data as answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1: Are informed respondents representing Generations Y and Z more emotionally resistant to misleading advertising messages of the fashion brand showing signs of greenwashing?

RQ 2: Do uninformed respondents of Generations Y and Z show more positive emotions than informed respondents while watching an environmentally oriented advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing?

RQ 3: Does a fast fashion brand become more valuable to uninformed respondents after watching an advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing?

RQ 4: Does the information provided in environmental advertising spots of fast fashion brands have a credible effect on the informed respondent?

In the following part of the study, we focus on the implementation and results of the research to obtain the answers to the above-mentioned research questions.

5 Results

For the purposes of neuromarketing research, we selected the video advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing “H&M CONSCIOUS EXCLUSIVE A/W/20” as the audio-visual material necessary for recording data based on emotional indicators. This advertising spot is 40 seconds long and is primarily focused on marketing communication about H&M’s latest sustainable collection called ‘Conscious’.

The important determinants of marketing research include innovations enabling faster, more efficient and more detailed research. Another determinant is the respondents themselves whose consumer behaviour is increasingly complex and influenced by several factors.¹⁹ In the next part of the study, we focus on, analyse and describe the results of the neuromarketing research, namely the results of dermal encephalography and emotional valence in connection with an additional questionnaire survey. As part of our research, we primarily focused on neuromarketing methods investigating the emotional activation of the studied uninformed and informed sample of respondents and the subsequent comparison of these results.

Dermal Encephalography Results

Electrodermal activity (EDA) is a property of the human body causing constant changes in the electrical characteristics of the skin. EDA is also known as skin conductance or galvanic skin response (GSR). The traditional EDA theory states that skin resistance changes according to the state of sweat glands in the skin. Sweating is controlled by the sympathetic nervous system and skin conductance is a sign of psychological or physiological activation. If the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system is strongly excited, then the activity of sweat glands also increases, which in turn increases the conductivity of the skin. In this way, skin conductance can measure emotional and sympathetic responses. A possible way to visualise GSR outputs is to quantify the number of GSR peaks indicating a significant emotional response. The more GSR peaks identified in an individual watching a stimulus, the more intense their emotional activation.

Table 1: Measuring GSR peaks

Respondent	Informed	Uninformed
1	4	7
2	1	4
3	3	3
4	1	4
5	3	2
6	0	3
7	2	2
SUM	25	14

Source: Own processing

Based on the results shown in Table 1, Figure 1 below was drawn up for a much clearer presentation of the results. According to the obtained data, the participants of the uninformed group are seen to have experienced more moments in which emotional activation occurred when watching the above-described H&M advertising spot.

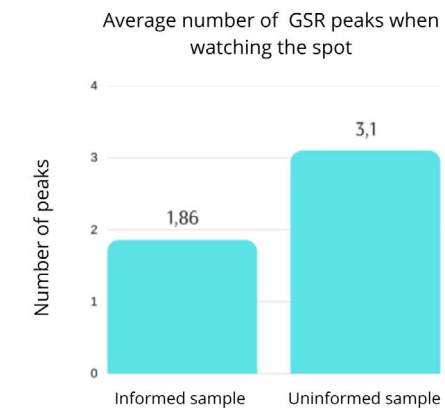


Figure 1: Average number of GSR peaks when watching the spot

Source: Own processing

In light of the above, it is clear that the uninformed sample, based on the respondents’ skin conductance showing a degree of emotional and sympathetic reactions, experienced the offered advertising campaign more emotionally than the informed sample. Based on the results in Figure 1, the uninformed sample was considerably emotionally influenced by the advertising spot. On the contrary, the informed sample showed signs of emotional stagnation. Ultimately, it suggests that the informed sample maintained an emotionally neutral attitude towards the data provided by H&M’s advertising campaign for their ‘Conscious’ collection showing signs of greenwashing.

Measuring Emotional Valence

Emotional valence or hedonic tone indicates which emotions the participants could be experiencing based on their facial micro-expressions. The valence value can range from +100 to -100 with positive values indicating positive emotions and negative values indicating negative emotions. The valence value specifically tells us about the average number of captures with a certain emotion during the recording.

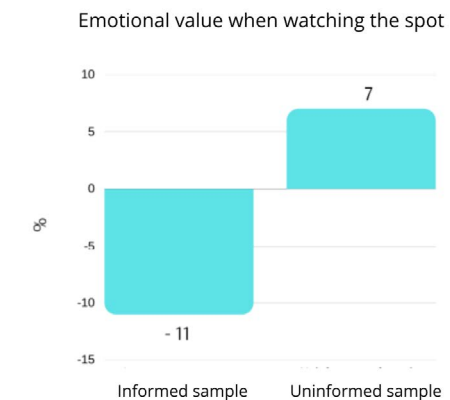


Figure 2: Emotional valence when watching the spot

Source: Own processing

19 KRAJČOVIČ, P., DARÁZS, T.: Neuromarketing – A New Possibility in Marketing Research at FMK UCM in Trnava. In *Communication Today*, 2021, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 196-197.

In our neuromarketing research, it was shown that the said emotional valence indicates that the uninformed group experienced, on average, more positive emotions while watching the advertising spot than the informed group. Advertising statements in the form of video footage or spoken text content showed a more positive effect on the uninformed sample of respondents. An uninformed respondent/consumer shows a more positive perception of misleading information in the field of sustainability within the fashion industry. They are unable to evaluate whether the information provided is true or not and show positive emotional valence in favour of misleading claims produced by fast fashion chains. The presented neuromarketing research, on the other hand, demonstrated certain emotional resistance to deceptive advertising by an informed sample of respondents. As already mentioned above, education in the form of information provided to respondents and potential consumers enables positive self-reflection when receiving the messages of advertising spots, correct perception and evaluation of advertising spots or entire campaigns or helps to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions and strengthens trust in non-misleading sustainable fashion brands. For the comprehensive evaluation of the results, immediately after the implementation of the neuromarketing research, quantitative investigation was carried out in the form of a supplementary questionnaire, the results and statements of which were communicated in a qualitative manner.

1. Does the information in the form of the video footage provided by H&M in its spot have a credible effect on you?

The following question is aimed at the perception of the level of credibility of the video images provided by the company to the informed and uninformed sample of the respondents. Within the list of options, the respondent could choose from the options that were assigned numerical values from 1 to 4, with 4 representing the highest value of satisfaction and 1 the lowest value of satisfaction, for the purpose of clearer statistical evaluation of individual closed questions. The options were as follows: Yes, very much (value 4), Rather yes (value 3), Rather not (2), No (1).

Table 2: Overview of the answers of the informed and uninformed sample within the question No. 1

Informed sample		Uninformed sample	
Respondent's answer	Value	Respondent's answer	Value
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Rather yes	3	Rather yes	3
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Rather yes	3	Yes	4
2.29		2.86	

Source: Own processing

Based upon the above-mentioned results, it is obvious that the uninformed sample of respondents shows a higher degree of credibility towards the images shown in the video in the form of waste management, its processing and the subsequent creation of a new sustainable and conscious fashion collection called 'Conscious'. The informed sample shows, on average, a 0.57 lower value of credibility in the video advertising images, which demonstrates that the amount of information provided in the field of consumers' education and informability about the issue of greenwashing has a positive effect on the level of trustworthiness from the part of the informed respondents.

2. Does the information in the form of a spoken text provided by H&M in the advertising spot have a credible effect on you?

As part of the following question, we focused specifically on the spoken statements and the text itself which accompanied the video spot. We were interested in the level of trust from the part of individual groups in the above spoken and textual claims made by H&M.

Table 3: Overview of answers of the informed and uninformed sample within the question No. 2

Informed sample		Uninformed sample	
Respondent's answer	Value	Respondent's answer	Value
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
Rather not	2	Rather yes	3
Yes	4	Rather yes	3
Rather yes	3	Rather yes	3
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
2.43		2.71	

Source: Own processing

Similar to the previous question, we perceive a lower level of trust in the statements provided by H&M precisely from the part of the informed sample of respondents. According to the above results, the uninformed sample shows a value of 2.71 demonstrating they are more likely to trust the textual information and claims provided by the company than the group of informed respondents. Questions No. 1 and 2, supported by neuromarketing research confirmed that the more relevant information a consumer obtains in the area of sustainability in the fashion industry, the more they know how to control the level of their emotions and let themselves be emotionally influenced by a misleading type of advertising in the form of tricky images and spoken text of fast fashion brands.

3. Has the H&M brand and its collection become more valuable to you as a potential consumer after watching the video?

Question No. 3 examines the perception and acquisition of value by the respondent immediately after watching the video advertising spot. We are interested in the perception and value of the brand, its conscious and sustainable fashion collection by informed and uninformed respondents after watching the environmentally oriented advertising messages.

Table 4: Overview of the answers of the informed and uninformed sample within the question No. 3

Informed sample		Uninformed sample	
Respondent's answer	Value	Respondent's answer	Value
No	1	Rather not	2
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
No	1	Rather not	2
Rather not	2	Yes	4
Rather not	2	Rather not	2
Rather yes	3	Rather yes	3
Rather yes	3	Yes	4
2		2.71	

Source: Own processing

Based on Table 4, it is clear that the uninformed sample of respondents shows a higher level of perception of the value of the brand and its 'environmentally friendly' collection 'Conscious' immediately after watching the H&M's video advertising spot. It results from the fact that the form of displayed messages has a positive effect primarily on an uninformed sample of respondents, who, based on this, perceive their sustainable collection as more worthy compared to other brand collections. Even in this case, the informed sample of respondents proved their resistance to the company's data and retained a degree of value 0.71 lower in contrast to the uninformed sample of respondents. Therefore, education and information have a positive effect on the degree of relevant value being allocated to sustainable collections by an informed sample of consumers/ respondents.

6 Conclusion

In this part of the study, we focus on the overall summary of the results of the implemented neuromarketing research related to the evaluation of predetermined research questions. The research questions were aimed at comparing the perception of the advertising message of the H&M brand showing signs of deceptive advertising by a group of informed and uninformed respondents.

RQ 1: Are informed respondents representing Generations Y and Z more emotionally resistant to misleading advertising messages of fashion brands showing signs of greenwashing?

Based on the results of dermal encephalography, measurement of emotional valence and an additional questionnaire survey, which was carried out on all respondents, we can confirm that informed respondents from the selected generations demonstrated greater emotional resistance to misleading advertising messages of the selected fast fashion brand. We monitored emotional resistance based on the galvanic skin response, which demonstrates signs of psychological or physiological excitement based on skin conductivity. We illustrated the visualisation of these signs through the quantification of the number of peaks of the galvanic skin response in Figure 1, which showed significantly lower values for the informed sample of respondents compared to the uninformed sample. Thus, the education and information provided to consumers and their emotional activation have a possible impact on the monitoring and subsequent evaluation of advertising messages of fast fashion brands that show signs of deceptive advertising. By defining this research question, we also assume that an informed respondent, with the preservation of emotional resistance to the provided advertising message of fast fashion brands, will be more rational when directing the steps of their next purchase decision in the field of the fashion industry.

RQ 2: Do uninformed respondents of Generations Y and Z show more positive emotions than informed respondents while watching an environmentally oriented advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing?

The main message communicated by the video spot created by H&M was to emotionally influence the audience through authentic images pointing to the problem of environmental pollution in the form of disposed and unused waste. The company subsequently, through excellent work with the camera and the overall processing of the advertising spot, comes up with a subsequent solution, which is waste recycling and subsequent creation of its new 'Conscious' collection. The number of shots that were included in the shorter advertising spot were intended to cause a certain emotional excitement in the respondents, which culminated in the last shots, which the creators of the advertising campaign enhanced with strong claims in English: "Let's wear waste" and "Let's change fashion". However, the emotionally rich advertising spot left stronger, more positive emotions only within the sample of uninformed respondents. This is shown in the research into the numerical values of emotional valence shown in Figure 2. This is also confirmed by our supplementary survey, when, in contrast to the informed group of respondents, the uninformed group reacted very positively to the company's strong final statements about wearing waste. In these conflicting moments, the uninformed

sample showed no signs of outrage or negative emotions regarding the company's claims. This is to say that the uninformed/uneducated sample of respondents representing the selected Millennial Generation is positively inclined towards the company's activities or at the same time cannot correctly evaluate the credibility of the advertising message.

RQ 3: Does a fast fashion brand become more valuable to uninformed respondents after watching an advertising spot showing signs of greenwashing?

Within the third research question, we focused on the brand value itself perceived by individual groups of respondents after seeing this type of the advertising spot. Brand value represents and at the same time tries to express the added value by means of which the brand offers and sells its goods or services. In the case of fashion companies, these are individual pieces/collections of fashion goods, the added value of which can be registered in the form of used textile materials, an environmentally friendly production method, the lifespan of fashion goods, ethical conditions for all employees who participate in the cultivation of raw materials necessary for production of fashion goods or workers involved in the actual manufacture of clothing. Another very important attribute for the added value in the fashion industry is its transparency and the provision of reliable data to the public and consumers. Since a large number of fast fashion companies and brands refuse to change their highly profitable operating strategies, they often solve this problem by practising the aforementioned greenwashing. Large clothing corporations perceive an increasing interest and pressure from not only pro-environmental organisations but also consumers themselves. The easiest way for these companies is to provide their consumers with the information that consumers require, even though it often has nothing to do with the truth or is only half true. A consumer not having enough information does not achieve a correct and rational evaluation of the advertising message; they perceive this information positively and, according to our survey, they also tend to overvalue the brand itself or its respective product range. An uninformed sample is therefore more easily influenced in this regard and adds value to those brands that do not fully deserve it. The informed sample of respondents/consumers, on the other hand, again takes a neutral position towards the presented advertising spot and leans towards the 'Rather not' option with the value of 2, which means that the brand does not become more valuable for them. The uninformed sample with a value of 2.71 leans more strongly towards the option 'Rather yes', which means that the brand becomes more valuable to them to a greater extent than in the case of the informed sample.

RQ 4: Does the information provided in the environmental advertising spots of fast fashion brands have a credible effect on the informed respondent?

In his article, Han et al. claim that according to various studies discussing consumer behaviour, knowledge is seen as an essential element for building trust.²⁰ Consumer trust is believed to be a prerequisite for creating the value of an ethical product because due to increasingly sophisticated and unforeseeable greenwashing, many consumers are currently having difficulty evaluating the credibility of claims and are afraid of possible deception by fashion companies. Knowledge and trust in organic products were also found to be highly positively correlated.²¹ As Liu et al. say in their study, only after consumers became more knowledgeable about the eco-friendly variations of fashion products, they expressed willingness and intention to learn more about fashion and even get engaged in future fashion purchases. At the same time, Bonn et al. argue that sustainable fashion expertise also increases trust in sustainable brands, which can play an important role in improving consumers' behavioural intentions.²² Existing studies have shown that knowledge influences

20 HAN, J., SEO, Y., KO, E.: Staging Luxury Experiences for Understanding Sustainable Fashion Consumption: A Balance Theory Application. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2017, Vol. 74, No. 5, p. 163.

21 YONGDAN, L. et al.: The Importance of Knowledge and Trust for Ethical Fashion Consumption. In *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 2020, Vol. 33, No. 5, p. 1181.

22 BONN, M. A., CRONIN, J. J., CHO, M.: Do Environmentally Sustainable Practices of Organic Wine Suppliers Affect Consumers' Behavioral Intentions? The Moderating Role of Trust. In *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 26.

consumer decision-making processes. The level of knowledge of consumers and their attitude towards organic products are directly related to consumers' intention to buy. In their paper, Wang et al. also suggest that trust in ecological products and consumers' perceived effectiveness can effectively explain the internal mechanism of the transformation of knowledge of ecological products into the ecological purchase intention. Perceived consumer effectiveness is defined as an individual's belief that the efforts of their actions can have an impact on environmental problems.²³ Confidence in sustainable fashion brands is often undermined by fast fashion brands, which, due to the power of sophisticated advertising campaigns and promotion, influence rational and generally correct environmental decisions of consumers.

As part of the neuromarketing research we carried out and based on the given advertising spot of the fast fashion brand, we tried to determine the level of trust of informed and uninformed respondents expressed in the information provided in the form of video images and accompanied by spoken or written text. Respondents who were informed of misleading practices of advertising companies in advance showed a lower level of trust in the provided information than the uninformed sample of respondents. When it comes to video spots showing the process of waste processing, its recycling and the subsequent production of a sustainable collection, the informed sample reported a value of 2.29 leaning on average to the answer 'Rather not' compared to the uninformed sample of respondents with a value of 2.86 leaning directly towards the answer 'Rather yes'.

We also see a difference when it comes to trust expressed in the spoken text and the company's claims in informative text form, in which the informed sample expressed a value of 2.43, leaning on average to the answer 'Rather not', compared to the uninformed sample of respondents expressing a value of 2.71, leaning towards the answer 'Rather yes', which means they trust the presented text and spoken information provided in the advertising spot about H& M's 'Conscious' fashion collection. In light of the above-mentioned data, we can confirm that the higher level of information provided within the framework of sustainability issues in the fashion industry including greenwashing has a positive effect on the correct perception of the brand among informed respondents/consumers of Generations Y and Z as it helps to properly perceive the brand value or rationally evaluate of the veracity of provided audio-visual information by fast fashion brands. In case of an emotional appeal, the education and information provided ensure emotional balance and resistance to emotional swings or showing tendency for deceptive and misleading claims, especially from fast fashion brands. This is to say that an informed respondent subconsciously maintains emotional stability when perceiving possible misleading information, which leads to correct evaluation of advertising messages. In terms of the perception of advertising messages from fast fashion brands, it is extremely important to educate consumers, who, due to various unfounded information, are likely to express distrust towards all information related to environmental issues, including certified sustainable fashion brands.

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²³ WANG, H., MA, B., BAI, R.: How Does Green Product Knowledge Effectively Promote Green Purchase Intention? In *Sustainability*, 2019, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 3.