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The Impact of Sustainable Advertising and its Relationship to Consumer Brand Loyalty

An Empirical Study of Young Adults and their Brand Switching Behaviour on High- and Low Involvement Products

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Abstract

Even though the majority of companies have realised the benefits of implementing sustainability practices into their business strategies today, the problem is that the marketing of these activities still has a negative impact on the environment. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine if the impact of sustainable advertisements can influence the purchase decisions of young adults who show loyalty to another brand. In order to reach this purpose, qualitative research was conducted using an abductive approach through 23 semi-structured individual interviews with consumers between the ages of 19-30. This enabled us to get an in-depth understanding of their subjective consumption behaviour in comparison to sustainable advertisements. This report draws on existing literature which states that sustainability promotions positively impact the consumer decision process and that consumers' rarely switch from a brand they are highly loyal to. The results show that sustainable advertisements' impact on young adults is dependent on the product-involvement category. In order for sustainable advertisements to have a chance to generate a switching behaviour among young adults for high-involvement products, the message must provide clear and transparent information regarding the product, because the perception of brands tends to be more valuable. However, this is not as important for low-involvement products since sustainable messages can provoke a switching behaviour based on emotional appeals. Therefore, this research contributes to companies which seek to use sustainable marketing for high- or low-involvement products.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Sustainability	2
1.3	Brand Loyalty.....	3
1.4	Green Advertisements.....	4
1.5	Problem	4
1.6	Purpose.....	5
2	Literature Review.....	7
2.1	Collection of Data	7
2.2	Brand Loyalty.....	7
2.2.1	Influential Characteristics of Brands	7
2.2.2	Brand Identity	8
2.2.3	Brand Trust and Brand Effect.....	9
2.2.4	Impact of Sustainability on Brand Loyalty	9
2.2.5	Characteristics of Technological Brands	10
2.3	Consumer Behaviour.....	10
2.3.1	Purchase Decisions	10
2.3.2	Consumer Awareness and Attitude.....	11
2.3.3	Environmental Involvement.....	11
2.3.4	Price as a Determining Factor.....	12
2.3.5	Delivering Methods and their Impact on Consumer Decisions	13
2.3.6	Ethical Intention-behaviour Gap.....	13
2.3.7	Consumer Behaviour within Technological Fields.....	14
2.4	Green Advertising	14
2.4.1	Consumer Responses to Green Advertisements	14
2.4.2	Message Appeals	14
2.4.3	Perceived Benefit.....	15
2.4.4	Consumers' Sustainability Involvement.....	16
2.4.5	The Effect of Green Messages on Brand Loyalty.....	16
2.5	Sustainability.....	17
2.5.1	Sustainable Development.....	17
2.5.2	Transparency of Sustainability	18
2.5.3	Sustainable Technology	19
3	Methodology.....	20
3.1	Method	20
3.2	Ethical Considerations	22
3.3	Data Collection.....	23
3.4	Data Analysis	24
3.5	The Interview Format.....	25
4	Empirical Findings	27
4.1	Soda Brand	27
4.2	Smartphone Brands	29
4.3	Consumer Behaviour.....	30
5	Analysis.....	31
5.1	Impact of Sustainability	31
5.1.1	Sustainability Involvement	31
5.1.2	Sustainable Advertisements.....	32
5.1.3	Sustainability Awareness.....	34
5.2	Influencing Factors of Advertisements	35
5.2.1	Level of Product Involvement	35

5.2.2	Message Appeals	37
5.2.3	Advertising Integrity	38
5.3	Brand Loyalty	39
5.3.1	Level of Loyalty	39
5.3.2	Recommendations	40
5.3.3	Brand Trust	41
5.3.4	Brand Awareness	42
6	Conclusion	44
7	Discussion	46
7.1	Contributions	48
7.2	Limitations	49
7.3	Future Research	49
	Reference List	51
	Appendices	57

1. Introduction

Through this chapter the foundation and the background of the research will be firstly introduced. Following are the three main topics of the research explained in-depth in order for the reader to get familiar with the concepts from the beginning. The next section that will be covered in this part is the problem, followed by the purpose that is thoroughly presented in the last part of the chapter.

1.1 Background

As of today, what remains of the planet's total, once standing, rainforests is less than half (Brancalion et al., 2019), and it is estimated that between 25 and 50 per cent of all living coral in our oceans has died, only within the last 30 years ("Why protecting coral reefs matters", 2020). As stated by IPBES (2019), there are 8 million species living on our planet today, and approximately 1 million of them are today at risk to get extinct due to climate change, deforestation and overfishing. Not only that, 427 gigatonnes, that is almost the weight of 1 billion of the biggest airplanes, of the planets ice sheets are also melting each year, and 12.85 % of the arctic ice vanish per every ten years which contributes to the sea level rising by 3.3 millimetres every year ("Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet", 2020). The majority of these effects on the planet is caused by human activity, such as consumption, waste, production, deforestation and transportation, etc. (Jackson, 2020). What is further stated by Jackson (2020) is that if we stick to this way of living, the temperatures are expected to continuously rise, dry areas will become even dryer, and places which already experience heavy rainfalls can await an even greater amount of precipitation. As a result, there will be far more extreme weather conditions across the globe, such as stronger, more intense, and more frequent hurricanes, droughts, and fierce bushfires.

Nonetheless, since we are the cause of the problem, we can also be the solution to it, and it is not yet too late to slow down the process of climate change by incorporating sustainability practices throughout the whole system. Back in time, Zinkhan and Carlson (1995) found that consumers were not comfortable when participating in sustainable behaviours. Their research has proven that consumers were involved in environmental perspectives only to be accepted in society, but did not take part in any sustainable

behaviour. This is no longer the trend, Mähönen (2019) notes that consumers nowadays are considerably more aware of environmental concerns compared to earlier, which is reflected in their behaviour and values as they want to make a difference. Therefore, companies now face the opportunity to align their business activities with consumers' values, and by doing so, decrease their environmental impact by providing green products and promoting sustainable consumption. Despite that, it is yet to discover whether such initiatives initiated by firms hold the power to compete with strong, established, brands on the market.

1.2 Sustainability

One definition of sustainability is stated in the dictionary of Merriam-Webster (2012) as the activity of collecting and/or using a product in a way not to drain or damage the resource and it relates to using sustainable methods as a lifestyle. In the research carried out by Kuchinka et al. (2018), it is determined that a company can achieve competitive advantage as well as strengthen brand loyalty among their consumers by implementing green activities into their business strategy. Although these activities may result in financial losses in the short term, businesses could increase their profits derived from such activities in the long run. Beyond that, Parsons and Maclaran (2009) state that the other most important benefit for businesses that results from being responsible for sustainability is marketing and branding recognition. Sustainability is known today as one of the most influential parts within businesses due to the realised climate efforts that are needed, i.e. to use our resources more effectively in order to take better care of our planet (Brundtland, 1987). For example, one study (Tucker et al., 2012) displays this importance of sustainability within business strategies, since the majority of their respondents expressed that they would take action in order to preserve the environment. The consumers also claimed to be positive with respect to environmental protection, which could indicate that they prefer companies and brands that operate in the interest of the environment.

The results from a global study conducted in 2018 show that 81% of consumers think that businesses should take actions that aid to improve environmental sustainability ("The Evolution of the Sustainability Mindset", 2018), which is an increasing trend. The same research also provides findings which state that 73% of consumers would certainly change their purchase patterns in order to reduce their environmental footprint. Furthermore, Cone Communications (2017) study on CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) shows that

consumers attitude towards a company that supports environmental issues is as follows: 92% would develop a more positive image regarding that company; 87% are more likely to trust companies with such attributes and; 88% of consumers would be more loyal to sustainable firms. The same study also mentions that, in 2017, 89% of consumers would switch to a brand they associate with sustainability, considering that price and quality are equivalent. However, since there is a gap between consumers' claims and their true actions, this does not necessarily mean that they would make sustainable purchase decisions even though they express so (Carrington et al., 2010; Newton & Meyer, 2013).

1.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is best described as the outcome of persisting consumer satisfaction and their support towards a specific brand. The phenomenon is generally subconscious, and consumers are less sensitive against competing brands' promotional messages when brand loyalty is strong (Law, 2016). This means that consumers, even as they are under the influence of other products or services, will stay loyal to one brand. Jacoby and Kyner (1973) was among the first to examine this phenomenon of brand loyalty and describes the necessary conditions to be “(1) the biased (i.e., nonrandom), (2) behavioural response (i.e., purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision-making unit, (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes.” (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973, p.2). They also add a note to these conditions, that if they are not met, it is not brand loyalty but rather a repeat purchasing behaviour. Singh and Sirdeshmukh (2000) develop this further by strongly emphasising that brand loyalty is an important part of the purchasing decision process. Therefore, if the company provides valid information through advertisements, underlining the properties of the product clearly, the customer develops trust and feels a connection to that specific brand (Redmond, 2013).

Buyers' consumption motives have moved from the desire of demonstrating economic wealth to reflecting their personality and values through specific brands (Varey, 2010). From a consumer perspective, this means that a purchase is considerably more than just obtaining a necessary good, or even displaying their social class through a product, the product and brand itself have now become a way for the consumer to express themselves. Tian et al. (2001) further point out that consumers' need for sticking out and being unique is an important factor in brand preference, these needs are supported by the feeling of

wanting to be different compared to others. However, according to Berger and Heath (2007), the choice to be unique or follow the mainstream is dependable on the domain of the product, i.e. the perceived importance the product has on the consumer.

1.4 Green Advertisements

Green marketing and green products have the objectives of both improving the quality of the environment and consumer's satisfaction (Thieme et al., 2015). To investigate sustainable messages in regards to how they affect brand loyalty is important to the sense that these messages are one step towards sustainable development according to Clift (2017). This is further explained as enabling long-term sustainable restraints that will ultimately benefit people and the planet. According to Jovanovic et al. (2016), marketing communication has become one of the most important tools that organisations seek to develop and utilise. To gain competitive advantage, the sellers rely mostly on product differentiation in the promotional message, and, through this, they reach a degree of control over the actions of the buyers (Redmond, 2013). Advertisers aim to create specific emotional connections in the mind of the consumer when he/she is thinking about that product or brand advertised (Jovanovic et al., 2016), and the main goal of advertisements is to transform consumer wants to needs in order to trigger purchase intent (Varey, 2010).

1.5 Problem

The importance of adopting sustainable approaches in business- and marketing strategies is no longer favourable for companies, it is crucial to survive in today's highly competitive marketplace. However, even though it is well known that sustainable factors can improve a company's image (Choi & Ng, 2011; Grimmer & Bingham, 2013; Noh & Johnson, 2019), it is yet to explore to what extent it might do so. Do attempts towards sustainability conquer strong brand images and can it influence switching behaviours among consumers? At the same time as businesses realise this opportunity, to promote green consumption towards consumers who are becoming more aware and concerned about the environment, the problem being that consumption harms the environment (Choi & Ng 2011). That said, sustainability and advertised promotions are aspects that contradict each other, but when it comes to business, they can find common ground and work together. Undoubtedly, this leads to an area worth investigating as the results can be used as a guiding incentive for companies to implement sustainability further into their business strategies. Ultimately, this could create a norm for sustainability practices to

always be included in business- and marketing strategies, an outcome that would benefit people, and the planet.

Despite the fact that there has been comprehensive research conducted in the field of green advertisements effectiveness (Buerke et al., 2016; Chekima et al., 2015; Grimmer & Woolley, 2012; O'Rourke & Ringer, 2015; Park & Kim, 2016; Tucker et al., 2012), and the importance of brand loyalty (Andrae et al., 2016; He et al., 2012), there is yet to this date no evidence whether these promotional messages can stimulate a switching behaviour among consumers from a brand they are highly loyal to. Thus, it is not known if sustainable advertisements hold the power to influence and change the purchase decision when the brand is a determining factor, although consumers have expressed a positive attitude toward sustainability initiatives. Even though modern times allow for information to be easily accessible and where consumers are getting more aware of the importance of sustainable development, it is not always an easy process to use the former to solve the latter. We want to investigate the power of these sustainable advertisements to solve the complexity of consumer behaviour.

1.6 Purpose

The purpose of our research is, therefore, **to examine if the impact of sustainable advertisements can influence consumers' purchase decisions even though they prove to be loyal to another brand.** By doing so, the aim is to establish whether sustainable messages integrated into visual advertisements is an effective business strategy, or if businesses before all else need to build a strong brand image in order for these messages to provoke a switching behaviour. Thus, the following research question has been developed:

- *What role do sustainable advertisements play in influencing a purchase decision which is different from consumers' preferred brand?*

This thesis intends to answer this research question by investigating sustainable advertisements, first, in regard to a low-involvement soda brand, and then a high-involvement product category of smartphones, specifically the top-three smartphone brands on the market. The reason that both a low-involvement- and a high-involvement product were chosen is for the contrast that it brings to the research. In addition to this, these smartphone brands were selected because their brand names are already strong in

the market and that the consumers currently owning one of these brands indicates that it is their preferred brand. Furthermore, these brands are also among the most costly brands, which is the effect of the strong brand images that come with the phones, which further argues that the brands are of great importance to their consumers.

Throughout this report, the terms ‘green’, ‘sustainable’, ‘ecological’ and ‘environmental’ will have the same meaning, all referring to a future that is not impacted or affected by the actions that are taking place in the present. This is also the case for the terms ‘consumer’ vs ‘customer’ as these terms are both accurate for the participants that are part of our research. The next section of the report provides a literature review in order to build a frame of reference for our study as well as to find a gap within this area to be examined. Afterwards, we provide the methodology, where the method used, data collection process, as well as, analysis approach is presented. Thereafter the empirical findings derived from the research is demonstrated, followed by the analysis, a conclusion, and lastly the discussion, where the authors own reflections and insights regarding the research are addressed.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter presents the frame of reference of the research where four main areas have been examined, i.e. Brand Loyalty, Consumer Behaviour, Green Advertising, and Sustainability. The most relevant findings regarding these topics from previous research are discussed to find a gap that is worth investigating.

2.1 Collection of Data

In order to construct the literature review, we collected 103 articles, only 45 being useful for our topic and therefore, used in the literature review. The articles found were mainly searched through ProQuest, ScienceDirect and Emerald databases, and while looking into this area we realised that technology and sustainability thoughts are changing rapidly, thus, the time interval chosen is between the years 2009 and 2019 for the findings to be relevant. With the intention to find articles relevant for our research we used keywords such as sustainable advertisements, green advertisements, consumer behaviour, purchase decisions, and brand loyalty. For the literature to be easily understandable, it is divided into four subheadings chosen according to the most important topics in the research. The first one is Brand Loyalty and represents the factors which influence brand loyalty and therefore, the consumer decision process. The second one is called Consumer Behaviour and it orbits around the behaviours of the potential consumers, how their purchase decision is influenced and what drives this influence. The third one, Green Advertising, includes details about how, and in what way, green advertisements can persuade consumers and influence their purchase behaviour. Lastly, Sustainability, the topic in which we present the development of sustainability practices and how companies can approach this new process. For further development of the topics in order for them to also individually cover the specific research method of smartphones, we have at the end guided each of the sections towards the smartphone industry. This will enable conclusions to be made from the research regarding smartphones, back to the subheadings.

2.2 Brand Loyalty

2.2.1 Influential Characteristics of Brands

The action of buying a product several times makes the consumer committed to the product's brand at a psychological level (Zhang et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the group of

consumers we want to target in our research, i.e. young adults, are considered to be less loyal towards a specific brand compared to other age groups (Shukla, 2009). Moreover, Noh and Johnson (2019) conclude that brands' use of communication efforts is one method used to provoke consumer behaviour, and the impact of these depends mostly on their already existing identification with the brand. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to continuously work on creating brand awareness and make sure that their brand is already familiar to their potential consumers in order for the information in their promotional messages to influence the target audience. It has also been confirmed by Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015) that familiarity with a brand plays a significant role for young consumers in the decision-making process due to the fact that familiar brands decrease the risk associated with purchases. Further, Mohd Suki (2013) also agrees to the strong influence of social factors on brand loyalty. The study mentions that students specifically are highly influenced by brands that have a high focus on strengthening the characteristics of the brand such as the brand name and the self-expression it delivers among friends. This is further supported and discussed by Shukla (2009), which also emphasises that the brand name is a factor which influences brand loyalty among consumers. According to Schultz and Block (2013), another important goal of communication that the brand can try to reach is to make the brand stronger beyond being just a brand within a product category, as this can further make the brand's value more convincing.

2.2.2 Brand Identity

It is suggested that consumers generally perceive brands as adding no individual value to products (Schultz & Block, 2013). However, others argue for the opposite, for example, that there is a momentous and explicit link between brand loyalty and that of brand identity and consumer identification, and that this is true for both brands and companies (He et al., 2012). This means that companies must build an identity for the organisation itself, or the brand, as this is an underlying structure for firms to build brand loyalty. Also, they state that when communicating values of the brand to its consumers, this will help enable brand loyalty, and without this brand identity-foundation it can be extremely difficult for consumers to initiate a relationship and stay loyal to a brand. If this is extended further so that consumers can recognise themselves with these identities, then companies could put less effort into this consumer-loyalty process.

2.2.3 Brand Trust and Brand Effect

Park and Kim (2016) differentiate between brand trust and brand effect in their research, proposing both factors to be part of overall brand loyalty. The first referring to the functional claims by the brand and customers' willingness to believe in these, and the latter referring to the possible beneficial emotional response derived from the usage of the brand. Even though their research is conducted within the fashion industry, it is possible to implement their results to a certain extent regarding brand loyalty in other industries and for other brands as well. For example, brands that have sustainability practices implemented in their core values provokes greater brand trust compared to brand effect, demonstrating the importance of different marketing communication appeals from sustainable versus unsustainable brands. Furthermore, Ong et al. (2015) mention that brand trust is one of the most important indicators of consumer loyalty towards a product or service. Meaning that trust is earned after the customers come across a moment of truth, which means that the company delivers on the promise that was made through their advertising. In order to measure, manage and evaluate the effect of the individual brand, Schultz and Block (2013) provide a new framework that in summary examines the growth of a brand by investigating the number of loyal customers through the criteria of how many of their customers encourage their acquaintances to become users as well.

2.2.4 Impact of Sustainability on Brand Loyalty

Although there are an extensive amount of brands today from which the consumers can choose among, there are quite a few of the brands which consumers will be loyal to (Hibić & Poturak, 2016). A proven factor which can positively affect brand loyalty is consumers' attitudes towards environmental concern (Kuchinka et al., 2018), which means that consumers who are already concerned about the environment will have a more positive attitude and be more loyal toward brands that address sustainability issues. The correlation between brand loyalty and environmental commitment by consumers is further supported by Javed et al. (2020), where they refer to this phenomenon as green consumer loyalty. This can be translated into the action of delivering sustainable communication from a brand, which according to Noh and Johnson (2019) will positively affect consumers' view on the brand in the form of brand identification. Javed et al. (2020) further state that the process by companies to associate its product with sustainability practices, have a positive impact on brand loyalty as well as to strengthen the relationship

with the customer, which means that it should be an important goal even though a customer base has been established. In their research, Choi and Ng (2011) also determine a positive relationship between how sustainable a company is and consumers' evaluation of that company, as well as their purchase decisions regarding their products.

2.2.5 Characteristics of Technological Brands

When examining the segment of young adults, Shukla (2009) discovered that organisations that are implementing continuous innovation or brand extensions into their marketing strategy can generate greater value from these consumers. This means that, for this segment, improvements and added features are factors which have a positive impact on brand loyalty. It can be argued that smartphone manufacturers belong to this category, since they are adding new features and improvements for each new model they launch, and therefore this might be one of those industries where brand loyalty is the strongest. Mohd Suki (2013) further investigated students in the young adult category in regard to smartphone brands and agrees that smartphones must continue to evolve technically in order to meet the continuous growing demand of young adults.

2.3 Consumer Behaviour

2.3.1 Purchase Decisions

According to Zhang et al. (2020), the purchasing behaviour that a customer has is not a random action, but rather the result of a long-term influence triggered from the internal factors that the customer has created in their mind. Furthermore, when it comes to purchases regarding high-involvement products, e.g. smartphones, consumers tend to actively seek information and their decisions are rarely based on impulse (Raj & Roy, 2015). It is therefore argued that this impulsive phenomenon, also referred to as switching brand behaviour, does not have an impact on the overall consumer purchase behaviour (Shukla, 2009). Accordingly, young consumers are not expected to switch brands once they are pleased with a product, alternatively a brand, that occurs on social media (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). On the other hand, if a green product would be in correlation with potential consumers' self-interest, they would be more likely to buy it (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Yang et al., 2015). Yet, it is quite a challenge to convince customers to act in a sustainable manner because the beneficiary of these acts is mostly the society as a whole and not the consumer itself (Yang et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Consumer Awareness and Attitude

Research has examined the impact of brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand design on the consumer decision-making process (Hibić & Poturak, 2016), and the result from this research indicates that the only factor which positively influences the decision making is brand awareness. A second result derived from this study is that there is no difference between male and female consumers and their awareness of brands. This finding that brand awareness and knowledge regarding a brand are predominant components in the decision-making process among young consumers is further supported by Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015). As mentioned by Danciu (2015), consumers' purchase behaviour is changing according to their increased awareness and knowledge regarding green activities. Therefore, it can be argued that consumers who are aware of such activities prefer brands which are considered to be green. Using advertising as a tool of marketing communication, companies can inform potential buyers about the necessary characteristics of the product advertised and create awareness that subsequently leads to purchase (Jovanovic et al., 2016).

Maddock and Hill (2016) further state that credible messages found in advertisements influence buyers in being aware that there are similarities between their day-to-day life and the product/brand endorser, considering the advertisement significant and becoming familiar with that specific brand. Therefore, the purchase intention increases when customers display a positive attitude to that particular product or service (Kim & Han, 2014). Furthermore, based on the theory of planned behaviour, consumers' ecological purchasing intentions are a part of their positive attitudes toward sustainable advertisements and the same the other way around (Chekima et al., 2015). According to Bruno et al. (2017), emotional appeals in marketing communications have the power to bring changes in the buyer behaviour regarding the desire to buy more, changing attitudes, and loyalty when it comes to buying from that brand.

2.3.3 Environmental Involvement

It has been confirmed that consumers' educational background, age and involvement in environmental issues, also have an impact on consumers' green consumption behaviour (Yang et al., 2015). This relationship between involvement and consumer behaviour is also discussed by Grimmer and Bingham (2013), where they suggest that consumers who

are less involved in environmental issues are more likely to buy goods from a company with lower levels of sustainable performance, as well as, consumers with high involvement regarding the environmental well-being are more likely to purchase from a company that has a high environmental commitment. Additionally, several potential customers base their purchase decisions on the firm's role in society and to what extent this company is responsible for the environment (Grimmer & Bingham, 2013). Therefore, it can be concluded that the consumer's engagement with environmental concerns is not the solely dependent factor that affects the purchase decision, consumers also value the firm's involvement in these issues and base their decision-making on this.

2.3.4 Price as a Determining Factor

Price has been discussed as one of the factors which impact the consumer decision-making process. According to Roynes et al. (2011), there is a direct relationship between an individual's environmental concern for wildlife and his/her willingness to pay more for a certain good, since it is known that the price is generally considerably higher on green products (Yang et al., 2015). They also discovered that between the younger adults and older adults, the younger group of customers is willing to spend significantly more on environmentally friendly products. Even if today, more and more individuals have a pro-sustainability attitude, only a few are fully convinced to buy green products, mostly because there are some changes from the initial product, such as higher prices or reduced performance (Buerke et al., 2016). However, according to Thieme et al. (2015), many consumers do not refuse to pay more for an environmentally friendly product, as long as it does not undermine the quality of the product. Further, Choi and Ng (2011) indicate that consumers are more sensitive regarding environmental sustainability than economic sustainability, meaning that a low price does not necessarily lead to increased purchase intent when consumers are aware of the firm's poor sustainability commitment. To take this further, this finding supports Shukla's (2009) conclusion that the price domain has not been confirmed to be a significant persuasive component for consumers to switch brands.

2.3.5 Delivering Methods and their Impact on Consumer Decisions

When delivering sustainable products there are three ways that determine the option given to consumers, and these are opt-in, opt-out, or “a forced-choice” (David Lee et al., 2016) and these options are prone to entail different levels of responses from consumers. Firstly, opt-in means that the policy provided to consumers is one that offers them a sustainable option but does not force it, whereas opt-out provides consumers with a sustainable alternative with the option to return to an unsustainable alternative, after trial. The opt-out option could entail a more guilt-filled decision, and therefore, higher participation in the sustainable activities provided even for less sustainable conscious consumers. Lastly, the third option that exists is called “a forced-choice” which arranges an active choice for consumers between a sustainable and a non-sustainable product, by offering this option to consumers, the participation rate is slightly higher than the opt-out option.

2.3.6 Ethical Intention-behaviour Gap

According to Carrington et al. (2010), there is a gap within ethical consumer decisions known as the intention-behaviour gap and it is explained as the difference between the intentions of consumers, and their actions. The cause of this gap is further explained to come from the internal consumer process that decides when to shift from intention to action, and in order to overcome this phenomenon, consumers need to be encouraged as often as possible of the process. They also mention that the presence of accurate information regarding the impact of each ethical purchasing decision is vital to minimise the gap as it motivates consumers to turn intention into action. Newton and Meyer (2013) explain that the reason behind this intention-action gap that exists for green consumption is based on several barriers which need to be conquered in order to encourage consumers to act what they claim. They mention a lack of information, time, finance, and convenience as some of the factors that restrain consumers from carrying out their claimed actions regarding sustainable consumption. Lastly, Carrington et al. (2010) state that the gap between intention and behaviour can largely be explained by the social norms of being ethical. One way to apply this would be to remind people of the social norms while they are making purchase decisions.

2.3.7 Consumer Behaviour within Technological Fields

When examining high-involvement products, which smartphones are considered to be, and consumer responses towards marketing communication aimed at this product category, Raj and Roy (2015) found that brand image is one of the main influencing factors. However, even though they conclude that brands which are associated with a positive brand image stand a high chance in being selected in the decision-making process, the superior trusted source where consumers seek information are reviews from friends and experts. Arif et al. (2016) extend on this by adding that social influence is one of the main forces that affect the purchasing decision when it comes to university students. Here, the social influence of smartphones is concluded to be of such importance that companies should seek to transfer these aspects to marketers in order to take advantage of this. Additionally, they also add that convenience is another important part that describes the reason behind university students' great dependence on smartphones today. They believe that, as smartphones have reached similar capabilities as laptops, students have extended the use of smartphones to also help them in their studies.

2.4 Green Advertising

2.4.1 Consumer Responses to Green Advertisements

Generally speaking, by simply involving a sustainable message into the promotional advertisement, it decreases the obstacle of the price for consumers as they are willing to purchase a product (Ayadi & Lapeyre, 2016). Furthermore, Danciu (2015) stresses that it is crucial for companies, in order not to experience major losses, to realise the fact that they need to implement green activities due to sustainability claims' impact on consumer decisions. According to Noh and Johnson (2019), sustainability efforts shown through advertisements by a fashion company will enable consumers to have a greater identification process, compared to those efforts that lack a sustainability focus.

2.4.2 Message Appeals

According to Yang et al. (2015), when choosing to describe the features of green products either vague or specific, the vague way of doing it is found to be effective only when the characteristics of green products are correlated with the benefit of others, such as the environment. However, both appeals seem to be less efficient when the features of the green product are in collaboration with consumers' self-benefit. That is, when promoting

a product which only benefits the environment, not the consumer itself, marketers should deliver the message with less concrete information regarding the product. In contrast, advertisements that make high effort claims on green products can raise feelings of uncertainty and discomfort for consumers who are hesitant when it comes to sustainability in general (Minton et al., 2012). By combining environmental advertising appeals and consumers' green purchase attitude, it is concluded that when increasing the sustainable messages that advertisements send, it grants consumers the possibility to realise that they have an advantage when purchasing green products (Chekima et al., 2015). Also, Mohd Suki (2013) explains that strong messages sent through marketing efforts are shown to be able to positively affect the performance of the marketing activity, which further emphasises the importance of messages.

2.4.3 Perceived Benefit

It has been concluded that, when advertising environmentally friendly products which also underlines an individual benefit to the consumer, the purchase intention is not greater in comparison to advertisements that only promote environmental benefits (Grimmer & Woolley, 2012). In other words, even though the individual benefit derived from buying a green product is spotted in the commercial by the consumer, this cannot be argued to be one factor that influences the purchase decision since the ordinary advertisement for a product derives as great purchase intent. In their research, Tucker et al. (2012) studied consumer responses to green advertisements, and they found that if a consumer believes that their actions can lead to beneficial environmental change, they will more likely have a positive attitude toward these advertisements.

Therefore, making potential customers feel that they can make a significant change for the environment when buying a sustainable product, can be seen as a business opportunity (Buerke et al., 2016). Grimmer and Woolley (2012) also established that green advertisements which highlight a personal benefit derived from using the product, are more efficient toward consumers who are less involved in sustainability issues, and merely highlighted environmental benefits perform better toward high-involved consumers. What should be mentioned is that this research focused on low-involvement products and was conducted using a printed advertisement. To sum this up, according to Grimmer & Bingham (2013), it is not easy for a firm to just start using environmental advertisements for their sake. They continue by saying that managing this kind of

sustainable image for a brand can deliver significant benefits, only if it is communicated properly to customers, in order for them to see the added value.

2.4.4 Consumers' Sustainability Involvement

Further, involvement also plays an important role in establishing the effectiveness of green advertisements, since it is concluded that advertisements are perceived to be more credible and trustworthy when consumers are more involved with sustainable issues and concerns (Tucker et al., 2012). This is also true for companies in regard to the effectiveness of their sustainable advertisements. Thus, the involvement that a company has in the environment strongly influences the consumers' intention of whether engaging in behaviours that are environmentally friendly or not (Thieme et al., 2015). Not only that, but it has also been found that advertisements with a focus on the environment are one of the main influences in creating a will for a greener consumption by consumers (Chekima et al., 2015). Additionally, Tucker et al. (2012) explain that the receptivity to environmentally themed advertisements is greater for consumers' who are concerned for the environment, regardless of the degree of green products in the promotion. However, the literature in this field contradicts each other somewhat since do Paço and Reis (2012) states that the more concerned about the environment a potential customer is, the more sceptical he or she will be toward different green messages and facts an advertisement provides.

According to Nyilasy et al. (2013), these suspicions appear along with the phenomenon of greenwashing that is becoming increasingly popular in today's marketing techniques. Greenwashing is defined as the act of a firm that misleads consumers on purpose with false information about their environmental performance (firm-level greenwashing) and sustainable benefits of the products or services (product-level greenwashing) (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). It is of major importance that a firm treats this issue with care since this insincere/deceitful communication could impact the company's bottom line as well as constituting severe ethical harm for the firm in the long run (Nyilasy et al., 2013).

2.4.5 The Effect of Green Messages on Brand Loyalty

For consumers in this segment, i.e. young adults, previous research has examined whether advertisements influence brand loyalty (Shukla, 2009). Even though the results in this research indicated the opposite, the same study found product improvements and added

features to be major factors that influence consumers' brand loyalty as well as the packaging of a product. On the other hand, since this research was conducted using advertisements in general, not specifically green advertisements, it cannot be concluded that green promotional messages do not have an impact on brand loyalty. However, more recent research states that green advertisements, and whether they match with consumers' thinking and ideas, is proven to influence their attitudes toward purchasing intentions, brands and brand choice (Chekima et al., 2015).

Since this research does not focus specifically on the young adult segment, rather consumers in general, there is an inconsistency of the literature in this field which would be of value to investigate. Although various characteristics and factors of green advertising have been discussed to affect certain consumers, it is argued that the sole important determinant is how the consumer perceives the brand, not the information provided by the brand (Danciu, 2015). Meanwhile, research carried out by O'Rourke and Ringer (2015) implies that a large proportion of consumers are not influenced by sustainability information at all, and in some cases, the claiming of a product being green can even decrease the purchase intent for certain consumers.

2.5 Sustainability

2.5.1 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is considered to be a global topic and it is believed to be an important issue nowadays (Law & Gunasekaran, 2012). Since economic growth and increasing population are reducing Earth's natural resources, companies feel the obligation to take action and change their way of managing their businesses (Thieme et al., 2015). This obligation originates from that companies feel forced to take responsibility for how they operate, in order to be seen as a competent sustainable firm, or simply because they feel threatened by laws and regulations (Parsons & Maclaran, 2009). Also, some companies realise that they are a big part of the problem and that they are the party who has a strong influence on consumers to contribute to a better environment (Thieme et al., 2015). As a result of these environmental concerns, there is a growing number of firms that are adopting strategies related to corporate responsibility to contribute to the sustainable development goals (Law & Gunasekaran, 2012). According to O'Rourke and Ringer (2015), the main strategy which most companies

initiate to encourage consumers to a more sustainable lifestyle is to provide them with sustainability-related information.

Furthermore, by promoting the sustainability values of the brand to the target group in a way that explains both ecological benefits and the benefits of the firm will enable consumers to associate sustainability with the brand (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014). Previous research has shown that the impact on consumer responses is dominant for a firm that demonstrates a poor level of sustainable responsibility compared to a firm that demonstrates a high level (Choi & Ng 2011), which means that the negative impact from low sustainability involvement is greater than the positive impact from high sustainability. Therefore, consumers are more likely to develop a negative perception of companies with poor sustainability commitment than they are to develop a positive perception of those with high commitment, which further indicates the importance of corporate sustainability.

2.5.2 Transparency of Sustainability

In order for sustainable brands to reinforce loyalty among their existing and potential consumers, they need to, not only claim their sustainability approaches in their marketing communications but rather provide credible evidence for such claims according to Park and Kim (2016). Also, they further highlight the importance for marketers to realise this when they develop promotions toward sustainable brands, that information, honesty and transparency are crucial factors for the promotion to be successful. However, it has been shown that there is a major difference between direct users and nondirect users and their responses towards sustainability information as well as whether this information has an impact on their purchase decisions according to O'Rourke & Ringer (2015).

This means that direct users are considered to be the ones that actively search for information regarding sustainability, and nondirect are those who obtain this information from another source, e.g. direct users. They further explain that this is an important aspect for marketers to keep in mind when establishing promotional messages since sustainability information influences direct users' buying behaviour, whilst nondirect users seem to demonstrate no response towards this type of information. As a result, providing environmentally-related information to non-direct users is more or less worthless and ineffective given that they would not change their buying habits after being

exposed to such information. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that this research was conducted using websites to determine whether green information has an impact on consumer responses

2.5.3 Sustainable Technology

Technological devices are currently a part of most of the activities of human lives (De Felice et al., 2014), and from a solely technological point of view, to eliminate all environmental impact of products is completely unattainable (Andrae et al., 2016). Instead, Aschehoug and Boks (2013) describe the development of sustainable products as an ongoing process, which means that the area will not reach an ultimate goal, but continually need to be researched and developed. Moreover, the number of electronic devices produced per year is immense, and consequently, sustainability development has been studied to find methods that can be applied to several different technological areas according to Andrae et al. (2016).

They further explain that the primary consumer motivation for technological products comes from the brand of the product. Therefore, the challenge for these brands to adapt ecological processes, and successfully use this to improve their position, lies in the task of combining the environmentally-friendly perspective with the brand. It is further affirmed by Wong et al. (2013) that the implementation of sustainable processes throughout management and production has a positive effect when releasing information regarding the company. However, the emphasis here is on the act of making sustainable information public for consumers, i.e. to exclusively implement sustainable activities throughout the company does not necessarily affect consumers' perception of the company, unless this message is delivered clearly to them.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological insights of this paper will be presented, as well as the approach in which the data has been collected. This includes the ethical considerations that were taken into account throughout the research as well as how the data was analysed, and the format of the interviews.

Since the purpose of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding regarding consumer responses derived from sustainable advertisements, a qualitative study based on interviews will be conducted in order to understand the meaning behind the collected data (Charmaz, 2014). The research strategy follows an abductive approach in order to achieve a theory generation. This includes a combination of the two approaches induction and deduction. In the first step, as an inductive approach, a framework was estimated to be tested, and to achieve abduction, a deductive approach was added. This approach includes a comparison of the gathered data from interviews and the information with the previously mentioned framework. Lastly, to create triangulation, the frame of reference is used to support the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). Correspondingly, we aim to do this using the interpretivism paradigm as we desire to select a non-random sample since we want to understand each consumer's thoughts and reasoning. This means that the interviews will be semi-structured with open questions to leave space for us as interviewers to adapt according to the interviewee.

3.1 Method

To meet and answer the purpose of the research question, we conducted 23 individual interviews orally, either face to face, via phone or through online platforms which enabled us to ask extensive questions and the interviewees to give extensive feedback. Specifically, we decided to interview consumers regarding their current smartphone brand and see how they respond when we introduce them to the 'most sustainable phone' on the market via a visual advertisement. Additionally, in order to collect data concerning consumers' general attitude towards sustainable advertisements, the interview sessions started with examining their preferences regarding a soda brand and its sustainable vs unsustainable advertisements. The topic of sustainability was not mentioned to the participants before the interview since the aim was for them to enter the session with an

unbiased mindset regarding the topic. The questions consisted of both open-ended, as well as, closed questions since the research required a mixture of them both. Furthermore, the questions were also semi-structured to examine subjective points of views (Tracy, 2013), while remaining within the desired structure of the interviews in addition to providing room for discussion and in-depth analyses.

Due to the time limitation of the research, the chosen sampling strategy was Ad-hoc, i.e. sampling based on accessibility (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the sampling process aimed to reach a diversity of ages, genders, country of origin and occupations in order to include as many diverse consumer types as possible. The interviews were prepared and organised to take place over the span of two weeks, and from these results we obtained knowledge of how sustainable advertisements for a product can change how consumers previously perceived their brand of choice. It was also investigated whether this can derive a change in the purchase behaviour among the participants if they would switch from a brand, they show loyalty towards based on these sustainable advertisements. The qualitative approach enabled us to examine the world in the perspective of it being a social structure with fluctuating forces depending on the subjective thoughts of people. This means that we could direct the results to show the meaning behind sustainable advertisements and in what way they influence a purchase decision which is different from consumers' preferred brand. These direct observations allowed an in-depth analysis of the behaviours causing existing brand preferences, and what strengths these have in comparison to sustainable advertisements.

The interviews followed a set of semi-structured questions to make sure that the same foundation was created for each interview so that all interviewees answered the predetermined list of questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013). However, when needed, there were additional questions added during the interviews to allow the participants to elaborate on their answers (Charmaz, 2014). Moreover, the nature of the research question depends on analysing brand preference in relation to sustainable advertisements, that is why the targeted sample of the population will be Millennials and Generation Z, i.e. young adults between the ages of 18-35, since they are less loyal towards a certain brand (Shukla, 2009), and they are willing to spend more on environmentally-friendly products (Yang et al., 2015). We chose to investigate the different opinions regarding the brand that the consumer is loyal to and the most sustainable smartphone, and the preference

between the two. The reason why our interview is directed specifically to the phone industry is the fact that this particular product is common and essential in the life of a customer today.

Furthermore, smartphones are considered to be high-involvement products and, therefore, it is expected to require a greater decision-making process by the consumer since these products are generally associated with a higher risk when switching between brands. That is why we believe that the empirical findings will give us a broader understanding regarding sustainable advertisements and brand loyalty given that low-involvement products would not generate an extensive evaluation when choosing among brands. However, since we also implement a section at the beginning of the interview regarding a low-involvement product and its sustainable message impact on the participants, it will provide us with insight about this product category as well. Ultimately, by investigating consumers' perspective of sustainable advertisements in relation to brand loyalty by using smartphones, the conclusions from the research can be applied to a certain extent to other, similar markets.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

For the research to uphold the ethical considerations regarding data collection, we investigated the necessary set of rules and boundaries before the interviews, which we followed during the sessions. First, we ensured that the interviewees understood the research and any impacts they have in it which entailed that they, at the beginning of the interview session, were made aware that the purpose of the interview was to collect consumer data for a bachelor thesis regarding advertisements. This was done in accordance with Bell and Bryman's (2007) key principles in research ethics which include protection of the interviewees and their dignity, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality by keeping them well informed and providing full transparency and avoiding any misleading. Also, we made sure that we would not harm or deceive the participants in any way or that we would be of any conflict of interest by keeping the interviews professional and unbiased.

So, that is why we decided to strictly follow the GDPR and make sure that the personal data is collected and processed in accordance with these regulations to hinder this data from being used to identify an individual. Also, all participants had to give consent to the

stated purpose of the interview, before it started. This included the information we wanted to collect, what it will be used for, and that all personal data will be deleted maximum one week after the thesis has been approved. This was shared electronically to the interviewee, or in a paper copy if the interview was conducted face to face. Through this, it was clear that the participants were aware of the ethically correct environment that exists. Furthermore, the consent form (Appendix A) informed the participants that all data that is collected through the interviews will remain anonymous, i.e. that their names will remain unattached to the data to maintain the promised confidentiality.

3.3 Data Collection

The research will consist of both the collection of primary data in the form of individual interviews with consumers, as well as secondary data collected from existing sources to provide a background to our topic. The primary data from the individual interviews was collected either face to face, through an online platform, or over the telephone with the participants. By collecting the data in a dialogue between only two people, the interviewer and interviewee, the desire was to make the interview resemble a flowing conversation in order to make the respondents confident to share their thoughts and not be influenced by anyone else. Therefore, the results of our research are based on the reality of each participant's own experiences and reality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and the reason they feel this way (King, 2004). Since the interviews were conducted over the phone or through online voice channels, the sessions were not voice recorded, rather noted on a computer while the discussion took place.

Furthermore, according to the previous mentioned ethical considerations, we made sure to be prepared before the data collection so that the data we collected was necessary for our work and that only we had access to the interview data with the purpose of not sharing it with other people. Also, by collecting all data on the same place enabled us to delete any unnecessary data during the screening process and will enable us to delete the data maximum week after the thesis has been processed, as agreed with the participants when it is no longer of use. Secondly, the data collection for the frame of reference was established from peer-reviewed articles online using five keywords: sustainable advertisements, green advertisements, consumer behaviour, purchase decisions, and brand loyalty.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the collected data, in the shape of individual interviews, the general analytical procedure established by Miles and Huberman (1994) has been followed. This process broadly consists of data reduction, displaying the data, and lastly, drawing conclusions as well as testing the validity of the conclusions. A necessary step prior to reducing the data was to process and re-write the initial field notes since these have been documented while undertaking the interviews, which generated misspellings and abbreviations. Additionally, a proportion of the interviews was conducted in languages other than English, which required translation of the documented data into a common language. Next, the data was reduced to sort out irrelevant information gained throughout the data collection, which was done by using coding. Coding the data enabled the authors to easier identify common themes and similarities, as well as differences, within and between the respondents' answers. By coding the collected answers in a similar way to the themes in the literature review, as well as by the help of the formulation of the research question, it was easy to instantly recognise the material which was relevant and within the scope of this study.

When the coding was done and only the information of importance remained, the displaying of data was initiated and the respondents' answers were displayed using a simple matrix (Collis & Hussey, 2014), categorised based on the questions discussed during the interviews. Thereby, all responses derived from the same question could be analysed in order to find common themes and draw conclusions based on those themes. Furthermore, displaying the data in this way enabled us to analyse and draw conclusions between different respondents, as well as throughout the single respondent's interview. The following themes have been determined as a result of the coding: Impact of sustainability, Influencing factors of advertisements, and Brand loyalty. These themes have been used as a framework for our analysis and will later in this report be used as subheadings in the analysis section. Additionally, data derived from closed questions, such as whether the participants had ever recommended their currently used phone brand to someone, were easily established once the reduced data was displayed in the matrix. Thereafter, this data was calculated with the purpose of displaying the disposition between the answers, e.g. to determine the most frequently used answers. The dispositions can be found in Appendices C & D, where it is displayed using charts and graphs.

Lastly, displaying the data in this way enabled conclusions to be drawn regarding the collected data, which was done by analysing the single individual, as well as, compared to other individuals. After the consumers' answers were thoroughly analysed, interpreted, and concluded, given meaning to their statements, the previous literature was further investigated and connected with the respondents' answers to verify the validity of this research.

3.5 The Interview Format

In accordance with what has been stated above, each interview followed the same structure as presented in Appendix B, for the answers to be accurate and to stick to the relevant issues. The interview session started with the introduction of a soda brand where the participants watched two of the brand's advertisements, one sustainable and the other one non-sustainable. The reason that the specific soda brand in question was chosen, is because the brand has done different video advertisements with different purposes. What needs to be highlighted is that none of the participants was informed about the sustainable aspect of the research prior to the interview, in order to collect unbiased responses regarding this area. The first ad includes clips of young adults laughing and having a fun time at the beach while drinking the soda brand. The second advertisement is as stated, from the same brand, but the style of it is different. Instead of a real-time video, this one portrays a developed animated video of a ladybug recycling an empty bottle with the help of ants. The advertisement mentions a new, 100% recycled, bottle and associates it with teamwork.

These two advertisements were chosen because of their different objectives, one showing a fun and enjoyable lifestyle associated with the brand, and the other drawing on a sustainable interest. As a result, the interviewees were given two different aspects of the brand as they had to decide which one they prefer, and why (question 1). This meant that we would find out which function they deem most important, and they could elaborate on this as we ask about their respective emotions derived from the advertisements (question 2). In addition, this was examined further to any pre-existing connection with the brand to see if it has an effect on the responses (questions 3). Then, the participants were asked how concerned they are regarding the environment, and how involved they feel in sustainability issues (question 4). As the last question of the first section of the interview regarding the soda brand, a sustainable connection was added to the advertisements to let

them explain how they feel about the same brand creating different advertisements with different purposes (question 5).

Continuing on the theme of sustainability, the topic was introduced in the second section of the interview from the perspective of smartphone brands. First, the participants were asked what smartphone brand they currently use (question 6). Then, we examined their loyalty towards their smartphone brand by asking how connected they feel towards it (question 7) and if they have ever recommended this brand to others (question 7b). Whereas by asking what the reason for their perceived strong connection (question 7a) was to see if it was possible to draw any conclusions regarding the consumers' identity or self-expression. In addition, the participants were asked what made them buy this brand in order to see what features of the phones that attracted them (question 7c). Subsequently, the opinions of their own smartphone brands would be established before they were shown further advertisements. The participants were selected based on the fact that their current smartphone brand is among the top three market-leading phone brands so that we could prepare to show existing and ongoing advertisements based on their respective smartphone brand.

Next, the participants were asked if they were already familiar with the sustainable smartphone and if so, what they have heard about it (question 8). The participants were shown one advertisement from their current smartphone and one advertisement from the most sustainable smartphone on the market. They were then asked if their perception of their current brand had changed after seeing the commercial from the most sustainable phone (question 9). Likewise, they were asked if they would consider buying the sustainable phone instead of their current phone brand, (question 10) or at least try it (question 10a). If they did not feel convinced or attracted enough from the sustainable advertisement to consider buying it, we wanted to figure out if this was because something was missing from the product (question 11) or if it was something from the advertisement itself (question 12). Lastly, the last section is separated in order to examine consumers' behavioural aspect of what most influences their purchasing intentions when it comes to visual advertisements, which is something that could have affected individual respondents' answers (question 13).

4. Empirical Findings

This section will introduce the reader to the qualitative data gathered from the individual interviews. The collected data will be divided into the categories formulated above. This chapter will lay the groundwork for the analysis, discussion, and conclusion.

The empirical findings were gathered from 23 consumers that participated in the interviews, almost twice as many male consumers (65%), compared to female consumers (35%) participated. However, since it has been concluded that there is no significant difference between the genders regarding brand awareness, this cannot be considered to have an impact on the results. As mentioned earlier, the targeted consumers are between the age of 18-35 in this research, and it was possible to obtain insights from almost every age between 19 and 30, except for 21 years old, please see Appendix C for an age distribution table. Furthermore, we collected data from consumers with five different ethnicities, i.e. our participants were from Sweden, Germany, Romania, The Netherlands, and Australia, these results are shown in Appendix D. Lastly, the subheadings used for the interview format, found in Appendix B, are used here in order to present the results clearly, and so that the results can be connected easily with that format.

4.1 Soda Brand

All of the participants said that they were aware of the soda brand before the interview, and 17 people (74%) said that they consume it often. The respondents expressed the most interest regarding the sustainable advertisement when these different promotional messages come from the same brand. Namely, 70% preferred the sustainable advertisement while only 30% liked the unsustainable advertisement. As stated earlier, the respondents had not been informed of the sustainability topic prior to the sessions, yet 7 consumers, i.e. 30%, mentioned that they preferred the sustainable commercial just because of that reason, that the advertisement focused on sustainability:

*“The first one is touching with sustainability - it is more relevant - more touching. The second one is more standard with the hot weather and a cold *soda brand*”*

*“The first one is very cute, original and with a strong message, the colors are good and uplifting. The second just feels like a generic *soda brand* ad that does not really add any value.”*

Answers from some consumers that chose the other advertisement argued that they associate the drink with other features than environmental aspects:

“The second one on the beach, because I did not like the environmental part of the first one. I just do not like the social responsibility, I do not like the winning about it, it should be what politicians do, not companies. They do it to make more money.”

The participants were asked regarding their previous connection with the soda brand and 74% mentioned that they consume the brand often, but, some mentioned that this does not necessarily transfer into any connection to the brand:

*“I drink *soda brand* when I drink *that type of drink*, but no further connection.”*

When asking the consumers if they are concerned about sustainability issues and therefore take any actions to make a difference for the environment, 83% said that they are doing some kind of effort. The most common answer among these consumers was that they are either doing waste separation, recycling, or a combination of both. During this question, one participant that previously chose the environmental advertisement responded with this:

“Yeah I would say so, if you belong to the generation I do, then you are very aware and influenced by the everyday life, commercials, friends, I think about it many times each day. Waste separation and when I shop. I do not really shop that much, because I do not really see the point with it since the clothes I have now are still good, or I buy clothes on second hand. A lot of environmental thinking in mostly everything I do.”

Nevertheless, it was only 8 consumers, i.e. 35%, who indicated that, after seeing the two different advertisements, their perception towards the brand had changed given the fact that one promotes sustainability and one does not. The majority of the other participants responded that they understand that brands need to develop different advertisements with different messages and for various purposes:

“Not at all, it makes sense that different ads have different meanings.”

4.2 Smartphone Brands

When moving on to the next part of the interview, we asked the participants whether they felt a strong connection towards their current smartphone brand, and not even half of the participants, i.e. only 48%, said they did. The rest of the participants argued that the reason that they have the current smartphone brand is because of the phone itself, not the brand:

*“No not really at all. I just want a functional phone. I don't really care about it being a *brand*.”*

“Nope. I only care about the phone that I use itself, not the brand on it.”

Despite this, 87% of the consumers have, at least once, recommended their brand to acquaintances, and 52% said that they bought their current phone brand because friends or family recommended it to them. Most of the interviewed consumers claim to be concerned about the environment and involved in sustainability issues, but only one participant (4%), had heard about the most sustainable smartphone on the market before being shown the advertisement for it. Furthermore, after watching the advertisements developed by their current phone brand and the most sustainable phone brand, 34% claimed that their perception towards their brand had somewhat changed:

“Yes, I think more sustainable when it comes to phones now, it wasn't really an area where I was thinking about the environment before.”

The most common response from the rest of the consumers was that they did not think of the sustainable advertisement as affecting their current brand, merely regarding the most sustainable phone brand:

*“My opinion do not necessarily change about *brand*, but my interest is awakened by seeing this new phone.”*

Moreover, 48% of the consumers will consider buying the sustainable phone in the future when they are in need of a new phone. However, this number is based on some respondents adding that they would consider buying it if they carry out further research in relation to the sustainable phone brand first:

“Yes I could do that, if I can check a bit how it works before, like test the camera before because the camera is very important to me.”

Only two people, making up 9 % of the participants, said that they would buy it without adding any further desire to do more research first, i.e. that they felt that the advertisement delivered enough information for them to make a purchase decision:

*“Yes, it seems really good in my pursuit to minimise my negative effects on the world. I strive to be more sustainable and with the *brand* it seems like I can.”*

4.3 Consumer Behaviour

Lastly, asking a question about advertisements in general, most of the answers were leaning towards the fact that the respondents are seeking information regarding a product when seeing a commercial. That is, 65% of the consumers claimed to be more affected by information, while 9% argued that they are more impacted by the emotional effect a commercial gives them, and the rest 26% argued that it is a mix of both. However, some respondents wanted to separate their appeals depending on the product type:

“If it is a product category where I have no insight or previous knowledge, I would rather have more information about it. But if it is something that I am very familiar with, then it might be more the feeling”

“When it comes to phones, definitely more information, maybe a bit of emotion to get my attention though. But for other stuff than phones, then maybe more emotions when it is smaller purchases.”

5. Analysis

This section will present an integrated analysis of the empirical findings from the individual interviews. It will allow the reader to gain a deeper understanding of how the empirical findings are linked with theory presented in the frame of reference as well as the research question.

5.1 Impact of Sustainability

5.1.1 Sustainability Involvement

One clear finding from the research is that almost all of the participants who selected the sustainable commercial as their favourite, also claimed that they are somewhat involved in sustainability issues. Among those 16 consumers who claimed to prefer the sustainable advertisement, only one stated to not be involved in environmental problems. However, even though this participant did not claim to be involved, the answer indicates that news related to this subject was of interest, indicating some kind of engagement. What is worth mentioning regarding this consumer is also, despite the fact that involvement does not exist and no clarification regarding the sustainability perspective prior to the interview was provided, that the emotions derived from the sustainable advertisement were:

“happy and hopeful emotions regarding the environment”.

Out of the seven consumers who were more drawn to the non-sustainable advertisement, four expressed that they are by no means involved in sustainability issues, nor taking any actions in order to reduce their environmental footprint. Two of them reported that they were slightly involved and both of them mentioned recycling as the main activity they incorporate into their daily lives. Finally, there was only one consumer who argued to be highly involved, even to the extent that they:

“avoid plastic, and eat as little meat as possible”,

although yet preferred the non-sustainable advertisement. These findings in relation to sustainability involvement are equivalent to the existing literature, that green advertisements have a greater impact on young adult consumers who are already involved in sustainability issues (Grimmer & Bingham, 2013; Tucker et al., 2012; Yang et al.,

2015). Although, since our findings suggest that there is no difference between the consumers who are prone to buy the sustainable phone and their involvement in environmental issues, this contradicts the study by Yang et al. (2015) and Grimmer and Bingham (2013). In other terms, there is no pattern among young adults who would buy the sustainable phone after seeing its advertisement and how involved they are in sustainability issues.

5.1.2 Sustainable Advertisements

Based on the empirical findings, when young adults come across two advertisements with different messages, yet produced by the same brand, they generally do not change their perception toward the brand when one promotes sustainability and one does not. However, our findings suggest that a sustainable message in an advertisement has some kind of impact on their attitude since seven of the respondents claimed that their perception of the brand changed after such a message was implemented in the advertisement. All of the consumers who claimed that their perception changed, also reported that it was a positive change, their view of the brand had improved after seeing the sustainable advertisement. One consumer even stated that:

“I like the brand more after seeing that they think about sustainability, that they are actually doing something about the current situation. Maybe I should think about this the next time I buy soda.”

What should be mentioned is that this consumer had previously in the interview explained that their preferred soda brand was, in fact, the main competitor of the brand we examined. This finding, therefore, supports Choi and Ng (2011) that consumers evaluate companies due to their sustainability commitment and base their purchase decision on this. Meanwhile, there was one consumer, who held the opinion that advertisements do not have the power to influence their perception regarding brands, yet expressed it as being annoying that the brand promotes sustainability,

“...kind of diminishing my opinion of the brand.”

Thus, this statement could be argued to imply a change in the perception of the brand, although negative. However, this participant is in no way involved in sustainability issues, and therefore the expressed negative feelings regarding the brand when such information

is implemented in their promotion supports the findings of Minton et al. (2012), but also by the work of O'Rourke and Ringer (2015). Even though their research uses websites in order to determine the effect of green information, it is still applicable in this case of a visual video advertisement.

Although the literature in this field states that a sustainable message has a great impact on consumers' perception of a brand (Javed et al., 2020), it is possible that only a third of the interviewed consumers claimed so since they are aware of the importance of different promotional messages. Approximately half of the participants, more specifically 12 out of 23, stated that it is not more than fair that a brand positions themselves to different target groups and that different commercials have their own unique purpose. It was also mentioned by consumers that advertisements regarding a product should not be focused mainly around the company's environmental responsibility since the product function disappears in that case. One of the consumers in our research stated that:

"...the two advertisements focus on different aspects, what is promoted is two different faces of the product life cycle (PLC)".

Hence, one of the commercials (the non-sustainable) focused on the product itself, the consumption, while the other one (the sustainable) was focused on the activity after the product had been consumed. Another consumer, for whom the perception had changed, argued for the fact that the impact of a sustainable message is dependent on when the advertisement was made. Thereby, the green message was powerful to this consumer, who are highly committed to sustainability practices, since the sustainable advertisement was developed years later compared to the non-sustainable commercial.

"I think that I would have thought that they made the sustainable commercial merely in order to look good if that advertisement was made prior to the non-sustainable".

This finding contradicts Tucker et al. (2012) since they imply that a highly environmentally-involved consumer finds a green commercial more trustworthy than less involved consumers and therefore support the research by do Paço & Reis (2012). In addition, eight consumers stated that their perception of their current phone brand had changed after seeing one visual advertisement from their brand and one from the most sustainable phone on the market. Four of these participants were the same ones that

previously claimed that their perception towards the soda brand had changed after seeing its sustainable advertisement. Although in this case, their feeling towards their brand had changed to something negative, and most of them indicate some kind of scepticism regarding their current brand's environmental commitment. All of these eight customers that changed their perception were either moderate or highly involved in sustainability issues, and none of the uncommitted consumers claimed that their view had changed. Contrary, one participant even said:

“No, not at all, if anything it made my connection to my brand stronger”,

which again supports O'Rourke and Ringer (2015).

5.1.3 Sustainability Awareness

When asked about what was the factor that made the young adults come to the purchasing decision of their current smartphone brand, most of the respondents were influenced by an external force, either through word of mouth or because the decision stood in the hands of someone else in their family. None of the responses had any kind of connection with whether the decision was based on their brand being environmentally friendly or not, even if the interviewee claims to be sustainable. Regarding their connection with their current phone brand, almost half of the respondents claimed that they felt a strong connection with the brand, either because the brand met their needs, that it did not disappoint them, or they could not be bothered to learn the functions of other brands. However, among the respondents that claimed not to have a connection with their brand, the majority of them had still bought the same brand for several years. Again, none of the interviewed consumers mentioned anything regarding sustainability when asked about the connection to their brand.

When moving on to the most sustainable phone on the market, only one respondent had heard about it before the interview session, yet, their opinion did not change after seeing the advertisement for this phone. However, when the customers were made aware that their brand does not implement sustainable practices they generally developed negative feelings regarding their brand, rather than developing positive feelings toward the most sustainable phone:

*“It was the sustainable phone that made me realise that *brand* is not sustainable, and they do not promote anything regarding the fact that they will do something better for the environment”*

*“I will probably question *brand* a bit after seeing this, like is my phone really sustainable, as the part about being fair for workers etc”*

*“Comparing the two, it gives me a negative perception of *brand*”*

This supports the finding of Choi & Ng (2011) which states that companies' low sustainability commitment generates more negative feelings than positive perceptions towards high committed firms. Empirics contradict the research conducted by Kuchinka et al., (2018) which states that consumers who are aware of environmental issues, present a more positive attitude and a specific loyalty toward a sustainable brand. However, the respondents' behaviour can be backed up by the research of do Paço and Reis (2012), which claims that the more concerned potential customers are regarding sustainability issues, the more sceptical they become when coming across an advertisement with a green message. Two out of the three respondents that claim to actively search for information regarding sustainability, and therefore are considered direct users, would also take into account switching from their preferred brand, which is similar to O'Rourke and Ringer's (2015) findings. Moreover, it seems that young adults who actively search for information regarding the environment or sustainability will be more affected by such information when it is presented to them through visual advertisements, as well as change their consumption behaviour accordingly.

5.2 Influencing Factors of Advertisements

5.2.1 Level of Product Involvement

The sustainable message that was presented did not have the power to influence every respondents' opinion regarding a possible purchase of the most sustainable phone. However, the presentation of a sustainable perspective for the soda brand was received relatively more positively, with the differentiating factor of it being a low involvement product. According to David Lee et al. (2016), these are the results of the sustainable message of the smartphone brand being delivered as an opt-in method, a method that delivers a relatively lower participation rate among consumers. However, for the soda

brand, the sustainable message is part of the product, which means that the sustainable option is provided as an opt-out option for the young adults who are loyal to that brand, but for those who are not, they have to opt-in to take part of the product. As a result, the sustainable soda brand advertisement is received more positively (higher participation rate) due to the opt-out method (David Lee et al., 2016)

When it comes to an advertisement for a low involvement product such as a beverage, the focus of the respondent is not on the information that the advertisement is showing, but more likely on the visuals or the story that is presented:

“I got a better feeling from the non-sustainable one”

“The sustainable advertisement gives you some type of hopeful feeling”

“The first one is sad, the other creates a feeling of party and happiness”

Thus, practically all of the consumers mentioned that it was the feeling associated with the soda commercial which made them prefer it, not the information regarding the product that was being promoted. On the other hand, for high-involvement products, such as smartphones, the respondent’s attention is fully directed towards the information that the advertisement presents, and not the emotional feeling derived from seeing it. Among the respondents of our research, most of the answers were completely directed towards the attention for information when asked what is more influential for them regarding advertisements in general. Additionally, since almost half of the consumers sought for more information in the advertisement for the sustainable phone, it could be argued that this supports Raj and Roy (2015) as they state that consumers who purchase high-involvement products are information seekers. Their research also states that a company that provides less clarity on what it intends to offer in the market, has very minimal chance of survival and the contrary is true for companies giving customers solid information sources with authenticity, which can be supported by these quotes derived from the interviews about the sustainable phone:

“Don’t just say that the phone is super good, provide true facts.”

“Show more of what it is actually capable of.”

“More specifications, I feel like I do not even know enough about the phone to make a complete opinion about it.”

As mentioned previously, only two consumers would consider buying the sustainable phone without any further requirements being fulfilled. That said, this finding is equivalent with previous research conducted by Raj and Roy (2015) that such high-involvement purchase decisions are infrequently based on impulse, also, Shukla (2009) states that switching attitude does not generally impact purchase behaviour.

5.2.2 Message Appeals

The results of the empirics show that just more than half of the respondents believe that their purchase intentions are impacted only from information regarding the product in question, a few chose emotion, while the remaining responded that it is the mix of the two. However, this question was asked after showing the smartphone advertisements, which could have created an unintentional association between the two. As the majority also declined to buy the sustainable phone next time they purchase a new smartphone, this contradicts research established by Bruno et al. (2017) that emotional appeals would change consumers buying behaviour as well as stimulate brand loyalty. On the other hand, the findings support Park and Kim (2016), that the effectiveness of appeals depends on if the product is sustainable or not, which can explain why most consumers claimed that the advertisement regarding the sustainable smartphone lacked clear and sufficient information.

Since the sustainable phone advertisement exclusively highlights the environmental benefit derived from using the product, not the personal benefit, it should have a greater impact on consumers who are highly involved in sustainability issues according to Grimmer and Woolley (2012). However, this is not true in our case because an equal amount of low- and high-involved young adult consumers would consider buying the phone, either immediately or if other features were fulfilled which was unclear at the moment of the interview. Our findings regarding message appeals in advertisements also contradict the research carried out by Yang et al. (2015), where they imply that, when promoting products which only benefit the environment, the features of that product should be described vaguely. Since the majority of the respondents claimed that there is a lack of information in the advertisement, although it merely promotes the environmental

benefit, it can be argued that the commercial should include more specific information for it to be more efficient.

5.2.3 Advertising Integrity

When it comes to the connection that the respondents have with their current brand, besides the fact that the phone is convenient and qualitative, they do not know how they tied such a strong connection with the brand. However, when asked what was missing from the advert, the respondents knew exactly what information would support them in creating a connection between them and the most sustainable phone. Out of 11 respondents that claimed to have a strong connection with their current brand, none of them had a specific reason in mind for why that is, besides the quality. When asked what was missing from the sustainable advertisement, 16 participants out of 23 claimed that the advert was lacking solid information about the phone, such as specifications and price. They considered that:

“...it was a lot of focus on sustainability”,

and it could be seen that some of them were not convinced by the sustainable ad because it lacked information about the phone:

“...do they really fulfill all the functions that I demand from a phone?”

This finding supports previous research in this field, such as the study by Park and Kim (2016), that it is not sufficient for companies to make environmentally-friendly claims in their promotional messages, they need to deliver clear proof that such claims are actually true. Furthermore, there is a clear pattern between young adults' concern about the environment and the degree of trust they put in the sustainable commercial. Hence, unconcerned consumers state that:

“I don't trust these ads, because most of them involve green washing.”

“I guess it annoys me to a certain extent that they even promote the problem.”

“I don't like when they promote sustainability.”

“If I have to choose between two brands where one promotes sustainability and one that does not, I would choose the unsustainable.”

Therefore, it can be concluded that our findings regarding advertising integrity are in collaboration with Minton et al. (2012) and O'Rourke and Ringer (2015), that green statements can have a negative impact on certain consumers and, therefore, influence the purchase decision. As mentioned earlier, it has been concluded that these consumers desire more specific information from the advertisement, but they also seem to find the commercial less trustworthy since it promotes a new product/brand on the market:

"I would rather wait a few years to see how good it actually is."

"The phone sounds good, but I am quite sceptical to new things."

Another finding worth mentioning is that, out of all of the respondents that claim to be sustainable, only two were completely into the sustainable smartphone's advertisement with not even a trace of doubt or scepticism when asked about their connection and their future purchase decision.

5.3 Brand Loyalty

5.3.1 Level of Loyalty

The empirical data collected during the individual interviews regarding consumers' level of loyalty show that all participants have a pre-existing connection to the soda brand, except for one person that does not drink soda at all:

"I just know what it is. It's just a brand because I don't really drink soda."

Otherwise, this connection ranges from a minimum level of consuming the product some times to buying the product several times a week and accordingly being committed to the brand on a psychological level (Zhang et al., 2020). The young adults who expressed a strong connection to the soda brand were not affected nor changed their perception of the brand because of the two advertisements which contradict Javed et al., (2020). Instead, this can only be strongly seen for the consumers who expressed little interest in the brand as they claimed that these sustainable efforts then had a significant impact on their perception of the brand:

*"I am more interested in *soda brand* now, even though I like *another brand*, just because they have recycled bottles."*

Furthermore, regarding the smartphone brands, there is no significant difference between the respondents' environmental commitment and whether they would consider buying the sustainable phone. These findings disprove Kuchinka et al. (2018) and Javed et al. (2020) research that a positive relationship exists between that group of consumers and brand loyalty. That is, young adults who hold positive attitudes toward sustainability do not seem to be more loyal to green brands according to our empirical results. However, given that the majority of the consumers do not want to switch from their preferred phone brand even though most of them also claim to be sustainable, can be argued to support findings by Danciu (2015). Thus, it seems to be more important how young adults perceive the brand, rather than the information a brand provides in their commercial messages.

Moreover, slightly more than half of the participants claimed to be more interested in the product itself (i.e. the smartphone) rather than the brand because of the design, or they stated that they think it was the best phone on the market according to ratings or individual preferences. Just below half of the participants claimed that they feel a strong connection to their current smartphone brand and, in accordance with Schultz and Block (2013), this is the result of that the participants do not believe that brands add value to merchandise. Also, this can further be explained by He et al. (2012) through that the rest of the participants either feel unattracted to the brand identity and/or not reaching a brand identification. Furthermore, aligned with Shukla (2009) and Mohd Suki (2013) and the empirical results, in order to gain greater value within this technological field, further brand extension or achieving unceasing innovation development is needed.

5.3.2 Recommendations

Considering that 20 consumers stated that they have recommended the brand to others, Schultz and Block (2013) demonstrate that this comes from brand loyalty. In that case, this would mean that 20 of 23 of the consumers then perceive the brands as strong, and/or then identify themselves with it. Further empirical results show that the majority of the consumers listed the external influence of friends or family recommending the brand as a factor when asked what made them buy their current phone brand, making it the most mentioned factor. Thus, it can be concluded that our obtained results are in collaboration with Raj and Roy (2015) who mentioned that reviews from friends are the most trusted source among consumers. Other reasons included that their parents bought it for them, concluding in another external influence, that it was the trending brand at that time, or

that the phone itself had the best ratings. That the consumers name the brand as an influencing factor as to what made them buy their phone brand is hugely contradicting to most of their previous answers where some stated that they are not loyal to their current phone brand. Furthermore, the young adults then claim to be willing to consider buying the sustainable smartphone brand, even though it does not contain any visible promises to deliver what they are seeking for in a phone.

5.3.3 Brand Trust

Participants were asked if their opinions had changed regarding their current phone brand after seeing the sustainable smartphone advertisement, and eight of the respondents answered that their perception had changed. These responses are in agreement with Javed et al. (2020) as communicating sustainable practices should further strengthen consumers' relationship with the brand. However, the majority of the answers leaned towards that the sustainable aspect in the advertisement was interesting, but since the smartphone brand is not known, their trust toward their current brand is not affected:

“No, I still think ‘my phone brand’ is better, mostly because I’ve never heard anyone talking about this one, not even an ad somewhere.”

The empirics regarding the sustainable smartphone show that this correlates to a current impossibility for the consumers to start a loyal relationship with the sustainable smartphone brand since they do not feel like they can trust the brand merely from the advertisement, which supports the findings of Ong et al. (2015). Furthermore, in line with this, the participants claimed that they need more information and proof for that the phone specs are as good as stated, and/or other people’s opinions to strengthen what the advertisement says and to trust the brand:

“I want to see different tests and reviews etc., since it is a big investment.”

“I might need someone to convince me to change from my present phone.”

Park and Kim (2016) also support this. However, just less than half of the consumers would still consider switching to the sustainable phone if additional information was provided, even with a lack of trust. This is explained from the brand effect, i.e. that the consumers feel like they benefit from using the brand. The fact that just less than half of the consumers would switch is further explained to be the reason that the brand is focused

on sustainability, which means that the impact of creating stronger brand trust would have increased this number. In fact, only two people state they would buy the phone, without expressing any concern about a lack of trust, i.e. that they need to do more research in order to trust the brand and buy the phone.

“Yes, I would definitely buy it. It seems like a good step and easy step if I like the phone.”

That said, the conclusion taken from Park and Kim (2016) is explained as the results of that when a sustainable nature is adapted by the brand, this means that they cannot communicate the same message as other smartphone brands that have a focus on other features.

5.3.4 Brand Awareness

No matter the level of connection, all participants were aware of the soda brand as well as named the different purposes behind the advertisements, even though some also wanted to express different levels of attractions to these messages:

“The one with summer was a feel-good ad and the other one made you think more, it was more thoughtful. That one was more appealing for me.”

This is, according to Noh and Johnson (2019), the direct results of consumers being aware of the brand, and thus they have already created a foundation that empowers the promotional messages of that brand, to have the desired effect on them. Correspondingly, Mohd Suki (2013) adds that the reason behind the strong influence of the advertisement can be explained through the strong brand name. This is transferred into a strong loyalty of the consumers as 17 of them state that they are strong users of the products which should be the results of the presence of a strong name (Shukla 2009). Comparatively, the same results are also shown during the smartphone section of the interview where the consumers' smartphone brand is one of the top-three market-leading smartphones, which means that the brand name is strong in the market compared to other brands, but this only created a strong connection for 11 participants.

Furthermore, only one respondent said that they were previously aware of the sustainable phone brand, yet, nine other participants chose to mention the environmental aspects of the smartphone when asked about the commercial. Hence, even though practically none

of the participants were aware of the brand, they still realised the message behind the advertisement, which contradicts Noh and Johnson's (2019) argument of awareness being the strongest effect on communication. However, since only one consumer knew of the brand beforehand, this can be argued to be the reason for why the consumers were suspicious regarding switching from their brand, due to the fact that brand awareness is the only feature that has an impact on the purchase decision according to Hibić and Poturak (2016) and Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015). Based on the results, the risk associated with unfamiliar brands seems to be one critical factor for why the respondents reject switching to another brand.

“If I would purchase a new phone I wouldn't be bothered to learn something new”.

This correlates with previous research in this field (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Furthermore, 10 consumers claimed that they were willing to change to the sustainable phone if, and only if, that phone was as good or better than their current phone.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides the answer to the formulated research question based on the empirical findings and analysis presented in earlier chapters.

To conclude the thesis in regard to connecting the findings back to the research question, the most important investigation of the study was to examine the role that sustainable advertisements have in influencing a purchase decision which is different from consumers' preferred brand. The research shows that sustainable advertisements have different levels of effect on young adults' purchasing decisions depending on several factors, including their previous relationship to sustainability, level of involvement of a product, brand recognition, message appeals, as well as, scepticism towards change.

Additionally, whether a sustainable advertisement can generate a switching behaviour among young adult consumers, from a brand they feel a strong connection to, is highly dependent on the product category. It seems that a brand has a greater impact on the purchase decision for high-involvement products, and that environmental messages have less of an effect on young adults for these products. Therefore, it is of major importance for companies to rather have a strong brand name in this product category, even though their target market is interested in sustainable products and concerned about the environment. Another main finding that affects the power of sustainable advertisement is that there is still a great amount of participants who doubt green messages, which makes it difficult for truly sustainable companies to separate themselves from companies that use greenwashing for their own motives. This problem is even greater for brands that are not known on the market since young adults then tend to doubt whether their statements are true or not. When these consumers are aware of a brand, they are more willing to trust it and, therefore, these brands have a better chance to influence the purchasing decision.

However, it can be concluded that advertisements with sustainability claims can have a positive impact on the consumers in this segment that are involved in sustainability issues, but this is only true for low-involvement products since consumers' degree of involvement does not play an important role for high-involvement products. Also, only applicable for low-involvement products, sustainable advertisements can in fact, by itself, change young adults' purchase decisions and provoke a switching behaviour. This is derived from the

fact that when it comes to high-involvement products such as smartphones, the brand and the information about the product is generally too important. In order to strengthen these aspects of high-involvement products, as well as unfamiliar brands, the most trusted source are the recommendations of acquaintances. It has also been shown that, when comparing two brands' advertisements where one brand promotes sustainability and one does not, the group investigated develops a stronger negative feeling toward the unsustainable brand compared to positive feelings towards the sustainable brand.

In conclusion, sustainable advertisements can drive new purchase decisions for environmentally involved young adults regarding high-involvement purchase decisions only if the advertisements are sufficiently trustworthy in order to outweigh what usually is strong brand loyalty. However, consumers' brand loyalty for low-involvement products tends to be weaker for young adults, which means that sustainable advertisements will be more effective in this product category.

7. Discussion

The research paper ends with a discussion constructed and based on each section mentioned above, supported by the conclusions that were previously drawn and the data that was collected specifically for this research.

The following section delivers noteworthy findings regarding sustainability, the interviews, and lastly our own discussion regarding the conclusions. These parts are not relevant for answering the research question yet should be addressed in order not to ignore other important findings. Starting with a side note that, even though the targeted segment of the research is young adults between the ages of 18-35, it can be argued to a certain extent that the conclusions are not dependent on their age. This means that it is not uncertain that the same conclusions could be derived from similar research with different ages.

To begin, there are several interesting empirical findings regarding the topic of sustainability that is worth mentioning regarding this research. Firstly, some respondents who, at one point claim to be sustainable, seem to not be bothered when they see their smartphone's advertisement in such a strong contrast to the sustainable smartphone. Secondly, the fact that they are concerned about the environment had not previously enabled them to research a sustainable option of a smartphone. This resulted in that they were not aware that smartphones are unsustainable and have such a huge negative impact on the environment, which means that the same scenario could be true for other markets where a sustainable option is not common or known to consumers.

Thirdly, when consumers chose between if informational or emotional appeals drive their purchase decisions, the participants made some remarks that can connect their choice to be affected from the fact that they were shown high-involvement advertisements before being asked. Lastly, a meaningful implication of sustainability implementation of a brand's communication efforts, is that this means that the consumers that appreciate these messages will continue to expect this kind of sustainable involvement in the future as well. This could mean that if a brand does not continue with these environmental efforts in their advertisements, the perception of the brand can be even worse than if no sustainable intentions were ever expressed in the first place.

Furthermore, results from the individual interviews show that consumers are aware and positive of the fact that companies need to promote different messages to different consumers when it comes to the soda brand. However, they do not seem to be as positive regarding this when it comes to the smartphone advertisements. According to most participants, this is derived from the fact that they want more information regarding the product itself, and they feel that the commercial should not focus only on sustainability. The difference being the former is regarding a low-involvement product, and the latter a high-involvement product. Also, a significant perspective is that the results of the consumers' choice between the soda advertisements are a more accurate representation that the consumers that are sustainable pick the environmentally friendly option, than when these consumers were asked if they would consider buying the sustainable smartphone.

However, based on our conclusions, the above mentioned could be a correlation that the participants are well aware of the soda brand already, which means that they can make an accurate intention choice between the advertisements without lack of awareness. The conclusion is intensified further as the awareness did not exist for the sustainable smartphone brand. Nonetheless, through our research we can only make the conclusions that this is a correlation, it cannot be proven that this is causation. Additionally, an interesting fact is that even though we did not mention the sustainability aspect of the research before the interviews in order not to influence their answers, the respondents were still drawn to the sustainable advertisement. This could be mainly because almost every respondent is aware of the environmental issues of today, yet it can be realised that there is no connection between how involved the potential young adults are in sustainability issues and whether they would buy the sustainable phone or not. We assume that there is no pattern between the two, mostly because the consumers in our research were not aware of the brand in question and therefore, they were sceptical.

Finally, our own conclusion analysis is as follows: based on the results, we believe that a brand which is unfamiliar to their potential consumers has a very slim chance to be picked among other known brands, even though consumers share the brand's values. Therefore, in order for companies to make young adults switch from another brand to theirs, only based on sustainable commercial claims, potential consumers must be aware of their brand so that they can trust the product without any further recommendations or reviews.

The main reason behind the small proportion of consumers who were prone to buy the sustainable phone, even though the majority considered themselves sustainable, is most probably due to the low awareness rate among them. Thus, the sustainable phone brand should focus more of their resources on marketing communication to reach more consumers and increase their brand recognition. At last, before the empirical research was performed, we believed that the results of the conducted study would support previous research stating that sustainable advertisements have a positive impact on brand loyalty. However, consumers that are strongly loyal to one brand were not expected to change their purchase decision after seeing one sustainable advertisement provided by a competitive brand in the same industry.

7.1 Contributions

This research makes a number of contributions to the literature of brand loyalty, consumer behaviour and sustainable advertisements. What must be kept in mind is that these results might have taken place because of the product choice of smartphones, however, this analysis method was simply a way to test the research question in a specific and measurable way. The end goal of this research method was to lead it back to the previous literature and the overall topics of sustainable advertisements effect of brand loyalty which are mentioned in the conclusions, that is why we argue that our contribution to the topic can be extended to similar fields with similar conditions.

The most important contribution that can be drawn from this research is that sustainable advertisements have a great impact for brands within low involvement product markets, even to the degree that it can attract consumers who prefer other brands. However, when it comes to high-involvement product types, other factors deem more important, these include high information content regarding the product and the strength of the brand itself. Further results of our research which should be implemented by others is to realise the true value of their brand names in regard to the degree that consumers translate this to be influenced by a brands' promotions. Moreover, since sustainable advertisements should be promoted in the most explicit way, and in order to succeed with environmentally friendly advertisements, companies should focus on the product specifications and also provide clear proof of their sustainability claims.

The research also contributes to the complex area of consumer behaviour and that, in order to provoke a switching behaviour among young adult consumers, there are several factors which companies need to take into consideration, most importantly generate brand awareness. In addition, this research has generated a framework for how sustainable brands should attract their potential consumers in this age category depending on the degree of product involvement, yet these brands' promotional messages could never affect the consumers who are against sustainability. Nonetheless, our research strengthens the previous research which states that sustainable development within businesses is needed, and if this way of implementing sustainability across all business- and marketing strategies becomes a standard way of procedure, there would be positive effects that reach both people and the planet.

7.2 Limitations

As for all research, our work has limitations that are worth mentioning. First, there is a lack of time since we only had a few months to conduct the entire research. Second, our work was restricted due to Covid-19 which has created a society where you are encouraged to stay at home and to avoid bigger groups of people. This means that our previous plan of conducting focus groups in order to collect our primary data was cancelled early on, and instead, we were forced to change the method of data collection to individual interviews face to face, over the phone, or through online calls. A limitation of this approach is that the discussion between consumers will not exist, which means that this instead must be replaced by us as interviewers, taking a more active part by asking more questions and lead the discussion differently. However, this means that the participants will not only be limited to the area of Jönköping, which would have been the case if we instead conducted the focus groups. Additionally, since our research is aimed at the investigation of consumer purchase intention, rather than the actual purchase, we are unable to determine if they would, in fact, buy the product even though they claim so. Drawing on that there is a gap between what consumers say and their true actions, this is perhaps our most significant limitation in this research.

7.3 Future Research

Based on the limitations of our research we suggest that further research could implement the previously planned focus groups and see if there is a difference between those results and the results in this study. Furthermore, the method of which the research was

implemented could be alternated in several directions in order to test where the results are applicable and in which cases they are not. Such directions include testing other products with a lighter or even stronger involvement level and examining different sustainable marketing efforts other than video advertisements. Additionally, testing the differences between several brands within the same field would be interesting in order to find the most effective sustainable marketing strategy within a specific field. Also, in order to broaden the results, the difference between this research on the top-three market-leading smartphones could be compared in relation to other phone brands, in order to see if a weaker brand name has any effect on the results. Lastly, it would be interesting to investigate the same research question but solely on consumers that are loyal to a certain brand and investigate if there are still some factors that would make them switch to a sustainable smartphone brand.

Through our research, we tested sustainable advertisements effectiveness on both participants that felt that they have a strong connection to a brand, and on those who have a low connection to their phone brand. Furthermore, including a sustainable option with a strong brand name instead would mean that a lack of awareness is not relevant and, therefore, the results might be different. We also suggest further research with two visually same advertisements that were made with the same purpose and by the same brand, where one has an additional sustainable message implemented, in order to see if this changes consumers' perception. Since the two advertisements from the soda brand were so distinctive, and because consumers said that they were aware that the two are meant to promote different aspects, it would be interesting to see whether this changes the results.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Consent form

Interview Consent Form

For Bachelor Thesis within the field of Business
Administration



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
*Jönköping International
Business School*

Research authors

Sandra Eklund, Alice Jernberg, Andreea-Jessica Roman

Information

- This research is regarding consumer decisions in contrasts to advertisements and brand loyalty.
- The purpose of this interview is to collect consumer data for a bachelor thesis.
- Personal data will be deleted one week after the thesis has been approved.
- All data is collected anonymously.
- The personal data of the interviewees will not be shared to unauthorized individuals.
- The interviewees can request access to their own data.
- The interviewers ensure that the interviews are performed without harming or deceiving the interviewees through full transparency of the interview.
- The interviewees possess the right to ask questions before, during and after the interviews.
- The interviews are constructed to be about 40-60 minutes.

Only by reading and agreeing to this consent form, before the interview takes place, the participants agree that they take part of the research voluntarily and can withdraw from any questions, also that they are aware of the previously mentioned information section. Only after this agreement, the researcher can proceed with the interview since this ensures an ethical correct environment.

Appendix B – Interview Format

Soda brand

1. Which one out of these do you prefer? Why?
2. How do the two advertisements feel compared to each other? How would you describe your emotional feeling toward each of the ads?
3. What connection do you already have with the brands?
4. How involved and generally concerned are you about the environment?
5. How does it affect you and your perception of the brands that one advertisement promotes sustainability, and one does not?

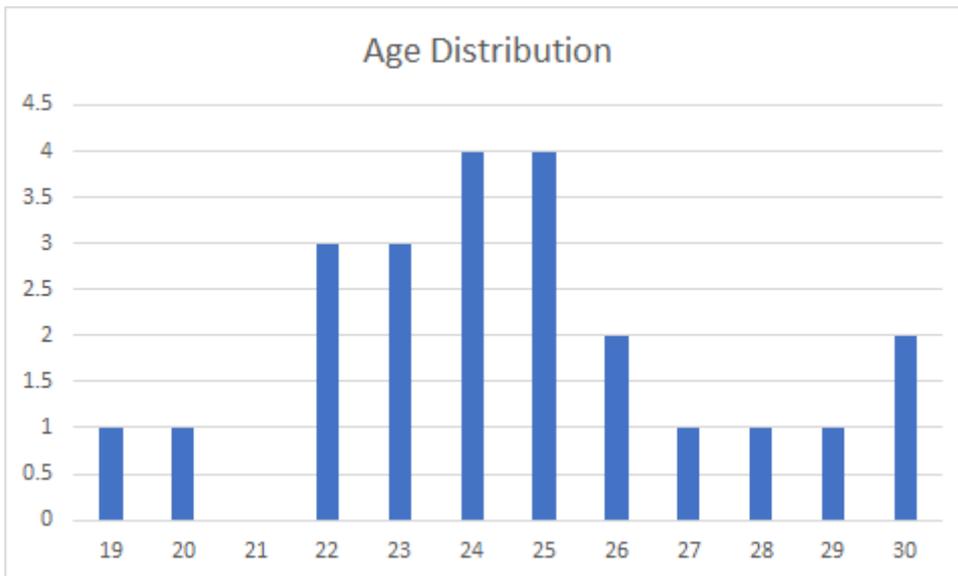
Smartphone brands

6. What smartphone brand do you use today?
7. Would you say that you feel a strong connection to this brand?
 - a. Why do you think that you feel such a strong connection to this brand?
 - b. Have you ever recommended this brand to others?
 - c. What made you buy this brand?
8. Have you heard about Fairphone? If yes, what do you know about it?
9. Have your opinions changed about your phone brand after seeing the smartphone brand Fairphone?
10. Next time you purchase a new phone, will you consider buying this sustainable phone instead of your preferred brand?
 - a. If no, would you consider trying it?
11. What would be some other phone features you feel that need to be fulfilled in order for you to change your brand preference? (regarding the product) - *in case they say no*
12. Could the ad be developed differently so that you would feel more connected to Fairphone/the sustainable phone which would make you consider changing your purchase behaviour? What was missing from the ad?

Consumer behaviour.

13. Is your purchasing intention influenced more by the information about the product given by the advertisement (commercial) or the emotion a certain advertisement (commercial) gives you?

Appendix C – Age Distribution



Appendix D – Ethnicity

