JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

Jönköping International Business School

Greenwashing in the fast fashion industry:

The role of consumer education.

BACHELOR DEGREE PROJECT

THESIS WITHIN: *Business Administration*

NUMBER OF CREDITS: 15

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *Double Degree*

AUTHORS: *Mar Bosch, Elisa Obeso and Alba Palao*

JÖNKÖPING: *June 2023*

WORD COUNT: *17390*

Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Greenwashing in the fast fashion industry: The role of consumer education

Authors: Mar Bosch, Elisa Wenshan Obeso & Alba Palao

Tutor: Nadia Arshad

Date: 2023-05-19

Key terms: "*greenwashing", "fast fashion", "consumer behaviour", "purchase intention", "consumer awareness."*

Abstract

Background: Every time sustainability has a more important role in the fast fashion industry and more consumers have higher environmental consciousness and look out for sustainable products in that area and companies that are genuinely sustainable. But the main problem is that lots of companies claim to be sustainable, but they are not and use the tactic of greenwashing, to attract consumers and trick them to purchase their products. Therefore, consumer education and awareness became essential to be able to avoid these misleading tactics implemented by the fast fashion firms.

Purpose: This study goal was to investigate the influence of customer knowledge of greenwashing on their purchase decisions and behaviour when it comes to environmentally friendly items, with a particular focus on the fast fashion sector. This research endeavour aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges associated with promoting sustainable consumption and to propose strategies for increasing consumer engagement with genuinely environmentally friendly products through a comprehensive review of literature and empirical research.

Method: The investigation follows a deductive approach, and it uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the information to resolve the research question. It uses focus groups as the main source of insights that are complemented by a survey.

Conclusion: Increasing the awareness of the consumer was enough to increase their purchase intention but not enough to convince them to make the change. The overall results add

information on the findings of the literature review, but it would be interesting to add more information on our results, meaning that future research is needed to get more in-depth with these findings. In other words, have a more specific idea about consumer awareness on greenwashing and purchase intentions to sustainable products.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the development of our thesis, we have received invaluable support from various people, and we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of them.

First and foremost, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to Nadia Arshad for her unwavering support and continuous feedback throughout the entire process. Your guidance has been instrumental in shaping our work, and we are truly grateful for everything.

Additionally, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the opponent bachelor thesis group, that through all of the workshops have continuously given us feedback and valuable advice with immensely high significant. We are truly grateful for your ongoing support throughout this journey.

Furthermore, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to each and every participant who generously devoted their time and cooperation to contribute to our research. Your willingness to share your insights, experiences, and perspectives have been invaluable to the success of this thesis. We are deeply appreciative of your time, cooperation, and contributions, which have greatly enriched our understanding of the subject.

Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our friends and family for their unwavering moral support throughout this thesis. Your encouragement and belief in us have been vital in our success, and we are truly grateful for your presence in our lives. Thank you.

Mar Bosch, Elisa Obeso & Alba Palao

Table of Content

Figures

1. Introduction

Section 1 displays a general introduction to the research topic. Through the establishment of the research problem, theoretical needs are evaluated. Therefore, the research topic and research questions are proposed through background information, the problem discussion, and the examination of the purpose.

1.1 Background

The fast fashion industry is increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. (Fletcher, 2014). However, according to Koslowzki (2019), many fast fashion brands engage in greenwashing, making false or exaggerated claims about the environmental benefits of their products. This creates confusion among consumers and may lead to a lack of trust in environmentally sustainable fast fashion products.

recognizing the importance of sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. (Fletcher, 2014). However, according to Koslowzki (2019), many fast fashion brands engage in greenwashing, making false or exaggerated claims about the environmental benefits of their products. This creates confusion among consumers and may lead to a lack of trust in environmentally sustainable fast fashion products.

According to Brown (2020) the concept of greenwashing can be defined as the technique that *"is used to describe the marketing practice of making exaggerated or false claims about a product's environmental benefits or impact in order to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers."* Without offering solid proof to support their claims, businesses employ this strategy to give the appearance that their products are more ecologically friendly than they are. Additionally, this approach may have detrimental effects on both customers and businesses.

There are several ways in which companies engage in greenwashing. Some use vague and misleading language to make unsubstantiated claims about their products, such as labelling products as "natural" or "organic" without providing any evidence to support those claims. Others use green imagery or symbols without explaining the meaning behind them, making it difficult for consumers to understand what they are buying. (Netto, de Brito, & Lima, 2020).

The fast fashion industry is a particular area of concern when it comes to "greenwashing." The fast fashion sector has emerged as one of the biggest environmental polluters. (Sonu G. & Pushpendra M. 2018). The sector has been forced to embrace sustainable practices as environmental awareness has grown. The fast fashion industry, however, has engaged in a number of instances of greenwashing, which raises questions about the sector's sincerity in regard to environmental sustainability.

This factor was because the industry is known to have significant environmental and social impacts, such as water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and unfavourable working conditions in garment factories (Alevizou, P.J., & Economou, L 22016), and since fast fashion has substantial negative effects on the environment and society, it is one of the most common industries to get greenwashing claims.

Despite these impacts, many fast fashion companies continue to make false environmental claims to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers. This has led to a growing awareness among consumers about the credibility of green claims made by fast fashion brands (Furlow, 2010).

It has been a request for more consumer awareness on how to recognize and avoid bogus environmental claims in order to combat the problem of greenwashing. (Tang et al. 2018). The non-financial cost of making consumers aware of the topic of greenwashing is unknown, though.

In contemporary society, the consumer should act on the sustainability issue and start making correct and coherent choices. These two generations, between the age ranges 10-25, are the ones who can make the real change and start working to reverse the situation.

Millennials and Generation Z are more likely to be environmentally conscious and interested in sustainable products. These two generations have been found to be more ecologically aware and concerned about the effects of their actions on the environment. (Akhtar & Ahmad, 2019); (Lee & Kim, 2021). When sustainable solutions are offered, they are more likely to choose them, and they have demonstrated scepticism toward advertising strategies that make environmental claims. It is seen that they tend to be much more critical when it comes to marketing tactics and to do much more research on the environmental claims of products before making a purchase (Mary C. Gentile, Christina M. McLaughlin, and Claire M. Ryan, 2019).

Millennial consumers are also environmentally sensitive, willing to pay extra for environmentally friendly goods, and feel it is their personal responsibility to address environmental challenges (A. Akhtar & N. Ahmad, 2019).

1.2 Problem Discussion

The prevalence of greenwashing causes a growing interest in investigating how values, personality characteristics and beliefs, interact with the concepts of awareness on the topic of greenwashing and the influence on consumer behaviour and purchase intention. (Garcia-Santos, De-Miguel-Molina, & Rodriguez-Molina, 2020; Kim, Kim, & Kang, 2019; Magnusson, Haden, & Holmberg, 2018; Nigbur, Lyons, & Uzzell, 2010).

Additionally, Kim et al. (2019) found that in order to shape consumer scepticism toward the green marketing claims we need to put our attention to the ones that play a significant role, in this case the individual differences on the green consumer values. Furthermore, Magnusson et al. (2018) argues that we need to keep in mind that consumers' attitudes toward green products are also influenced by their values and beliefs about the environment.

Investigating these aspects might have a significant impact on the behaviour of the consumer and help to guide efforts to counteract misleading marketing techniques. (Garcia-santos et al., 2020; Verfuerth & Gregoire, 2014). For instance, Verfuerth & Gregoire et al. (2014), mention the importance of understanding how personality traits such as scepticism and conscientiousness influence and impact consumer responses to greenwashing. It could help to assist politicians and consumer advocacy organizations to build more effective consumer protection strategies. In line with that, Peattie & Peattie et al. (2003) add that it could be of interest for a variety of stakeholders; including marketers, policy makers and consumer advocacy groups. Moreover, policymakers and consumer advocates could use the findings to guide policy decisions and consumer education strategies, while, on the other hand, marketers could use the findings to create more persuasive messaging and advertising strategies that appeal to the values of the consumer and also, in their beliefs. (Garcia-Santos et al., 2020; Peattie & Peattie, 2003).

Overall, regarding the information mentioned before, it may be interesting to investigate how different factors such as personality characteristics, values, and beliefs interact with awareness of greenwashing since these could influence customer behaviour and purchase intention.

1.3 Purpose

In line with the problem formulation, the purpose of this bachelor thesis consists of examining how customer awareness of greenwashing affects their purchasing decisions and behaviour when it comes to ecologically friendly goods, focusing on the fast fashion industry.

With this study, we want to try to clarify the intricate connection between consumer knowledge, greenwashing, and sustainable consumption by looking at the variables that affect consumers' perceptions of the practice.

Overall, this undergraduate research aims to offer insights into the difficulties in promoting sustainable consumption and to suggest tactics for increasing consumer involvement with truly environmentally friendly products through an extensive literature study and empirical research.

1.4 Research Question

To achieve the research purpose of this study, the following research question was constructed:

RQ1: *How does consumer awareness on greenwashing affect consumer behaviour and purchase intention of environmentally friendly products?*

1.5 Definitions

Word	**Definition**
Greenwashing	Practice of making misleading or unsubstantiated claims about the environmental benefits of a product, service, or business practice. Can be used to mislead consumers into thinking that a company or product is environmentally friendly, even if it is not. (Kokko, Similä, & Jaakkola, 2020).
Sustainability	It is a concept that emphasizes the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental consideration to ensure the long-term health and wellbeing of both people and the planet. Ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (World commission on environment and development,1987).
Fast Fashion	Business model that emphasizes speed and low cost in the

	production and delivery of clothing, in order to respond to rapidly changing consumer tastes and trends. (Kim & Damhorst, 2012)
Consumer awareness	The level of understanding a consumer has about the available products and services, their features, and the brand's reputation, as well as their own rights as consumers in the marketplace. (Bhatnagar & Jain, 2010).
Consumer intention	The level of willingness or determination to perform a particular behaviour and are considered to be a strong predictor of actual behaviour." (Hojnik & Ruzzier, 2016).
Focus Group	Research method used in social science and marketing research that involves a group of individuals participating in a structured discussion on a particular topic or issue. (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Figure 1: Definitions relevant to the study

1.6 Delimitations

The scope of the research contains restrictions and delimitations. Firstly, the study is bound to 22 individuals from generation Z and Millennials, as these two generations are the ones who matched with our work purposes, causing a need for additional factors to be considered if participating other different generations. Furthermore, the study is delimited to the fast fashion industry.

Fast fashion companies are characterized by quick changes and adaptations, and this results in a difficult solution for the issue of greenwashing. The authors wish to investigate how through the awareness and knowledge of the consumer, companies would face the necessity to change and adapt to avoid greenwashing. Lastly, the research is delimited to the consumer perspective, considering that there is already a wealth of literature on outlooks and consumer interpretations.

2. Frame of Reference

The purpose of this section is to supply the reader with an understanding of the existing literature regarding the thesis topic. First, the method of finding relevant literature is described. This is followed by a literature review, providing a comprehensive overview of the topic.

2.1 Method for the Frame of Reference

To carry out the objective of the investigation, it is necessary to supply previous background information, which was gathered by reading and investigating secondary sources.

A good way to start is to identify one or more keywords— words or short phrases summarizing your research topic—that can point you towards potentially useful resources (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 59). So, since the focal topics of the investigation were greenwashing in consumer behaviour and psychological consumer behaviour strategies, the recognized keywords that were used individually and combined between them were: “greenwashing”, “consumer behaviour,”, “sustainability”, “consumer intentions”, “consumer education and awareness”, “human decision process” and, “psychological consumer strategies”.

The databases that were used to retrieve the information included were mainly Primo and Google Scholar. The ABS list was then used as an additional source of information to verify the chosen articles and the authenticity and reliability of the material acquired. In addition, when selecting the articles, a time frame was set to ensure clear comprehension and scenario. It was claimed that the period was over two decades, except for two articles.

There were some requirements that the articles had to fulfil in order for us to make sure that the information that we were using was reliable and knowledgeable.

- Clear and well-researched information: Every article that we used had to include details that were unambiguous and easy to understand. It had to be supported by in-depth investigation and examination of the subject matter.
- Supported by research-based data or expert assessments: The data offered in the article or studies used, had to be backed up by research-based data or assessments from

subject-matter experts. This guaranteed us the accuracy and dependability of the information provided.

- References and credible sources: The information of the articles had to include articles from reliable references and respectable sources, such as academic journals, books, and reports. All the statements mentioned in the article had also to be supported by references and citations.
- No biased or marketing-oriented language: We made sure that all the article that we used, were written objectively and impartially without using any language that could sway the reader's opinion of the subject.
- Lastly, we made sure that the articles provided useful insights into the subject being addressed and its satisfaction with our specific and certain requirements.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Greenwashing effect on consumer behaviour

The first main topic we are going to address in the following literature is the effect of "greenwashing" and its impact on consumer behaviour.

Greenwashing is a new and emerging concept that has become increasingly important among the sustainable movement in recent years. Greenwashing can be defined as the: *"dissemination of false or incomplete information by an organization to present an environmentally responsible public image"* (Furlow, 2010). This marketing tactic is used to appeal to consumers who are concerned about the environment and want to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. However, consumers may become confused about whether goods or businesses are genuinely ecologically beneficial as a result of greenwashing. When consumers learn that the environmental promises were inaccurate or inflated, it makes it difficult for them to make informed decisions and causes a significant loss of trust in businesses. This final practice is being analysed and drawn conclusions about, for example, the growth of green markets, followed by greenwashing, a trust issue that has arisen as buyers struggle to recognize a truly green claim (Sebastião V. Netto, Marcos, Felipe F. Sobral, Ana R. Bezerra Ribeiro & Gleibson R. Soares, 2020).

The impact of greenwashing on consumer behaviour and trust has been widely studied. Research has shown that greenwashing can have a negative impact on consumer behaviour and

trust (Jindrichovska and Rypakova, 2020). It was found that greenwashing leads to reduced trust in the company, scepticism toward its environmental claims, and a decreased intention to purchase. It highlights the importance of avoiding greenwashing and accurately communicating sustainable practices to consumers (Jindrichovska and Rypakova, 2020). Besides, Vermeulen and Seufert (2019) examined the concept of greenwashing in the fast fashion industry and the role of consumer education. Many consumers don't understand what sustainable fashion really entails and are easily duped by greenwashing tactics. The authors suggest that consumer education programs could help consumers make more informed purchasing decisions and hold companies accountable for their claims.

Furthermore, greenwashing poses a significant loss of trust in businesses when consumers learn that the environmental promises were inaccurate or inflated, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions as they also have trouble detecting a legitimate green claim (Netto et al. 2020).

To effectively address greenwashing, businesses must provide transparent and verifiable information about their environmental practices (Boselli and Tamberi, 2021). Companies interested in communicating their environmental commitment should seek third-party certification and participate in labelling programs, which provide guarantees and build trust with consumers. Third-party certification programs can help validate environmental claims and increase consumer trust, leading to more informed and environmentally conscious purchasing decisions (Boselli & Tamberi, 2021).

Svensson & Jönsson conducted a case study in 2018 of H&M***),*** a well-known fast fashion retailer that has been criticized for its greenwashing practices. In this case study, the authors examine the case of H&M and its efforts to present itself as a sustainable and environmentally responsible company. However, the authors argue that H&M's sustainability claims are often vague and lack transparency, making it difficult for consumers to evaluate their credibility. They also found that H&M's sustainability initiatives do not necessarily address the root causes of environmental problems in the fast fashion industry. Overall, the authors suggest that companies should be more forthcoming with information about their sustainability initiatives and back up their statements with verifiable data.

The last study we will mention, studied consumer reactions to pro-environmental claims in the apparel industry and found that consumers are more likely to perceive a company's

sustainability claims as credible if they are backed up by third-party certifications or endorsements (Bailey et al., 2017). They also found that consumers are more likely to purchase sustainable apparel if they perceive it as high quality and fashionable. According to the report, consumers are becoming more aware of greenwashing techniques and are less likely to trust businesses that use them. According to the authors, businesses should put their attention on genuine sustainability initiatives, be open and honest about their business dealings to win over customers and invest in environmentally friendly processes and materials to produce consumer-friendly clothing while minimizing "greenwashing." (Bailey et al., 2017).

These studies agree that greenwashing is a widespread issue in the fast fashion industry, and that companies should focus on genuine sustainability efforts to build consumer trust and promote a more sustainable fast fashion industry. Consumer education programs, transparency, and third-party certifications could also help consumers make more informed purchasing decisions and hold companies accountable for their claims.

It is crucial for businesses to avoid greenwashing practices and accurately communicate their sustainable actions to maintain consumer trust and support for environmentally friendly initiatives. Greenwashing negatively affects consumer behaviour and trust and highlights the importance of transparent and verifiable information on environmental practices. Third-party certification programs are recommended to help validate environmental claims and build consumer trust.

3.2 Awareness theories in consumer behaviour

Understanding the reasons for how and why individuals choose to buy and use items and services is the goal of the huge and complex discipline of consumer behaviour (Sabine Kuester, 2012). Psychological consumer behaviour techniques such as these usually tend to concentrate on the mental and emotional elements, such as attitudes, emotions, beliefs, values, and other cognitive processes that affect these decisions.

Consumer behaviour is a complicated area of study that aims to comprehend the underlying forces that influence people's usage and purchase decisions. Psychological consumer behaviour techniques, which concentrate on the psychological and emotional elements that affect consumer behaviour, are a significant area of this field (David J. Stillwell, Michal Kosinski, & Youyou Wu, 2013).

In recent years, researchers have conducted numerous studies on the impact of these effects on consumer behaviour, for example, it was found that emotional jolts could increase brand resonance and online brand community participation (Fourniern and Alvarez, 2012). When people have strong emotional reactions to brands, they are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth and participate in brand communities. According to Fourniern's and Alvare's study, this is because these activities serve to prolong, relive, and share those emotions. This basically suggests that brands are seen as relationship partners by consumers, and warmth and competence are two key dimensions of this relationship.

The importance of status consumption in emerging markets through the role of emotions in consumer behaviour was identified as a highly emotional process that was driven by a desire to express one's identity, gain social approval, and reduce social anxiety (Mende and Scott, 2013).

Behaviour is another key component of psychological consumer behaviours strategies (Dholakia, U. M., Bagozzi, R. P., & Pearo, L. K., 2004). It was proven in their study, that the development of a social influence model of consumer participation in virtual communities, which sheds light on the role of social influence in shaping consumer behaviours.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is another psychological method that aims to explain and predict human behaviours. This theory is about the links among attitudes, intentions, and behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, 1980). As reported by the theory, this method has been applied to a wide range of conducts, from health-related actions such as exercise and smoking to consumer attitudes such as purchasing decisions. In the context of psychological consumer behaviours strategies, the Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control can influence consumer manners and can inform the development of awareness theories and other strategies aimed at influencing consumer behaviours.

Cognition is also an important factor in psychological consumer behaviours strategies (Christopher K. Hsee, Yang Yang, Fei Li, and Luxi Shen, 2009). The impact of different variables such as wealth, warmth, and well-being on consumer behaviours, finding that whether happiness is relative or absolute depends on whether it is about money, acquisition, or consumption. The information provided by these findings can help advertisers and marketers

better target consumers in light of the level of enjoyment that is supposedly related to their goods or services.

Finally, desire is a critical component of psychological consumer behaviour strategies (Bower and Landreth, 2001). It was proven with the development of an integrative model of consumer attitudes toward brand extensions, shedding light on the importance of brand loyalty in shaping consumer behaviour (Bower and Landreth, 2001). Even if a brand extension has a weaker match with the original brand, the authors discovered that consumers who have a strong commitment to the original brand are more inclined to see it favourably. This underlined the significance of desire in psychological consumer behaviour strategies since customers' emotional ties to a brand can trump their logical assessment of a brand extension.

In general, understanding consumer behaviour requires a grasp of psychological consumer behaviours techniques. Researchers can learn more about the psychological variables at play in consumer behaviour by analysing its effect, behaviour, cognition, and desire components. With the use of this data, successful marketing initiatives that connect with customers more deeply can be created.

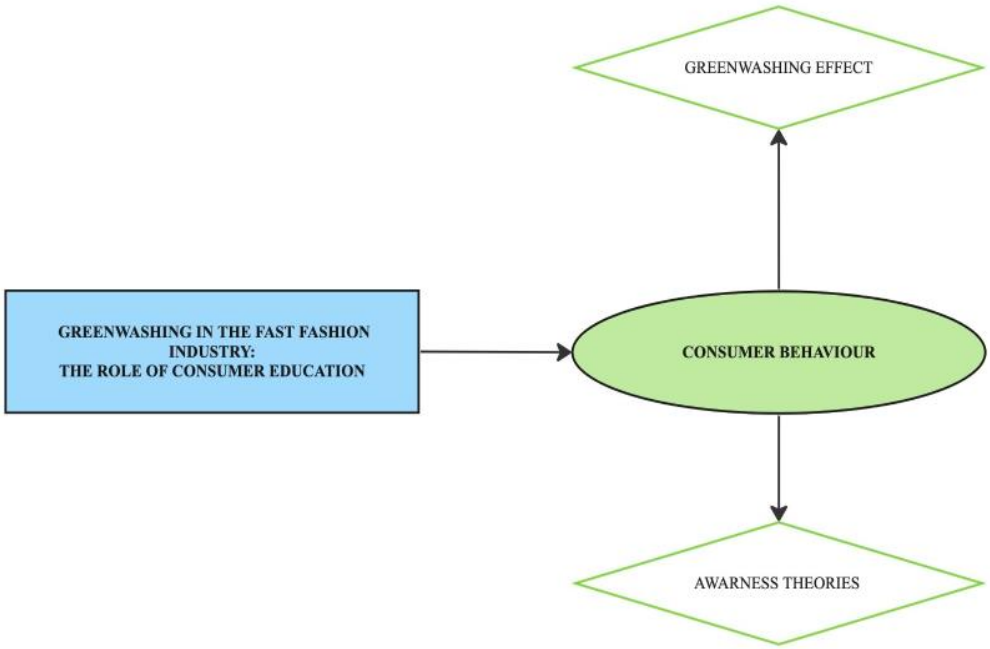


Figure 2: Cognitive diagram of the concepts

4. Method

The following section presents the methodological approach of the study. The authors describe and argue for the chosen research philosophy, approach, strategy, and design. Further, the data collection and analysis process will be explained. Lastly, the section will outline ethical considerations taken for this study.

4.1 Research Philosophy

According to pragmatism, the most crucial factors in determining the research philosophy you choose are your study topic and aims. (P. Lewis & M. Saunders, 2012). Since this study focuses on the relationship between two concepts, consumer awareness of greenwashing and sustainable products and the behavior on their purchase intentions, we decide to follow the pragmatic philosophy method based on the problem we found, and our aim to contribute with practical solutions that would help to define future practices on the concept.

The impact and significance of a social action or event are the main topics of discussion. This issue transcends any one strategy or activity for solving problems. (David L. Morgan, 2014). This supports a claim made throughout the book that it is possible to combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches. (P. Lewis & M. Saunders). To gather the data, the application of two different methodologies was chosen in order for us to gather as much information as possible to achieve our seek solution. The first one would let us see in an objective and clear way the data gathered, and the other one would give us deeper insights and let us interact with the participants.

4.2 Research approach

It is important to know what type of research design is going to be adopted to reason the investigation, meaning that there needs to be either the deductive or inductive approach.

The deduction is the research approach which involves the testing of a theoretical proposition by using a research strategy designed to perform this test (Lewis & Saunders, 2012, p. 108). As it is said, the aim of a deductive approach is to accept or reject a hypothesis, as this study wants to see if there is a relation between the awareness or education of the consumer and their

purchase intentions or behaviours regarding being environmentally friendly products in the fast fashion industry.

According to Lewis & Saunders (2012), there are a set of stages that state the procedure that a deductive approach needs to follow. It has to start by defining the research question or hypothesis that wants to be proven; followed by the application of the methodology previously chosen to gather your results and analyse them; finally accepting or rejecting the hypothesis so, to verify if there is a relation between the awareness and the purchase intentions of the consumers.

Therefore, the inductive approach is not suitable, since the generation or the building of the theory (often in the form of a conceptual framework) is done through the collection of data to explore the phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2016) which, means that the investigation goes from the specific observations to a more general identification of sequences, so, this research study differs from induction methods, due to the driving force is based in a research question and not being generated by observations.

4.3 Method

The study focuses on how consumers recognize greenwashing and how companies, especially in the fast fashion industry, declare their sustainability through different marketing tactics. It also implements awareness strategies that examine changes in consumer perceptions, intentions, and environmental consciousness in response to greenwashing and the anti-competitive advertising practices applied by fast fashion companies.

This data was gathered using two different methods.

Focus Groups

Our investigation has as its main source the focus group. It was divided into three, all of them mixed, men and women. A focus group has provided a wide range of information since it was not a one-on-one interview, and the participants could discuss and add comments to the answers to make them more complete or bring up new points of view that kept the conversation going. As well, the use of these methods tends to enhance peripheral vision, which is especially important at the early stages of inquiry, as noted further on (Shoshanna Sofaer, 1999)

The purpose of this method was to determine the possible effectiveness of psychological strategies in influencing and modifying customer behaviours and purchasing decisions in order to increase their awareness of identifying and understanding the problem of greenwashing, particularly in the fast fashion industry.

Also, these types of qualitative methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the research participants, are interactive and developmental and allow for emergent issues to be explored (Jo Moriarty, 2023). And it could be useful to look up and comment on later in the analysis or present earlier in the introduction.

Procedure:

1. Made the moderators guide the conversation so that covers all the requested questions we wanted and prepared for the focus group. Checked and guaranteed that our questions promoted conversations and were open-ended.
2. Leading or guiding the focus group: we presented ourselves and the group's aim at the beginning. Also, invited the participants to introduce themselves and discuss any personal events in relation to the study's subject. The moderators were the ones in charge of introducing or asking questions of the participants and encouraging conversation inside the group.
3. Data analysis: the authors transcribed and analysed the data from the focus group session. As well as evaluated the information to find the major trends and relevant insights for the study goals.

Focus Groups process:

1. First section: Introductive questions about sustainability

In this first section, we aim to gauge participants' perspectives, experiences, and aspirations regarding sustainability. We want to get previous insights of their behaviour towards this concept, learn about their point of view and know the level of introduction of sustainability into their daily lives without any type of influence regarding our study.

2. Second section: Introductive questions to the concept of greenwashing

In the second section, we introduce our participants to the principle of greenwashing. ¿Do they know what it is? ¿What is their level of cognition towards this practice? ¿Have they ever been

under the greenwashing effect in any purchase they have ever done? Etc. We aim to know their standpoint concerning this type of marketing strategy and know they level or awareness towards this concept.

This second section was divided by an explanatory video about the idea of greenwashing into two different parts.

We would ask questions about the concept of greenwashing to get previous inputs and their level of perception towards the idea.

Afterwards, we would show the descriptive video about greenwashing to our participants, for them to get a wider understanding and definition of the concept and re-ask the previous questions to know if their comprehension was the same or it changed.

3. Third section: Specific questions about greenwashing in our focus study (fast fashion industry)

In this third section, we wanted to know the experience, impact, and behaviour towards this marketing practice, in something so casual as buying clothes.

4. Fourth section: Final questions

In this last section, after all the insights received by the focus group, we wanted to get the consumers perspective towards this practice and what is their opinion in the solution of this phenomenon.

Along the focus group we had two interactive activities regarding the recognition of greenwashing and one explanatory video about the concept.

The two activities consisted of the identification of greenwashing thought advertisement made by companies and the differentiation between misleading advertisement and true sustainable advertisement claims.

Withing the focus group, we wanted to see if the level of acknowledge increased and if our participants were able to identify greenwashing in different advertisement examples.

Surveys

To close up the primary sources of information, there were the surveys that were used to collect objective information. The survey was sent to all the participants of the focus group before it, without any previous insights or explanations about the subject of study. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) emphasize the importance of administering surveys to participants without providing prior insights or explanations to ensure unbiased responses. After the focus group was done, the participants had to fill out the survey again.

As it has been said before, it was answered just by the participants in the focus group, and it was done twice. In their study, Fowler (2013) found that comparing survey responses before and after a focus group discussion can reveal potential dissimilarities in participants' answers.

The survey gave a broad and general view to easily compare the replies of before and after focus groups since there were two different surveys, and it helped a lot to know if the strategies applied affected the participants.

Moreover, it must be clarified that the surveys were basically a complementary source for the investigation to the principal one, survey research, the paragon of quantitative analysis with its emphasis in measurement standardization and representativeness owes much to the Durkheim tradition of broad, comparative analysis and the search of social facts (Wolff B., Knodel J., & Sittitrai W., 1993). So, the surveys were not capable of giving as much insight as the qualitative methods since there was no room for further discussions or explanations.

Procedure:

1. General questions: give us a general view of our participants in aspects like gender, generation, and if our participants were habitual buyers of fast fashion brands.
2. Concept questions: the answers that we got from these questions were already related to our study topic, specifically greenwashing and misleading marketing practices. and their concern and awareness about sustainable products.
3. Scale Questions Related to Fast Fashion: here we asked about fast fashion sustainability practices and their “green” products, relating to the greenwashing topic.
4. True or false: give participants some examples of images and claims, and they had to identify if they were sustainable or greenwashing; like this, we saw in an explicit way the awareness of our participants.

4.4 Ethical considerations

As researchers we are obligated to insurer that participants in our study are not harmed (physically or psychologically) by our research (Mickey W. Smith,1995).

It is crucial to give all the relevant information about the research, as well as any risks or benefits, to the participants in this investigation. When doing interpersonal activities that include individuals or groups, such as focus groups or surveys, it is essential and ethically correct to have their full consent.

As marketers, it is imperative to ensure that participants are fully informed of their participation and the use of the collected information. This transparency contributes to maintaining ethical standards in research (American Marketing Association, 2018)

Even a written document (contract) must be signed to have physical evidence to demonstrate that the participant agreed to take part in this investigation. Besides, adding a section that agrees to let them withdraw the contract at any time is very important for the trustworthy relationship between the researcher and participant, just as it is for the integrity of the research. It will make sure that the only people having access to the data will be the authors of the thesis, to avoid any problems and to respect the contract.

5. Analysis of the data: Focus Groups & Survey

In this section, we will conduct the analysis of the practical aspects of our research. By examining the collected data and using appropriate analytical techniques, we aim to gain valuable insights into the real-world application of our study. This analysis will help us draw meaningful conclusions and make practical recommendations for the field.

5.1 Sample

The sample members were from Gen Z and Millennials, since it is considered that this generation of consumers tends to be more interested in sustainability and have a greater awareness of environmental issues

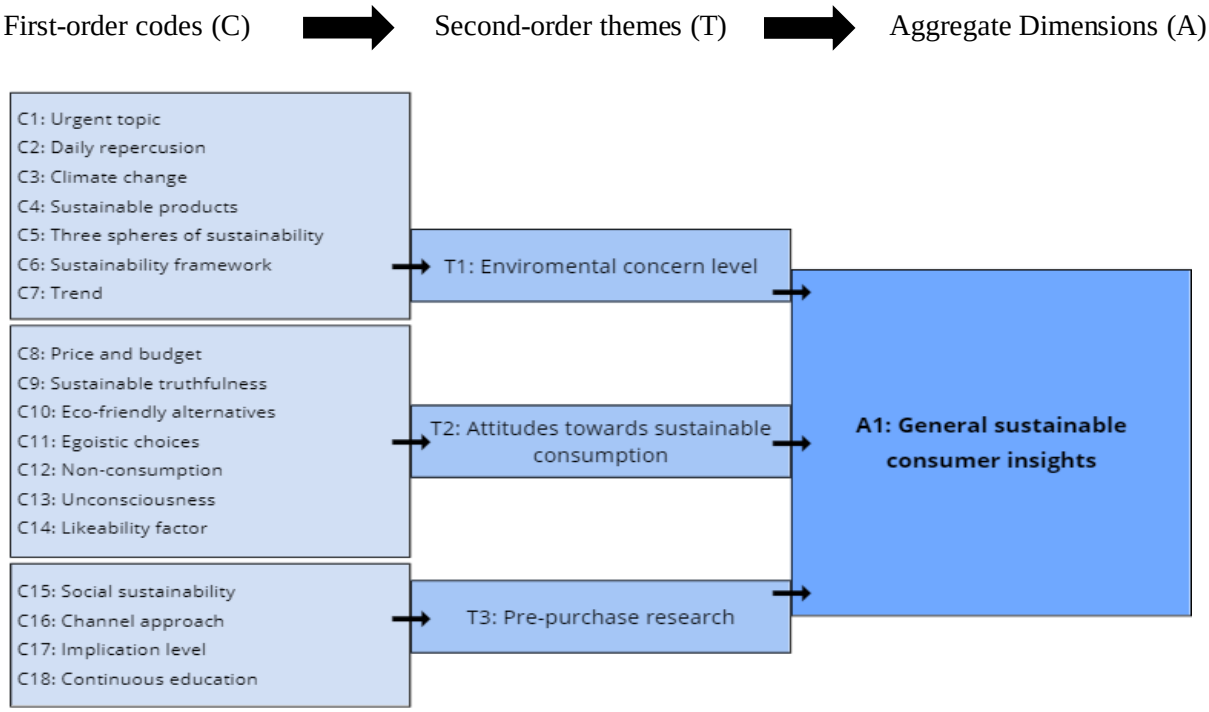
The sample was composed of men and women, since the topic of the research, greenwashing related to the fast fashion industry and the misleading practices companies use to communicate

these false claims about being sustainable, is something that affects and concerns both genders in the same way. And since it has been talked about the fast fashion industry and not a special brand, it would not be representative if it was just decided to do gender in particular.

There have been three focus groups, each with more or less the same number of men and women. It was determined to have a pair number for the groups so that couples would be asked to participate and not individuals. Also, it is a way that the participants could feel more comfortable, so there are more possibilities for them to join the focus group if they know that a friend of theirs is coming, and they would probably feel more relaxed, engage more in the discussion, and be more open if they had some familiar friends around.

5.2 Results & empirical findings: Focus Group

The following section consists of an in-depth presentation of the empirical findings of the research through emerging themes from primary and secondary data. The most prevalent themes are divided into subsections, in which a rigorous description is included. These themes serve as the most relevant and suitable pieces for theoretical development.



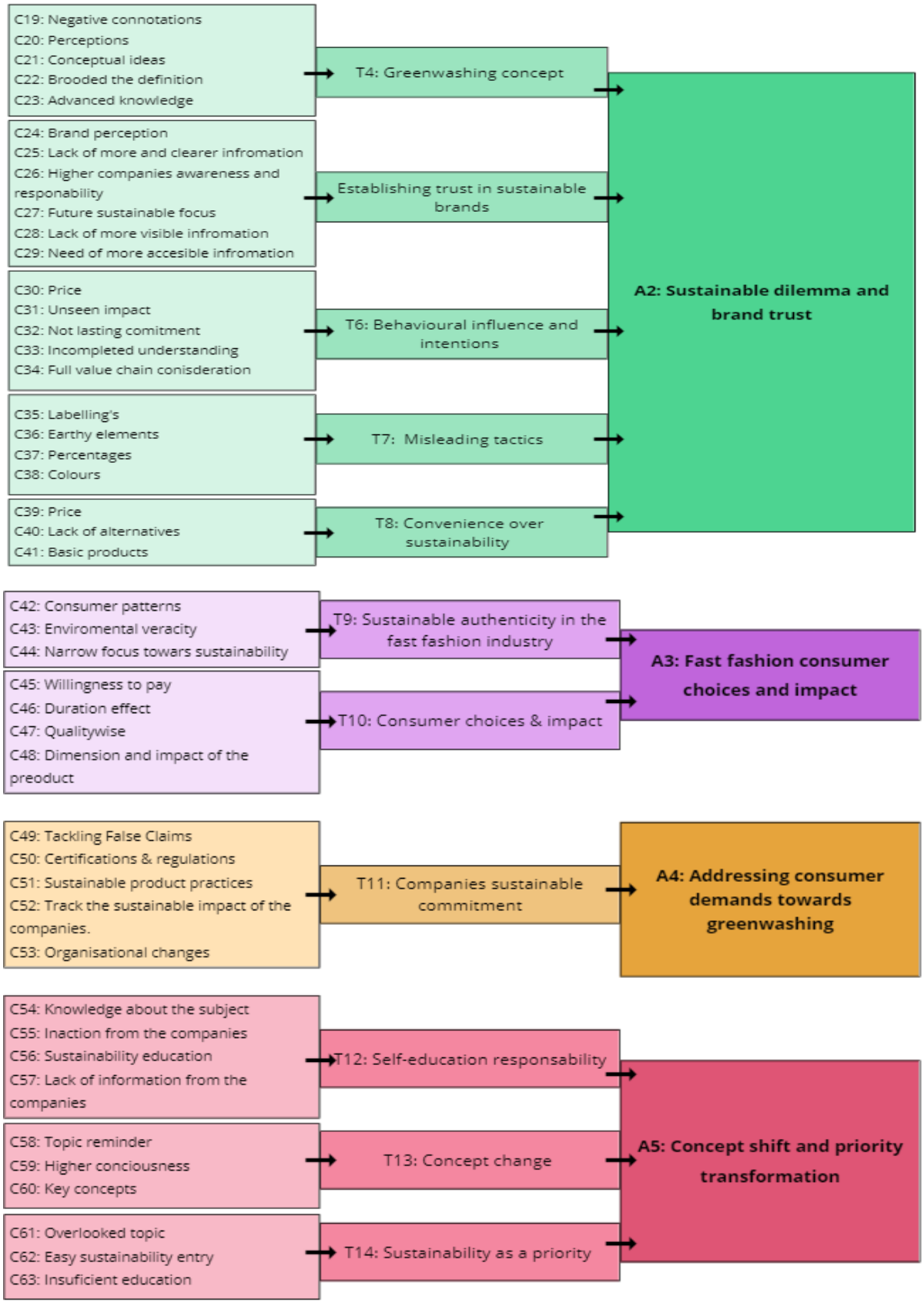


Figure 3: Structure of the data analysis

Following a rigorous coding process, primary data was incorporated to establish a genuine connection between consumer awareness and education regarding greenwashing and their intended purchasing behaviours. Throughout the analysis of the focus groups, there were five relevant concepts: general sustainable consumer insights, sustainable dilemmas and brand trust, fast fashion consumer choices and impact, addressing consumer demands towards greenwashing, and concept shift and priority transformation.

The figure provides a visual depiction, and the following sections will be explained in more detail, in each respective category. Also, there will be quotations added to the explanations, expressed as F with the focus number they belonged to and followed by the participant number they have in the transcript, e.g., F1.1 implies that this quote was from the first focus group, participant 1.

Focus Group	Participants	Age and birth year	Duration
Focus Group 1	Participant 1 (F.1.1)	20 years, 2002	47:31 min
	Participant 2 (F.1.2)	24 years, 1999	
	Participant 3 (F.1.3)	18 years, 2004	
	Participant 4 (F.1.4)	20 years, 2003	
	Participant 5 (F.1.5)	20 years, 2002	
	Participant 6 (F.1.6)	25 years, 1998	
Focus Group 2	Participant 1 (F.2.1)	20 years, 2003	57:07 min
	Participant 2 (F.2.2)	21 years, 2001	
	Participant 3 (F.2.3)	25 years, 1998	
	Participant 4 (F.2.4)	20 years, 2001	
	Participant 5 (F.2.5)	26 years, 1997	
	Participant 6 (F.2.6)	23 years, 2000	
	Participant 7 (F.2.7)	22 years, 2001	
	Participant 8 (F.2.8)	20 years, 2002	
Focus Group 3	Participant 1 (F.3.1)	19 years, 2003	01:07:06 min
	Participant 2 (F.3.2)	25 years, 1998	
	Participant 3 (F.3.3)	23 years, 2000	
	Participant 4 (F.3.4)	23 years, 1999	
	Participant 5 (F.3.5)	23 years, 2000	
	Participant 6 (F.3.6)	25 years, 1998	

	Participant 7 (F.3.7)	20 years, 2002	
	Participant 8 (F.3.8)	20 years, 2003	
	Participant 9 (F.3.9)	19 years, 2003	

Figure 4: Focus group sample table

5.2.1 General sustainable consumer insights

It is undeniable that sustainability is an ongoing problem in the present world, and it has been an issue that is getting more important for consumers every time, and they have a higher awareness about it since, affects them in lots of different ways and continuously, in every purchase. But as has been said in the literature review, "psychological consumer behaviour techniques focus on the mental and emotional elements that influence consumer behaviour, including attitudes, emotions, beliefs, values, and cognitive processes." (Kuester, 2012), so there are different motivations and drive-ins because a consumer will or will not be more disposed to buy a sustainable product. However, "status consumption in emerging markets is a highly emotional process driven by a desire to express identity, gain social approval, and reduce social anxiety." (Mende and Scott, 2013), expressing that some consumers aren't that concerned about sustainability in their purchases, but they buy the sustainable product anyway, seeking this acceptance from other people.

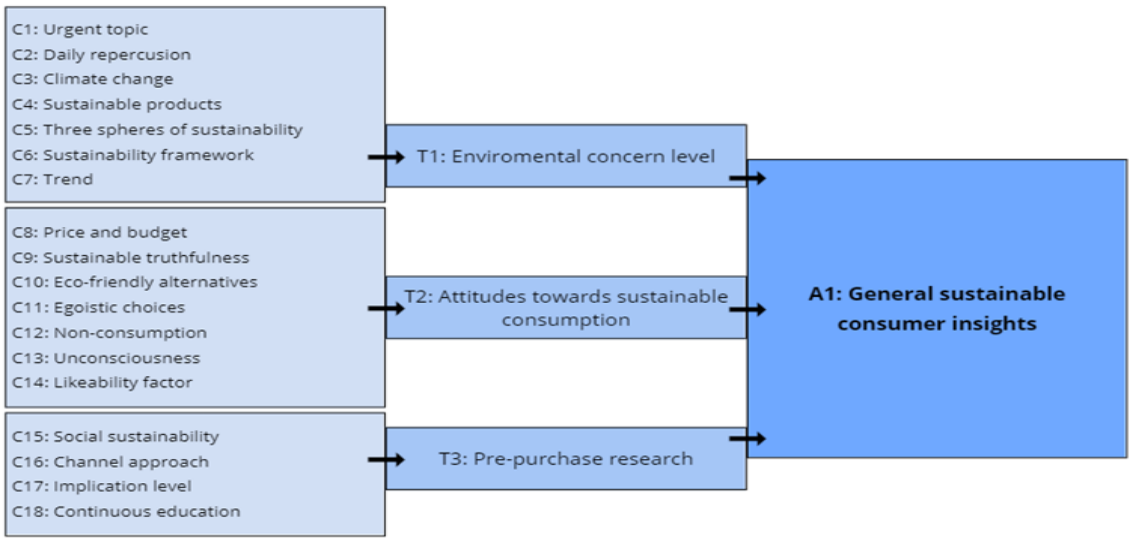


Figure 5: Overview of the first aggregate dimension

5.2.1.1 Environmental concern level

In this first section, primary data provided us that the levels of environmental concern among the participants varied greatly, revealing a wide range of viewpoints and attitudes.

"I think it's really urgent at the moment. We are living in the moment where we still got time to make the challenge, and like, we really have to understand sustainability. The companies and institutions have to understand so they can act on it, and they also have to understand that sustainability is not only climate change, is social sustainability, ecological sustainability, there are many aspects in sustainability. All of those are going to affect our daily lives." – F.2.8

"Climate change is a very big thing, especially in our generation and in the recent years, that came up a lot. I feel like our generation concerns more just because we have to live a bit longer on this earth, hopefully, especially if more live like we are used to. We have to think about the future and how we want to handle things. That is a big part of our lives, maybe a bigger part that it would have been to our grandparents, for example. And then also, I feel like it's a topic everywhere." – F.1.5

Although most participants showed a high degree of awareness and concern about environmental issues, there were others who seemed to have little or no interest in the subject. This discrepancy between attendees emphasized their different priorities and viewpoints on ecological challenges.

"For me, it's not really important, of course I am concerned about sustainability, but I also think about other issues" – F.1.1

"I think I'm not concerned about it, but I like to support things that are sustainable" – F.1.1

"I do focus in buying social sustainability. I tend to not think too much about like the hole, huge scale. It is not really on my mind, at least, not most of the time." – F.3.2

5.2.1.2 Attitudes towards sustainable consumption

There were many varying attitudes towards sustainable consumption among the participants. The price variable, influenced by their student budget, emerged as a key factor in their decision-making process.

"For me, it really depends in the price. Being a student, the budgets are really a key aspect of how I manage to live, and if there's two products and the most suitable product is the same price, then of course I would go for that option but that doesn't tend to be the case. It tends to be the opposite way, so, in many aspects I have to go with the non-sustainable option just because of the budged." – F.3.1

"The price is a big turn in that case because usually the sustainable products are more expensive so like, even if I wanted to be sustainable, I'm a student and one thing cuts the other." – F.2.1

The consideration of sustainable aspects varied depending on the type of product being purchased, while some participants did not actively think about sustainability in their daily product purchases. What some of them did prioritize, was sustainable choices in everyday activities like opting for biking over driving or reducing plastic bag usage.

"It's not something I usually think about, but for everyday things like biking versus driving, or getting around in more sustainable ways." – F.1.6

For some of them, the visualization of sustainable aspects played a crucial role in their purchase decision. However, there was also the connotation that generally the range of available sustainable products is limited, leaving them with fewer choices.

"For me it is also if I can visualize it. For example, happy chickens running around freely laying good eggs. It mostly happens to me with food like eggs or dairy product." – F.3.2

"I think usually the non-sustainable options have a bigger range whereas like sustainable products you probably or usually find one eco-friendly product. You don't have as many varieties which I think that limits your options." – F.3.7

Interestingly, there was a subgroup of participants that prioritized their personal preference and likeability for a product over its sustainability aspects when making purchasing decisions. This highlighted the significance of individual taste and product appeal as influential factors in consumer behaviour.

"For me the most important thing is that I like what I buy, so I don't really care. Of course, the price is important, but I rather invest more money on something I like. I wouldn't say that the most important factor is price or sustainability." – F.3.5

5.2.1.3 Pre-Purchase research

There were some participants that did some research on Apps or websites, but in general, pre-purchase research was not a common activity among the participants. The research efforts seemed to occur coincidentally or as a result of exposure to information through social media or other channels.

"I do research because I am interested in knowing how sustainable the product I am buying is. I mean, for example, it is useful to see what shoes are more sustainable, better buying wines from this company that is sustainable for the same price than other that is not." – F.1.3

"Maybe coincidently, not in a purposely way. If there is something that reaches the curiosity inside or something that speaks to me, then maybe I would do research" – F.3.2

"I am not actively searching for a company that is sustainable, maybe that is sustainable, maybe if I have information from someone, then it is something that comes to me, is not something that I've been actively searching for, most of the time." – F.3.5

Factors such as price and impact played a significant role in determining whether participants did research or not, as well as self-validation satisfaction.

"Honestly, sometimes I see sustainable, and I think about buying it, just so you know, feel good about myself. But then I don't do research on them. Maybe I look it up once, to kind of confirm before I buy, but not always." – F.2.4

"I would say it depends heavily on the price roll, like if it's low impact product, and I probably wouldn't think about it as much. Like I wouldn't go before I go to shop or before shop. Or before I go to H&M I wouldn't go on their website and like their holes, assembles strategy or what type of tax they have. I would do it if it is a product that is pricier." – F.2.5

Additionally, the participants indicated that they were more likely to do research on a company or brand if they already had a pre-existing interest or likeability towards it.

"I said, just with the Patagonia thing, that's my preferred route that they give back to the phone. It sometimes looks it up because I like the brand, but not constantly." – F.1.6

These motivations and concerns will be investigated through three themes: environmental concern level, attitudes toward sustainable consumption, and pre-purchase research.

5.2.2 Sustainable dilemma and brand trust

At this current time, consumers receive constant insights from brands with big loads of information and they can even search more easily, but that does not mean they trust all that information, like it was mentioned previously "Greenwashing is a pervasive issue in the fast fashion industry, and it has a significant impact on consumer behaviour. When consumers discover that environmental promises were inaccurate or inflated, it not only hinders their ability to make informed decisions but also leads to a loss of trust in businesses." (Netto et al., 2020) And since there is this lack of verification from the companies because a great number of them utilize that gap to their advantage to greenwash their clients, consumers feel like they can't rely on the company's information and marketing tactics. Nevertheless, "desire is a critical component of psychological consumer behaviour strategies. Emotional connections to a brand can outweigh logical assessments, highlighting the significance of desire in shaping consumer behaviour." (Bower and Landreth, 2001) And so, on some occasions, consumers let themselves be greenwashed and imposed some other characteristics or aspects above the level of sustainability of a product when they were making a purchase decision.

These will be further discussed in separate subsections to outline significant insights regarding brand trust and consumer behaviour.

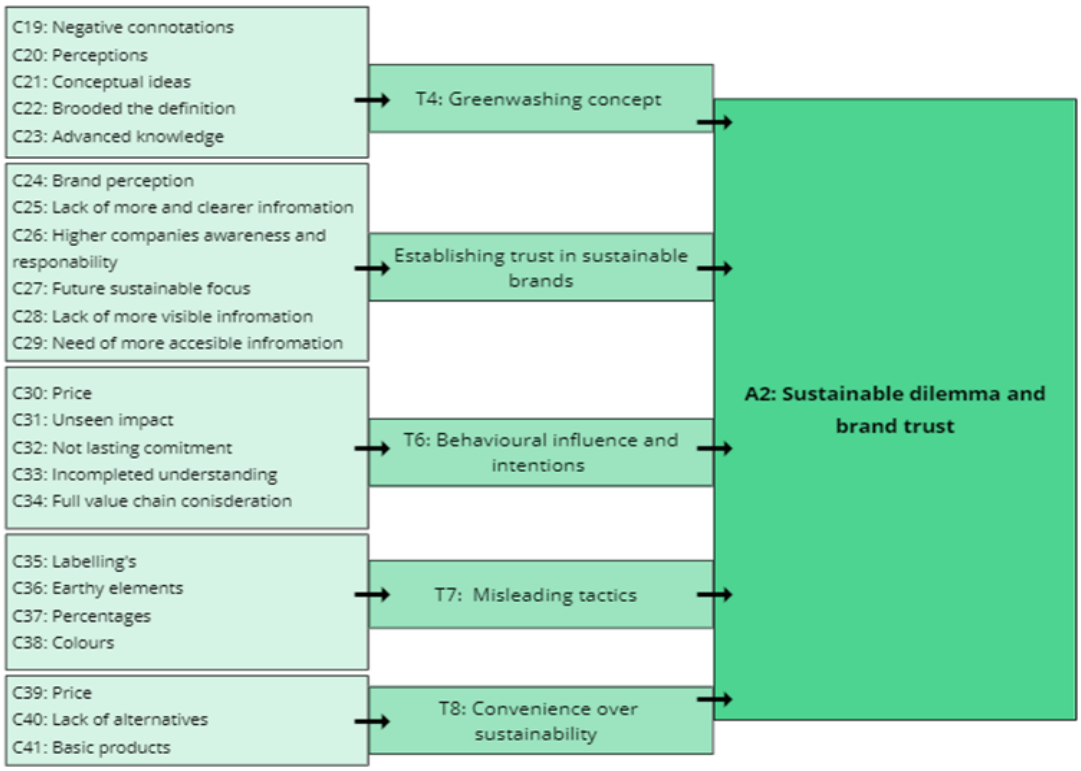


Figure 6: Overview of the second aggregate dimension

5.2.2.1 Greenwashing concept

Most of the participants in the study were already aware of greenwashing and its role in environmental consumption factors. While a small percentage had limited knowledge, the majority demonstrated a good understanding of the deceptive practices used by some brands.

"Greenwashing I think the definition that we were taught in school was when a company marks themselves in an environmentally friendly, that it has more focus on the environment rather than sustainability as a hole, company even when their activities are not doing so." – F.3.1

"For me greenwashing, the definition would be when a company is trying to act in a sustainable way, and is trying to focus the attention on what they are doing in a sustainable, instead of the other part behind it, and like an example could be the company Volkswagen; when they were, it is a bit tricky to explain, but they had this machine which was reducing the emission in the air but the real emission was not like that, was way more than how it was during the test face." – F.3.5

"Trying to read your benefits from having a sustainable point of view, or the benefits that sustainability gives you from society as a promo-reputation standpoint, but not doing any sewing." – F.3.3

Some of the participants even gave exemplifications they had seen

"I think another example of greenwashing that it's a bit different was Ikea a couple of years ago. They were caught that they were using wood from a source that they weren't supposed to. It wasn't a sustainable source, and even though Ikea had good intentions they didn't do the correct supervision with their suppliers and the suppliers were breaking the code of conduct for Ikea, so, technically they were not aware that they were taking part of greenwashing, but they were, because they were supporting something that it was supposed to be sustainable, but it wasn't." – F.3.1

"*We've got a lot of architecture firms to like present treaty models as a page and then it's like there are a lot of trees, living buildings with lots of follies and stuff, and when they build its only brick, no plants or anything."* – F.3.2

The participants generally associated negative connotations with the concept of greenwashing. Generally, they perceived it as a practice employed by brands to falsely portray themselves as sustainable in order to attract more consumers.

"Boosting sales" – F.2.8

"When a brand tries to pass as sustainable when it is not, to gain more buyers." – F.3.8

Participants mentioned visual elements used in marketing to create the illusion of sustainability.

"I would say they're trying to sell you an idea that is not necessarily true by putting the letters in green." – F.1.2

"The trees and the logos from a marketing perspective, trying to convince consumers of their products being sustainable just because it is a trend now, not because it is a core value" – F.3.9

They viewed greenwashing as a form of false advertising, manipulation, and unethical behaviour by companies. These perceptions highlight the participants' skepticism towards sustainability claims and the importance of genuine and transparent practices in the industry.

"Tries to manipulate you, and that is basically what greenwashing is doing. Manipulating people for making more profit or having a better promotion." – F.3.4

"Firms jumping into the environmentally friendliness bandwagon without actually doing it, you know, promoting that and doing their marketing in a way to appear more sustainable" – F.3.7

5.2.2.2 Establishing trust in sustainable brands

Participants emphasized that brands embodying sustainability as part of their identity, rather than following trends, were more trustworthy.

"I think it depends like, for example, H&M changed their strategy whereas Patagonia was from the beginning claiming that they were sustainable, so this is also kind of in their identity I would say, so if some companies are changing their identity is not that trustworthy than a company starting with this identity, and this is what I as a consumer know (of course because of marketing and advertisement) everything is influencing my decision making." – F.3.4

"What I would trust a big brand that really has like identified as environmentally sustainable through the years is because everything means that for them, if it turns out that they're not sustainable then the hole company just collapses. That's where the trust comes from." – F.3.2

They valued brands that possess credible certifications and provide supporting information to reinforce their sustainability claims. Transparency in the brand's work and practices was also deemed important.

"I think for, at least in the context of manufacturing companies, if they have what is called an ISO certification. It is a certification that has to be renewed yearly, so they have to come in and make sure that you're actually throwing up a certification. That one that I would be more inclined to trust in, if a company is ISO certified like, depending on the products or on their production." – F.3.1

"For me it's also a lot about how transparent they are by providing information. For example, easy access to information, what they're claiming, then I feel like I believe that. If it's easier to find, I trust it more rather than really dig deeper." – F.2.5

Some participants acknowledged their own role in contributing to the problem by continuing to consume from non-sustainable stores and others questioned whether companies were genuinely aware of the attainability and realistic nature of sustainable goals.

"I think the most important is that we understand we're part of the problem. And we take responsibility of what we're doing trying to do better. But I feel like many companies are hiding something. So, like, we have to try to be accountable of our own actions." – F.2.8

"I feel like many companies have maybe different perceptions toward sustainability. Do they even really know? Are they familiar of sustainable? Like the 17 development goals for 2030? Are those based on the sustainability that we are facing nowadays? Are they still available and reachable? I kind of doubt that. I feel like companies are not aware of that, and they are full of ignorance towards the subject. They make some claims like "this is 20% recycled" is that circular economy? I don't think so. So, many companies do that, and they know what they're doing." – F.2.8

5.2.2.3 Behavioural influence and intentions

The study findings revealed that companies resort to greenwashing as a marketing tactic due to the awareness of its impact on consumers, especially considering the current trend of sustainability.

"I feel a huge factor of sustainability is what other people think about your interactions. I feel like they are aware of this fact, and that's why they do it, because they know that if they claim they're sustainable, people will be looking for sustainable trends." – F.2.1

Participants expressed interest in examining data that demonstrates the financial gains companies achieve through greenwashing, creating a desire for transparency and accountability.

"It would be interesting to have like an index of greenwashing, or a calculation. How much greenwashing themselves makes money and then after they got caught." – F.3.4

"I'd like to see Fiji data first, before and after the accusations. Like revenue, like Fiji or Volkswagen. It would be interesting to have like a greenwashing ratio" – F.3.3

Participants also highlighted the lack of knowledge and awareness about greenwashing among consumers, making them susceptible to being easily deceived and influenced.

"I think many people don't have enough knowledge and then they just go and buy what it loos sustainable. That is good for the companies, so they're succeeding. And then it's the customer behaviour that is affected."- F.2.8

The study provoked discussions and raised questions about the true meaning and extent of sustainability, reflecting a broader uncertainty about what actions and behaviours are genuinely sustainable.

"It is also really hard to know that is sustainable. For example, I had a case where we were debating what was more sustainable, a plastic bag or a carton bag? I'm pretty sure everyone would say the carton bag but one thing we don't consider is that carton bags need way more space for transport, and it ends up meaning way more CO2 than plastic bags transported." – F.2.1

5.2.2.4 Misleading tactics

Participants mentioned that companies often use popular or influential celebrities associated with environmental issues in their marketing campaigns.

"Having a celebrity, for example, someone like David Attenborough, who is a known environmental celebrity figure." – F.3.1

Participants also highlighted the usage of nature-related and earthy elements in marketing campaigns, which they perceived as attempts to create an environmentally friendly image without necessarily reflecting sustainable practices.

"The usage of colour green, the labelling…" – F.3.4

"The more you're claiming to be sustainable without proving that you really are, the more you are not. Not giving data, without giving any type of insight." – F.3.5

Additionally, participants expressed concerns about the usage of specific misleading vocabulary, such as the manipulation of percentages or misleading labels.

"In their advertisement, they usually use vocabulary like conscious, or other type of key words that make you feel good about buying that product." – F.3.8

"Using percentages is also a quite common tactic in the fast fashion industry, like this is 20% made of organic materials or stuff like that." – F.2.4

5.2.2.5 Convenience over sustainability

The study findings revealed that convenience often took precedence over sustainability for most of the participants. They expressed that there is a limited availability of products or stores that prioritize sustainability as a core aspect of their identity, making it challenging to trust and rely on such options.

"You can find a wide range of non-sustainable product, which I guess would be considered the ones that almost everybody uses, but as for sustainable or environmentally products, there are not as many" – F.3.7

Additionally, the price of sustainable products emerged as a significant consideration. Participants noted that sustainable products tend to be more expensive, which can deter them from prioritizing sustainability when making daily purchases.

"I agree with that, if I have the option to buy the more sustainable one, I will go for it, but if it is more out of my price range then I would probably go for the cheaper one" – F.3.5

The study highlighted that, in general, participants did not prioritize sustainability as a primary factor in their purchasing decisions for everyday products. This suggests that convenience, affordability, and accessibility currently hold greater sway over sustainability considerations. However, the findings also indicate that a lack of accessible and affordable sustainable options could be a barrier to consumer engagement with sustainability.

"It also depends on the product, if it is a bag of chips, I will not do any type of research. Or some product like that" – F.3.9

5.2.3 Fast fashion consumer choices and impact

"Consumers are more likely to perceive a company's sustainability claims as credible when backed up by third-party certifications or endorsements. Additionally, consumers are more inclined to purchase sustainable apparel if they perceive it as high quality and fashionable." (Bailey et al., 2017) So, since there is a lack of verification of their sustainable actions and information from fast fashion brands, as well as a low-quality reputation that precedes them, it is hard for consumers to trust them and choose them if they are searching for a sustainable option and want to have a positive impact on the environment. In spite of that, there are other factors that can change purchasing decisions and will be discussed later through two themes, based on "sustainable authenticity in the fast fashion industry" and "consumer choices and impact".

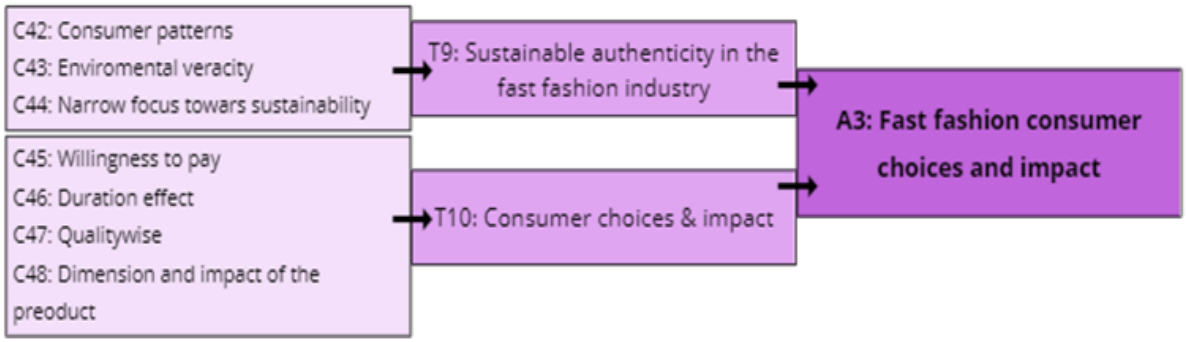


Figure 7: Overview of the third aggregate dimension

5.2.3.1 Sustainable authenticity in the fast fashion industry

Most participants were frequent buyers of fast fashion brands. However, the few people who were not usual purchasers from these fast fashion brands opted for alternatives such as shopping at second-hand stores or utilizing other family members' clothing.

"I usually do buy on this types of brands, H&M, Sfera (El Corte Inglés brand) and some others, not usual buyer like every day or every month, but I do tend to go there when I need new clothes" – F.3.1

"I usually buy second hand, so I don't consider myself a usual buyer of this types of brands. I also borrow many clothes from my family" – F.3.8

"I go max three times a year to this type of stores." – F.3.9

As some participants noted that second-hand options were not popular or readily available in their countries, some other said the total opposite about this type of store concept.

"*second-hand shops, for example, if you buy from a second-hand shop is because you do not have money to afford anything better. So, it's not an option. So, I will say like, from there, you either buy from little brands or you buy clothes, so I feel like it also kind of restrict your options."* – F.2.1

"We don't really have second-hand shops in Croatia. At least is not popular to go there. There, the culture is if you have some clothes that you can just give it away because you don't need it." – F.2.3

"We do have lots of second-hands shops in Romania. And everybody loves them. But it's also because people in Romania, there's a lot that I have no idea about brands. And also, you can find very expensive stuff for very cheap prices. So, they're actually pretty nice."- F.2.4

Geographical location played a role in the participants' perception of greenwashing and overall sustainability practices. In certain areas, greenwashing was not a prevalent concern, and sustainability as a whole was not widely prioritized.

"I do feel like the place you are from influences. I'm South American. So though, like greenwashing, or brand wise, you know, like sustainability, still not a huge factor."– F.2.1

A noteworthy finding was that some participants believed fast fashion could never truly be sustainable due to its violation of social sustainability aspects, which often go unnoticed.

"The fact that they are cheap, and they have been already claimed in the past for not being sustainable, even on their environmental working conditions, everything it's really hard for them to be sustainable in my point of view, so I will say, for me they will never be sustainable. They can never be sustainable as long as they produce in these countries where the culture of sustainability is totally different than ours, is not possible." – F.3.4

Participants indicated that if they became aware of a company's greenwashing practices, they actively avoided supporting that particular brand.

"I tend to avoid buying in stores that I am aware that have these types of claims even though sometimes is really hard. If I have other options, I will try to go there." – F.3.2

5.2.3.2 Consumer choices and impact

The participants' willingness to pay a higher price for a sustainable product varied depending on several factors. The type of product played a role, with participants being unsure about paying more for basic items but more inclined to invest in stylish products with appealing designs.

"If it's a piece of clothes basic and simple, I wouldn't pay as much. I would rather focus on the materials that are used and what is the best quality and last longer. I would probably decide by which one is the most suitable. Not just because it is sustainable but because what is behind that." – F.2.5

The perceived time effect and durability of the clothing also influenced their sustainability considerations, as they associated sustainability with longer-lasting and higher-quality garments.

"It is not such an easy question to answer for me because it depends on the product. If it is a plain white t-shirt I don't know, but if it is an oversized t-shirt with cool design, it is very dependable, maybe I would pay a higher price. I also see sustainability duration wise. There is some clothing like traditional clothing, we have that in Germany, or suits and stuff that you buy once in a lifetime because you know it's going to last for at least 10 years, so you spend

more money on it, and you know you will be able to reuse it. It depends on the quality and how much is going to last." – F.3.4

"It could also be like buy more qualitative, more expensive products, but you might use them longer, which in this term it is sustainable, because you are not going to change them every year, or every season." – F.2.4

"My dad said than poor shouldn't buy cheap, because then you have to buy again and again and again. It's better to buy more expensive one that lasts you four or five years, then, buy another one. I kind of grew up in that mentality." – F.2.8

"I totally agree, I would also go for the more expensive ones. If I know it lasts longer. Just because I know then it's more worth the price." – F.2.5

The brand's likeability was another significant factor affecting consumer choices. Participants emphasized that social aspects were often overlooked in sustainability discussions, indicating a desire for greater consideration of social sustainability aspects within the industry.

"It also depends on how much you like the brand. Like your willingness to pay is also based on that. I think the social aspect is very overlooked when it comes to sustainability"- F.3.7

Additionally, the price of the clothing itself played an important role for most participants. Their willingness to pay more for sustainable products differed depending on whether the item was already expensive or relatively affordable.

"It also depends, for example if you see 20%, if I'm comparing something that is 30 euros to 26 euros then I would do it. But if I am comparing something that is around 2000 euros to 2400 euros then it is a big difference. It is very relative to how much it costs." – F.2.1

5.2.4 Addressing consumer demands towards greenwashing

As we can see in the literature review, we wanted to ensure that, as Bailey et al., 2017 said, consumers are more likely to perceive a company's sustainability claims as credible if they're backed up by third-party certifications or endorsements. And it has also been said in the same thread on the subject that "to address greenwashing effectively, businesses need to provide transparent and verifiable information about their environmental practices. Third-party certification and participation in labeling programs can help build consumer trust." (Boselli & Tamberi, 2021). So, basically, consumers do not see sustainable responsibility on the part of

the companies, and they do not trust them when they claim they are sustainable. That is the reason why they need those certifications or third parties to get involved, so they can be sure the information they are getting is valid and trustworthy, and so they are, not getting greenwashed.

We'll go into more detail about each of these insights in a separate paragraph to highlight the importance of companies' sustainable commitment.

Figure 8: Overview of the fourth aggregate dimension

5.2.4.1 Companies' sustainable commitment

The participants seemed skeptical of greenwashing and expected companies to demonstrate genuine sustainability commitments. They demanded transparency, independent certifications, and a more repair-focused approach instead of consumption as the solution of a broken product.

"I would like them to stop claiming to be more sustainable and give us actual facts about how they make their products, their production process, more transparency" – F.3.8

"Something environmentally certified, something that is regulated, and you can't fake. Either you have an environmental label or not. If that was the thing, the problem of greenwashing would have been eradicated."– F.3.7

"Also, if you claim to be sustainable, instead of selling new stuff you should also be offering to repair. Before it was more common to repair things, now you usually buy something new every time something gets broken." – F.3.5

"The whole point of view should be changed. Swap or try to repair it or something. Don't just buy new stuff, even if it's sustainable." – F.2.8

The participants claimed that they as consumers seek for accurate information, systemic changes, and the development of tools like sustainability indices to navigate and make informed choices.

"It should be like systematic changes, not just like surface level, like really changed the operations of the company. Like for me, it's not enough if they just didn't change the marketing structure or something. I want to see bigger changes and like bigger and deeper understanding about the whole issue and like really, they are doing something." – F.2.8

"A type of index would be useful, for example, like the ones that you can find in some part of South Africa when you buy products that are not healthy. A full bio is basically when you're buying fruits or something that are shown as bio, so is like a certificate from a third party." – F.1.5

Aligned with these expectations, it was remarked during the study that it was essential for companies to build trust, credibility, and long-term relationships with environmentally conscious consumers.

"Certifications, definitely. But I also think that they should stay true to themselves. Because after all, they already have a lot of information that they put out. I don't know if it's true or not but they're already doing it. So, more information is not going to make me trust them more." – F.2.4

5.2.5 Concept shift and priority transformation

Vermeulen and Seufert (2019) examined the concept of greenwashing in the fast fashion industry and the role of consumer education. Many consumers don't understand what sustainable fashion really entails and are easily duped by greenwashing tactics. The authors suggest that consumer education programs could help consumers make more informed purchasing decisions and hold companies accountable for their claims. So, consumer education plays a key role in making the right purchase decision, which is the aim of the study: to prove the relation between consumer awareness and their purchasing intentions.

Since greenwashing is not really complex and is really present in daily life purchases, it could be a good topic to start with sustainable education. Besides trying to prove the relation previously mentioned, the study wanted to know if, through some strategies, consumers could have a better understanding of the concept too. And this will be further discussed through

different themes, which are "self-education reasonability", "concept change" and "sustainability as a priority".

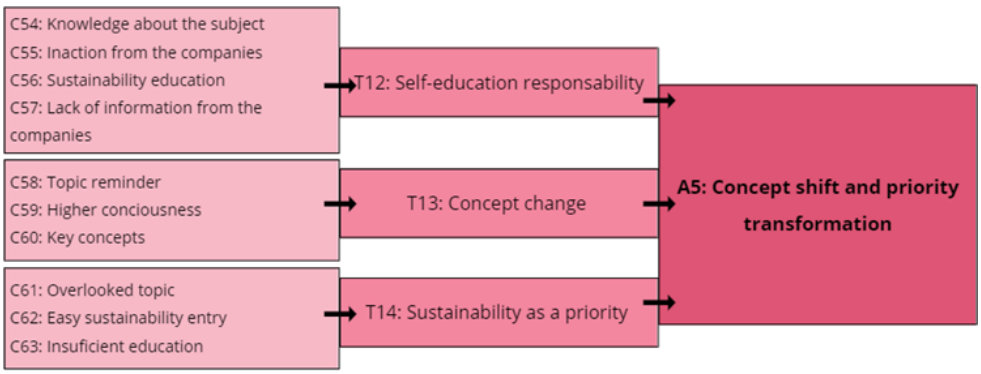


Figure 9: Overview of the fifth aggregate dimension

5.2.5.1 Self-education responsibility

Participants emphasized that in a world where sustainability is a global concern, individuals cannot afford to be ignorant. They acknowledged that companies are primarily driven by profit and are unlikely to provide comprehensive education on the topic.

"I mean, you can't be ignorant about a worldwide issue. So, I mean, I am not saying that you have to study sustainability every day, you know? But like, read a few articles. Whenever some news just be interested on them. That's enough change." – F.2.1

"People should be aware, and I believe nowadays they now what greenwashing is. Of course, companies are not going to educate you on greenwashing because they're using it. So, we have to teach ourselves and do it by our own." – F.2.5

"Coming from an economic background, companies just want to make profit so it's just a matter of the regulators to control the companies." – F.3.5

Therefore, the participants felt a personal responsibility to educate themselves about sustainable practices and identify greenwashing.

"The consumer has the power, basically. I think so, because when no one is buying at H&M they have to change so, as a company, you have to consider consumer behaviours and attitudes and if everyone thinks a little different and to be a little bit more sustainable, step by step it can make an impact." – F.3.4

"It is also our part as consumer to try to be aware and try with every little action to make the difference. Every person's action combined can make a bigger action." – F.3.5

Some of the participants discussed that educational programs in schools or high schools would be useful for increase of personal awareness towards this concept.

"I mean, I think it's like at the bottom of the old problems. I think it could be a start for the educational part" – F.2.4

"In German schools we already do that. I am from Germany and in my school, we had a talk about sustainability choices, what was greenwashing, which action could apply in our daily lives etc." – F.1.5

"In my school in Spain, we have kind of a method to give us more awareness on the greenwashing and sustainable topics. We do like projects and research in groups." – F.1.3

Participants also noted the influence of social media influencers in shaping consumer behaviour. They believed that influencers hold significant power due to their wide reach and impact on social media platforms.

"I think influencers nowadays have a lot of power on the mass. There needs to be definitely more consciousness by individuals and company, but I feel people with more voice such celebrities or someone with influence would make a bigger impact on us. SO, I would give them more responsibilities." – F.3.8

However, some participants expressed the view that companies bear the full responsibility for implementing sustainable practices. They argued that companies should prioritize sustainability without placing the burden solely on consumers.

"I think it is basically the firms. I think they should tackle firms; I think that is where the issue is. I mean, of course, every little action help, but I think that us as individuals by ourselves we can just do so much. So, think the government with their policies and companies have the most responsibility." – F.3.7

5.2.5.2 Concept change

Overall, for the ones who knew and had previous knowledge about the concept of greenwashing, it remained predominantly negative throughout the participants' perspectives.

"I would say it remains the same, I mean, I always thought of greenwashing as a bad thing and still do. After this, I for sure have more knowledge about it" – F.2.1

However, it was observed that the study did spark new visions and viewpoints among some participants, expanding their understanding of sustainability in the context of clothing. It served as a fresh reminder to consider the deceptive practices employed by certain companies and the importance of critically evaluating sustainability claims.

"It has definitely made me more conscious when it comes to identifying how greenwashing looks and it helped me identify the key concepts of how greenwashing works." – F.1.1

"I think it is a nice reminder. I feel like we know this type of things, but it is always a good to bring this type of topics up because they matter" – F.3.2

"This has made me more conscious about these concepts. Now maybe I look for the verification of the things I buy" – F.1.2

"I didn't know anything about it before, so the consciousness on my part too, and on the other hand I think I'm going to look into it." – F.1.4

While the negative connotation of greenwashing persisted, the study created an opportunity for participants to deepen their awareness and broaden their perspectives on sustainable practices within the fast fashion industry. This expanded understanding contributed to a more nuanced and informed outlook on the concept of greenwashing and its implications for consumers and the environment.

"I think all of us had similar views about greenwashing, or at least we knew that it wasn't good thing, so I think this is just added to the previous knowledge I had, and now I think I have a much breather view about it. But this was a nice way of also learning and seeing other people's perspectives." – F.3.1

5.2.5.3 Sustainability as a priority

The study revealed that while participants recognized the importance of sustainability, they considered it less urgent compared to other pressing issues.

"I mean, there's a lot going on in the world, obviously. Wars, especially in Europe right now. Sustainable is a huge factor, it is part of our daily lives, but I don't know if it is way worse than what is going on elsewhere." – F.2.5

"For me, it's naturally high on my level, when I think about sustainability, like the social issues and systematic issues and stuff. I think greenwashing is important and it is pretty normal concept to everybody. So, in a way, it's really important, but because I am like they are teaching me to be the sustainability professional that I am going to work in other companies and stuff like that. So, in my level, it is not the most important thing, but I see it in the perspective of someone who studies sustainability." – F.2.8

"I think it is important, but I think there are bigger issues regarding sustainability than greenwashing. Like ones that are more harmful, companies' regulation, child labour. Of course, greenwashing is important because we consume a lot, but I think there are other issues more concerning than this related to sustainability" – F.3.7

They acknowledged that greenwashing and long-term sustainability have significant implications, but there are more immediate challenges affecting people's well-being. They emphasized the need to balance long-term sustainability with addressing the more immediate and severe issues faced by individuals and communities.

"I mean, obviously it is hard to compare, Sustainability with the ongoing issues for a lot of years, and for example, the wars even now. So, it is something I mean, war affects us right now, gas prices etc. but sustainability as well. Maybe not right now but it will affect us in the future. And slowly it is. So, it is something to keep in mind. But still, no, there's not much we can do as individuals. However, as a society, we can." – F.2.1

5.3 Analysis

The purpose of this section is to connect the primary and secondary data's identified themes to the supporting literature. To achieve this, a theoretical framework is constructed and explained in-depth through an analysis of each dimension. Lastly, the knowledge from each dimension is connected to provide insights into the topic at hand.

To investigate the potential link between customers' awareness of greenwashing and their intentions to make ecologically friendly purchases, three focus groups were conducted. These focus groups were conducted with the intention of evaluating how much awareness people currently have about greenwashing, particularly in the fast fashion industry. The goal was to see if common clients of these companies could tell whether certain commercials or pieces of information that were provided by the firms were genuinely true or just greenwashing. Besides the role that awareness plays in the purchase intentions of consumers, they should prioritize choosing a sustainable product over a non-sustainable one.

5.3.1 General sustainable consumer insights

The study centrally needed a way to let the authors know the starting point of the consumer's awareness and concern about sustainability and the environment in a more general view, as well as the starting point related to the intentions of the consumers towards the consumption of sustainable products since the study is about the relation between these two concepts. So, general sustainable consumer insights were one of the main factors that were essential for the start of the investigation.

The data from the focus groups showed that on the one hand, all the participants were concerned about sustainability, even though it was at different levels, but they all agreed that sustainability is quite a broad concept, not only the general knowledge about sustainability concerning the environment and climate change but also other types such as social sustainability or economic sustainability that are not popular knowledge. However, it also showed that there were people who did not have a high level of concern related to the environment, but even though they tend to look up sustainable products for different reasons, it was mostly due to the way that it makes you feel to buy an eco-friendly product, or it was suspected by the participants, that consumers act and perceive the fact of caring about sustainability more like a trend than a real urgent topic.

The findings have shown that consumers base their purchase decisions on two principal aspects: the price and the low reliability of the information provided by the companies. The price is a reason that is commented on repeatedly during the whole discussion and the motive is always the same, that basically Since the sample of consumers that was being studied are students, they are sensitive to the price due to their economic situation, and since sustainable options are always more expensive, their situation does "not allow them" to make this type of

purchase. Nevertheless, if they are willing to pay more for a sustainable product, then the problem is in proving that the product that they are willing to pay more for is sustainable. They want to be sure, but since it is difficult to know if the firms are really sustainable or are greenwashing, there are two types of consumers: the ones that prefer to opt for the easy option of just buying a non-sustainable product and the ones that look for an alternative that they know is sustainable for sure. In the case of the focus group, they talked about second-hand shopping.

But second-hand shopping was not an option for everyone since if you want to follow the latest trends, you cannot go for this alternative, and it also depends on the culture of the society, because in some countries if you go second-hand shopping, it is because you cannot afford any new clothes, but in other countries it is really common and most everyone does that, so it was seen that the culture was also a fact that affected the way consumers acted towards their purchase decisions, not in products but in the place they choose to buy from.

5.3.2 Sustainable dilemma and brand trust

The research concluded the next stage of the focus group, where the aim was to know the understanding and awareness the consumers had about our specific topic, which is greenwashing, as well as the actions that companies could take to make consumers believe in them more and their purchase intentions.

The insights gathered about the concept of greenwashing were mostly negative since most of the consumers already liked the concept of misleading practices and modifying their perceptions about the product or brand. They all agreed that there were specific elements that helped them know if they were being greenwashed in the store or through an advertisement: the use of earthy elements, certain colours like green in the labelling, and the information with parentages that did not have any verification or facts to support it.

The findings also presented consumers' emphasis to know more about the reputation and transparency of not only sustainable brands but also brands in general. This gave us an understanding of the level of importance to consumers' considerations about these factors. Moreover, the strong desire for more information regarding sustainable brands and transparency regarding information about sustainable practices and environmental impact was highly expressed and remarked upon during the focus study. These findings suggested that

enhancing the reputation and transparency of sustainable brands, while providing accessible and informative content, could help build trust among consumers.

5.3.3 Fast fashion consumer choices and impact

The research concluded the next stage of the focus group, where the aim was to know the understanding and awareness the consumers had about our specific topic, which is greenwashing, as well as the actions that companies could take to make consumers believe in them more and their purchase intentions.

The insights gathered about the concept of greenwashing were mostly negative since most of the consumers already liked the concept of misleading practices and modifying their perceptions about the product or brand. They all agreed that there were specific elements that helped them know if they were being greenwashed in the store or through an advertisement: the use of earthy elements, certain colours like green in the labelling, and the information with parentages that did not have any verification or facts to support it.

The findings also presented consumers' emphasis to know more about the reputation and transparency of not only sustainable brands but also brands in general. This gave us an understanding of the level of importance to consumers' considerations about these factors.

Moreover, the strong desire for more information regarding sustainable brands and transparency regarding information about sustainable practices and environmental impact was highly expressed and remarked upon during the focus study. These findings suggested that enhancing the reputation and transparency of sustainable brands, while providing accessible and informative content, could help build trust among consumers.

The focus participants demonstrated a strong preference for convenience over sustainability. The majority agreed that they would purchase products that offered convenience and were within their respective budgets when making purchasing decisions. Furthermore, respondents said that they were unlikely to spend a lot of time or effort looking for sustainable alternatives when they wanted to buy something common or basic. The market's restricted supply of such alternatives had an impact on this sentiment, further supporting their desire for practicality and affordability.

5.3.4 Addressing consumer demands towards greenwashing

The study's participants indicated mistrust about "greenwashing," which is the term for false or exaggerated sustainability claims made by businesses. They stressed the necessity for businesses to exhibit sincere dedication to sustainability and offer open disclosure of their procedures.

Transparency emerged as a key factor in building trust with consumers. The participants expressed a desire for companies to disclose detailed information about their product manufacturing processes, sustainability initiatives, and environmental impact. By being transparent, companies can provide consumers with accurate and factual information, which is crucial in combating greenwashing. Participants specifically mentioned the importance of independent certifications as a means of validating a company's sustainability claims. They believed that certifications from reputable third-party organizations would provide a trustworthy standard and help eliminate greenwashing practices.

Another noteworthy demand from the participants was the shift towards a repair-focused approach. They criticized the prevailing throwaway culture, where consumers are encouraged to replace broken products with new ones. Instead, participants called for companies to prioritize repair services and offer sustainable alternatives to constant consumption. By promoting repairability, companies can align with consumer values and contribute to a more sustainable economy.

The need for tools and resources that support well-informed decision-making was also stated by the participants. They recommended creating sustainability ratings or certificates that people could easily access when making decisions about what to buy. Such technologies will encourage responsible consumption by enabling customers to recognize and support businesses that promote sustainability.

The comments of the participants make it clear that they expect significant improvements from businesses, placing more emphasis on systemic reforms than simple, flimsy marketing tactics. They demanded that businesses make substantial improvements to their operations in addition to superficial ones. These adjustments must address sustainability issues and show a thorough comprehension of the current environmental problems.

The findings highlighted the importance of addressing consumer demands towards greenwashing and sustainability commitments. Companies have the need to prioritize transparency by providing accurate and detailed information about their practices, in order for consumers to have a hight level of trust. They should also seek independent certifications to validate their sustainability claims. Furthermore, embracing repair-focused approaches and offering sustainable alternatives to constant consumption can meet consumer expectations. Finally, the development of tools like sustainability indices can empower consumers to make informed choices and support companies that align with their values. By addressing these demands, companies can build trust, credibility, and long-term relationships with environmentally conscious consumers.

5.3.5 Concept shifts and priority transformation

Our participants were asked perplexing questions during the concept shift and priority transformation phase in an effort to learn more about their perspectives and insights. Prior to the focus group, they were invited to consider their general levels of awareness and then offer their insightful recommendations and thoughts. As a result of their participation in the talks and activities, participants had the chance to express any major changes in their attitudes and knowledge during this phase. We were able to learn more about the profound effects of the focus group experience on participants' comprehension and perception by focusing on these important factors.

There was broad agreement among the attendees when it came time to make ideas that there is an urgent need for further education about greenwashing. It's interesting to note that not only were customers aware of this requirement, but also businesses themselves. Participants emphasized their conviction that those who engage in greenwashing often lack awareness, which contributes significantly to the issue. They stressed that corporations would likely see a drop in greenwashing as consumers would no longer demand such dishonest methods if most consumers were informed about this issue. The participants' comprehension of the power consumers must shape the market and bring about positive change was highlighted by this realization.

The attendees also stressed how inadequate current sustainability education is, which helps explain why greenwashing is so common. They emphasized the difficulty for both consumers and businesses in making informed decisions due to the dearth of thorough and easily

accessible sites that offer reliable information on sustainable practices. Participants were adamant that improving sustainable education is essential to properly addressing the problem. Individuals may make better decisions and businesses can better manage the complexity of sustainability by arming them with the knowledge and awareness they need. This reduces the temptation to engage in deceptive techniques like "greenwashing." As a result, they emphasized how crucial it is to fund sustainable education programs to promote a society that is more ecologically sensitive.

5.4 Survey

During our practical part of the thesis, we surveyed 22 students, ages 18 to 25, divided into 3 different focus groups, to determine their level of awareness and familiarity with the term greenwashing.
General questions, concept questions, questions related to the fast fashion industry, and interactive questions formed the parts of the survey.

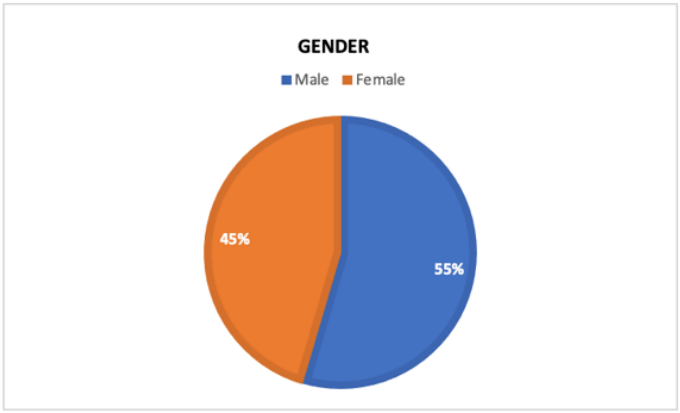
The purpose of the survey was twofold. Prior to conducting the focus group, we first sought to gauge the participants' degree of familiarity with greenwashing. Second, we were interested in determining if the focus group had any impact on the participants' degree of familiarity with the subject.

The survey's broad questions in the first section were designed to gauge the participants' general knowledge of sustainability and environmental concerns. The concept questions in the second section of the survey were designed to gauge participants' familiarity with greenwashing. The survey's interactive questions, which were its last component, asked respondents to apply what they had learned about greenwashing to actual situations.

Before the 3 focus groups started, all 22 participants completed the survey. After the focus groups were performed and over, we sent the survey again to the same set of participants. This was due to what we mentioned previously, our interest in determining if the focus group had any impact on the participants' degree of familiarity with the subject.

5.5 Sample

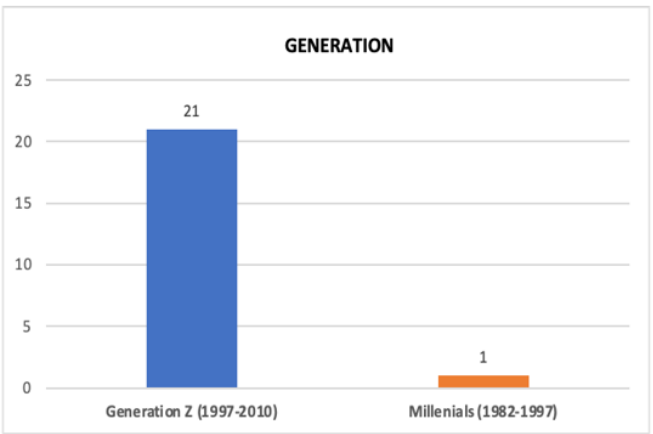
Regarding the participants' gender, the survey showed, as we can see in graph 1, that there were roughly equal numbers of males and female participants, with 10 females and 12 males.



GENDER	
Male	12
Female	10

Figure 10: Gender

On the other hand, we asked the participants' generational identity. The results of the survey indicated that 21 people were classified as millennials, taking up the majority of the participants, whereas just one person identified as a member of Generation Z. In graph 2, we can clearly see the huge difference. This can be a limitation and we need to consider this information when we will proceed to analyse the results.

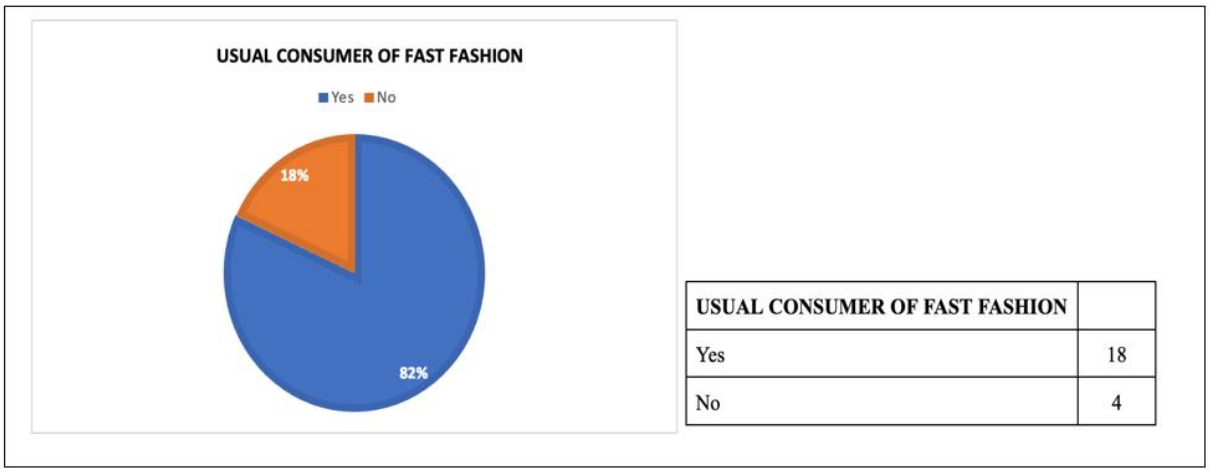


GENERATION	
Millenials (1982-1997)	1
Generation Z (1997-2010)	21

Figure 11: Generation

Finally, in order to determine how often the participants interacted with fast fashion companies, the study also probed into their consumption for fast fashion.

As we can see in the third graph, the majority of participants, 18, were frequent buyers of fast fashion companies. In contrast, only four participants stated that they are not usual consumers from fast fashion brands.



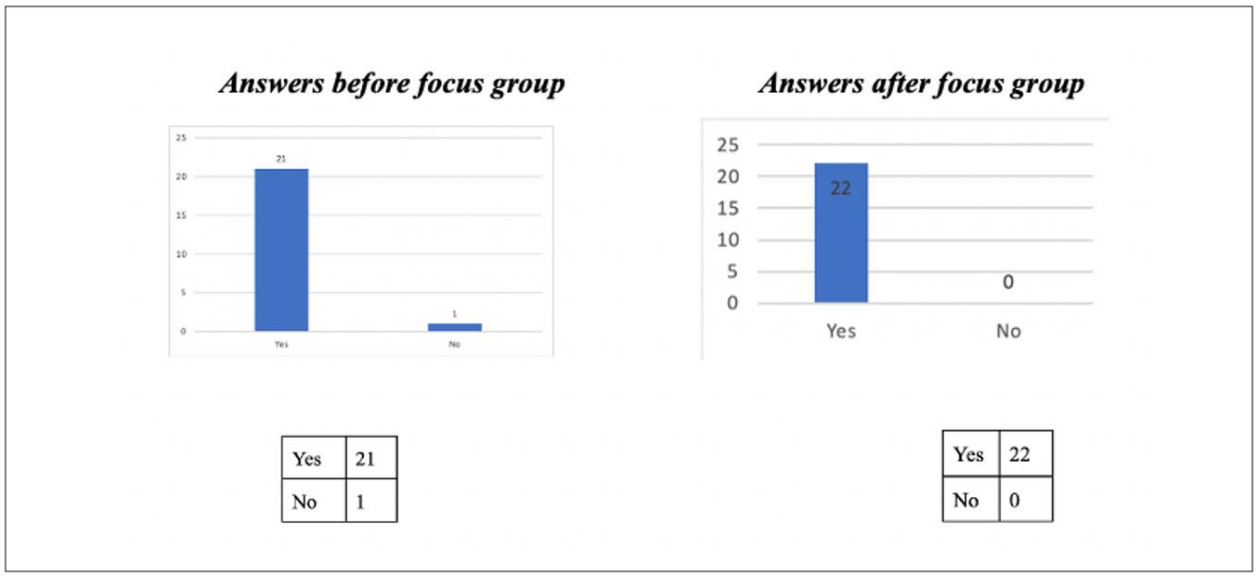
USUAL CONSUMER OF FAST FASHION	
Yes	18
No	4

Figure 12: Usual consumer of fast fashion

5.6 Analysis

5.6.1 Prior Knowledge of Greenwashing:

Almost all participants (except one) had prior knowledge of the concept of greenwashing. However, even the participant who initially had no knowledge became aware of greenwashing after participating in a focus group discussion. This suggests that the concept of greenwashing is becoming recognized among consumers.



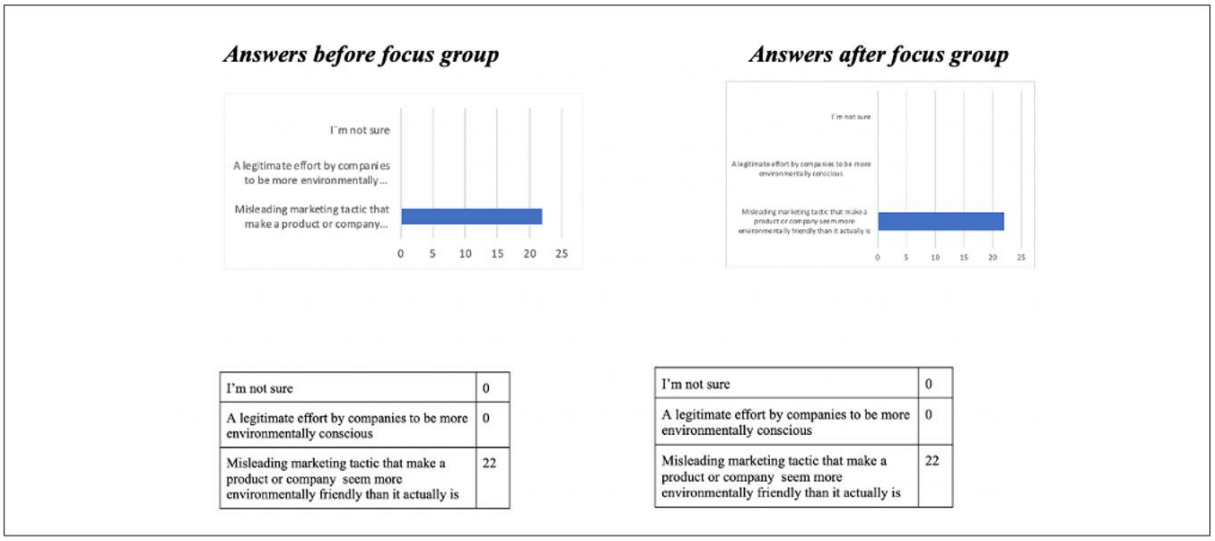
Yes	21
No	1

Yes	22
No	0

Figure 13: Prior knowledge of Greenwashing

5.6.2 Understanding the Definition of Greenwashing:

Participants demonstrated a basic understanding of greenwashing, as all of them correctly identified its definition in the survey. This indicates that consumers possess a foundational knowledge of what greenwashing entails.



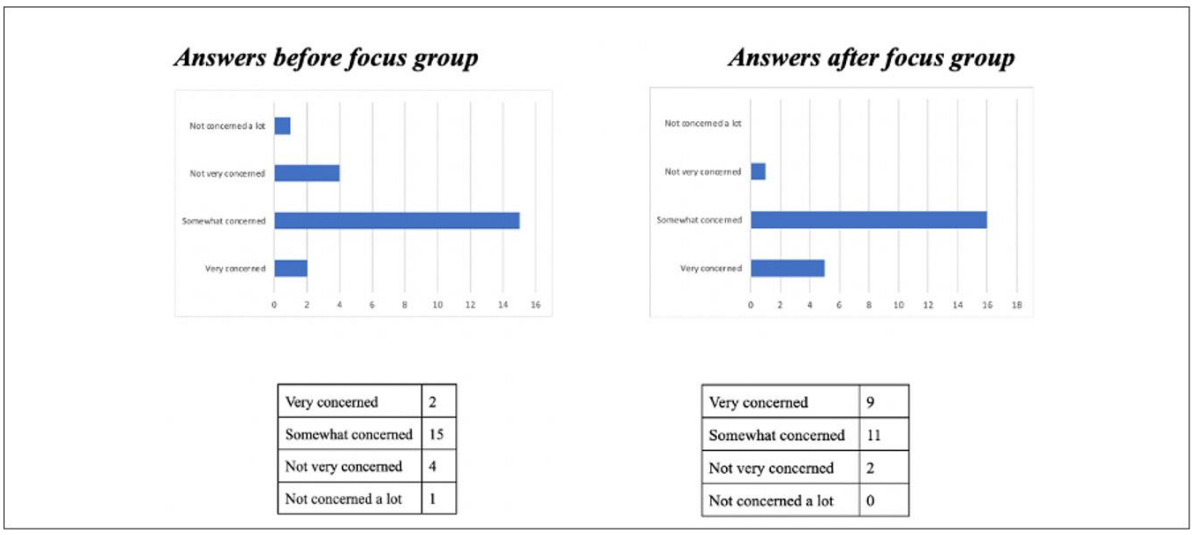
I'm not sure	0
A legitimate effort by companies to be more environmentally conscious	0
Misleading marketing tactic that make a product or company seem more environmentally friendly than it actually is	22

I'm not sure	0
A legitimate effort by companies to be more environmentally conscious	0
Misleading marketing tactic that make a product or company seem more environmentally friendly than it actually is	22

Figure 14: Understading the definition of greenwashing

5.6.3 Concern about Greenwashing in Purchase Decisions:

Initially, participants displayed varying levels of concern about greenwashing when making purchase decisions. However, after participating in the focus group, there was an overall increase in the level of concern among participants. This suggests that the focus group discussion effectively increase participants' awareness of the impact of greenwashing on their purchasing choices.



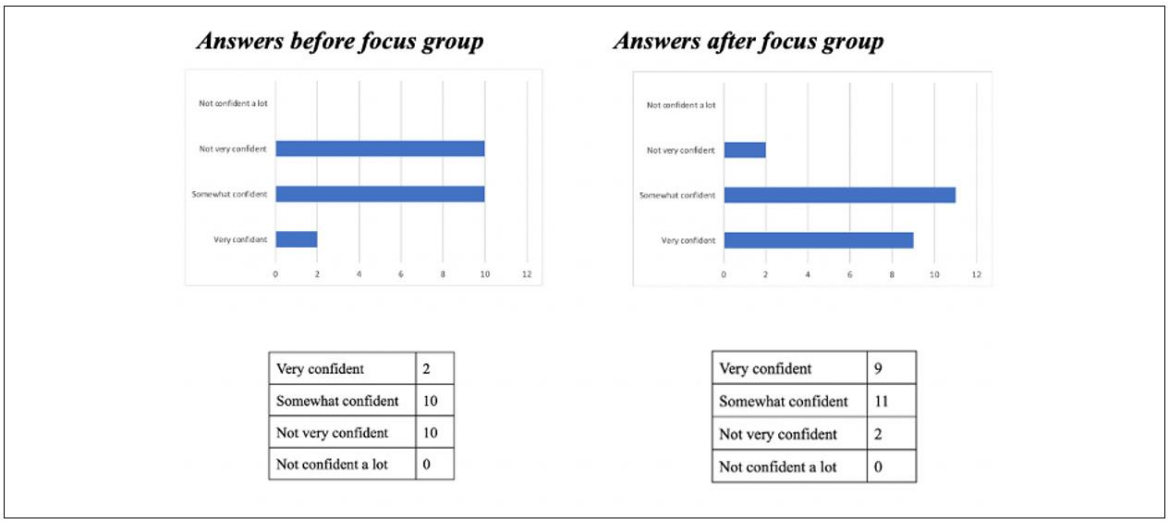
Very concerned	2
Somewhat concerned	15
Not very concerned	4
Not concerned a lot	1

Very concerned	9
Somewhat concerned	11
Not very concerned	2
Not concerned a lot	0

Figure 15: Concern about greenwashing in purchase decisions

5.6.4 Confidence in Identifying Sustainable Advertising:

Participants had different levels of confidence in their ability to identify sustainable advertising before the focus group. However, after the focus group, there was a notable increase in participants' confidence. The focus group appeared to enhance participants' ability to discern sustainable advertising practices from greenwashing.



Very confident	2
Somewhat confident	10
Not very confident	10
Not confident a lot	0

Very confident	9
Somewhat confident	11
Not very confident	2
Not confident a lot	0

Figure 16: Confidence in idenfitying sustainable advertising

5.6.5 Perception of Being Misled by Environmental Claims:

Before the focus group, a considerable number of participants agreed that they had been misled by environmental claims. However, after the focus group, the number of participants expressing uncertainty about being misled significantly decreased. This indicates that the focus group played a role in increasing participants' awareness of potential deception in environmental marketing claims.

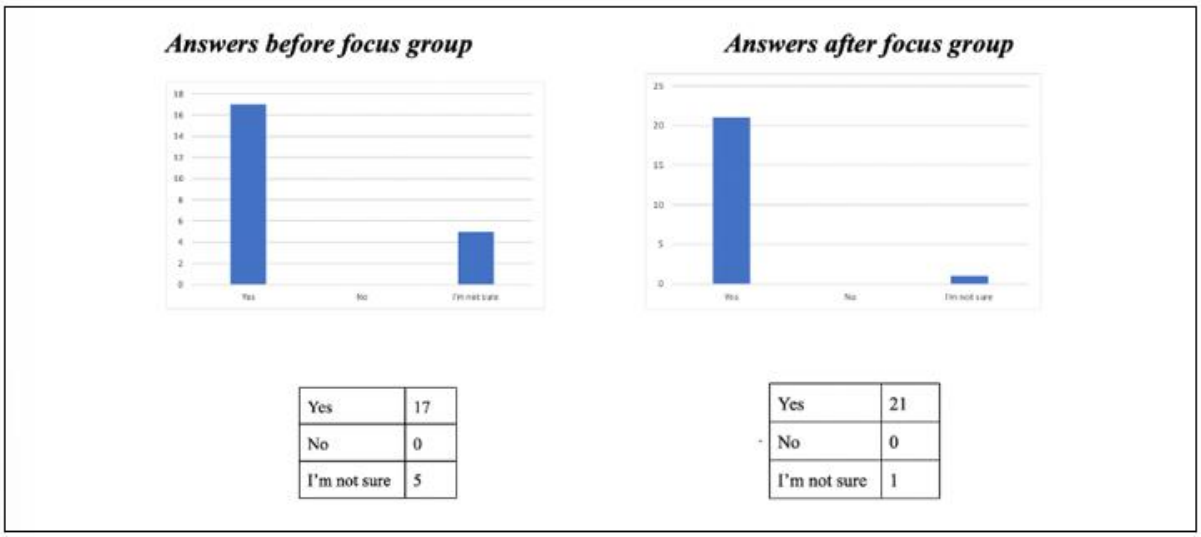
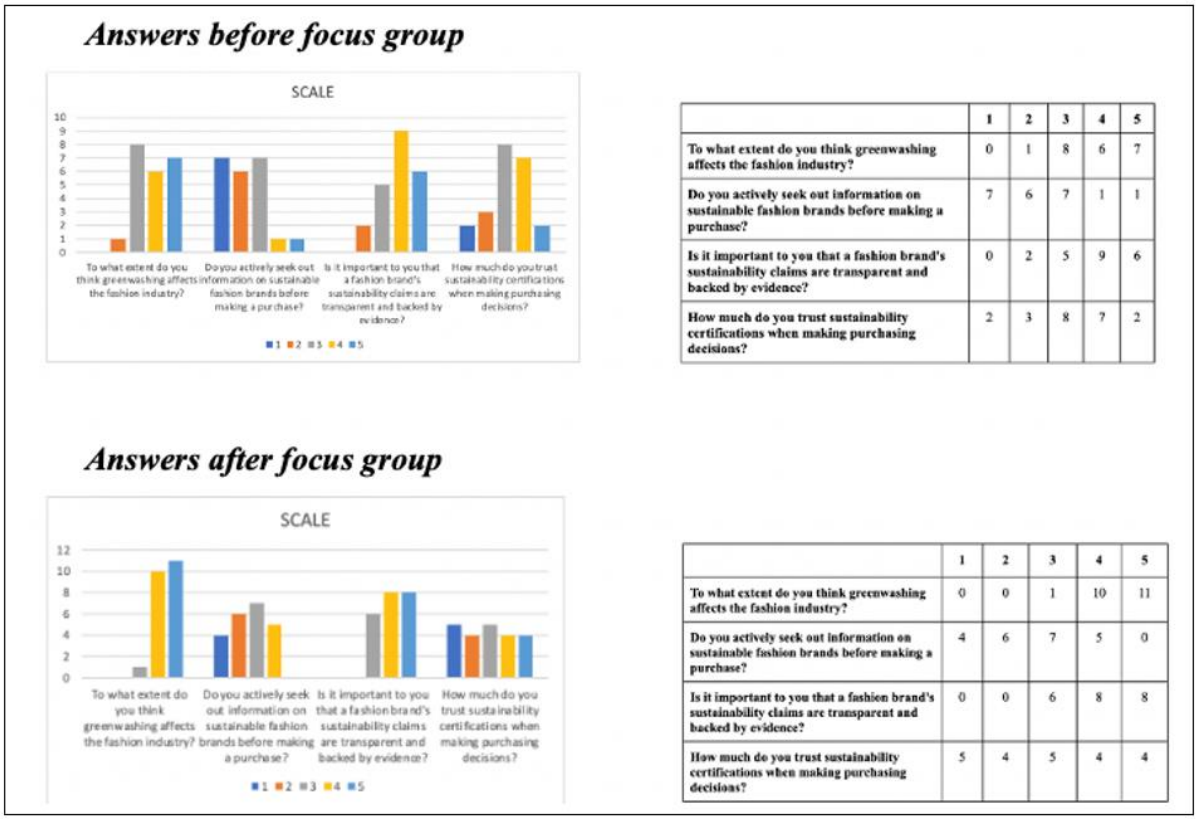


Figure 17: Perception of being misled by enviromental claims

5.6.6 Thoughts and Actions Related to Greenwashing:

Participants' responses to questions regarding the impact of greenwashing on the fast fashion industry, trust in sustainability certifications, and active information-seeking behaviour all showed positive changes after the focus group. Participants demonstrated a greater recognition of greenwashing's negative effects, a heightened scepticism towards sustainability certifications, and a stronger intention to seek information on sustainable fast fashion brands.



	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you think greenwashing affects the fashion industry?	0	1	8	6	7
Do you actively seek out information on sustainable fashion brands before making a purchase?	7	6	7	1	1
Is it important to you that a fashion brand's sustainability claims are transparent and backed by evidence?	0	2	5	9	6
How much do you trust sustainability certifications when making purchasing decisions?	2	3	8	7	2

	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you think greenwashing affects the fashion industry?	0	0	1	10	11
Do you actively seek out information on sustainable fashion brands before making a purchase?	4	6	7	5	0
Is it important to you that a fashion brand's sustainability claims are transparent and backed by evidence?	0	0	6	8	8
How much do you trust sustainability certifications when making purchasing decisions?	5	4	5	4	4

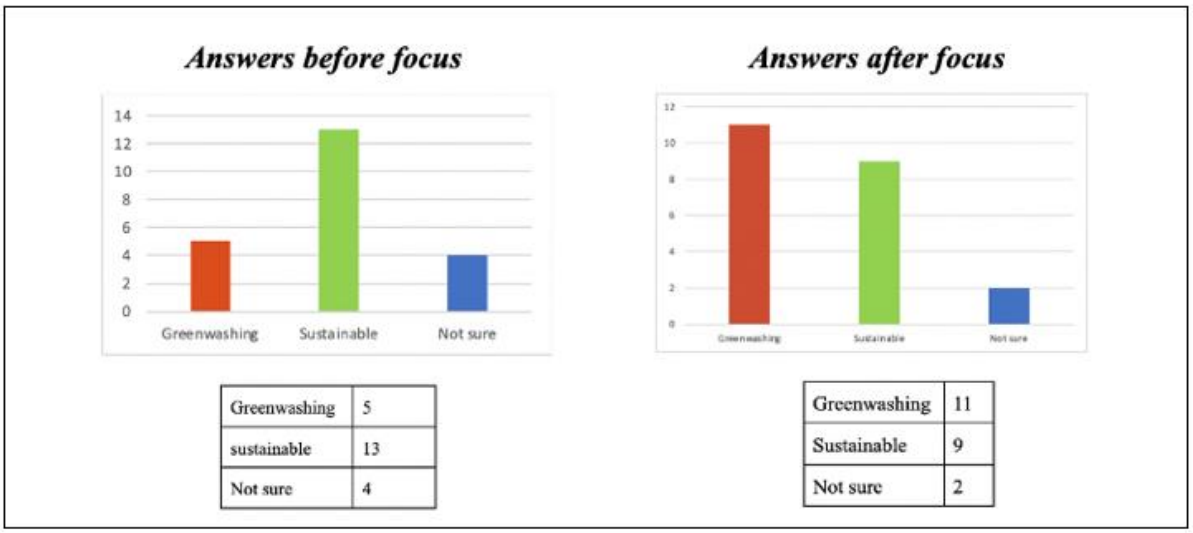
Figure 18: Thoughts and actions related to greenwashing

5.6.7 Interactive Assessment

In addition, in the survey we add an interactive segment that aimed to evaluate participants' ability to differentiate between sustainable practices and greenwashing. The results showed that participants' understanding improved after the focus group, particularly in identifying greenwashing practices associated with well-known brands. However, challenges remained, indicating the necessity of ongoing consumer education to combat misleading tactics effectively.

We can see it clearly what we mention before in the following graphs, from 16 to 19, and questions:

Question 2.3.2: ***Here we have an advertisement for the Everlane brand, specifically of jackets that the fabrics of their puffer are made from 16 plastic bottles.***

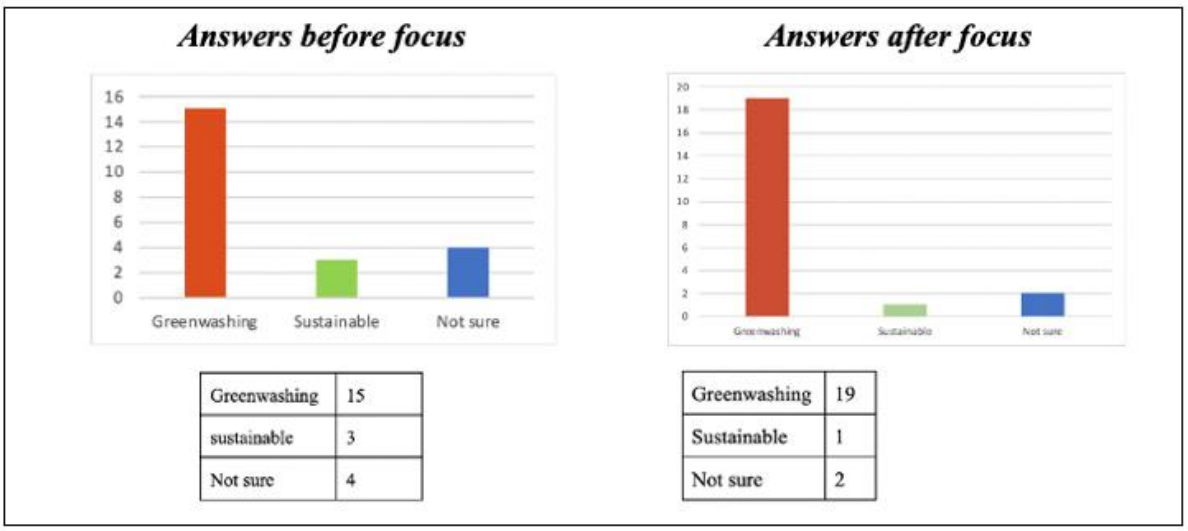


Greenwashing	5
sustainable	13
Not sure	4

Greenwashing	11
Sustainable	9
Not sure	2

Figure 19: Interactive assessment

Question 2.3.4: ***Promote their electric or hybrid cars as eco-friendly***



Greenwashing	15
sustainable	3
Not sure	4

Greenwashing	19
Sustainable	1
Not sure	2

Figure 20: Promote their electric or hybrid cars as eco-friendly

Overall, the survey results indicate a growing awareness of greenwashing among consumers and highlight the positive impact of education and discussions in increasing their understanding of the concept. We can align this with the statement that greenwashing is a pervasive issue in the fast fashion industry, and it has a significant impact on consumer behaviour. (Netto et al., 2020). Besides, this growing awareness is attributed to the positive impact of education and discussion, which supports the idea that consumer education programs could play a vital role in helping consumers make informed decisions and holding companies accountable for their green claims. (Vermeulen and Seufert, 2019).

The survey also emphasizes the need for businesses to provide transparent and verifiable information about their environmental practices to combat greenwashing. This aligns with the suggestion that Boselli & Tamberi mention. They said that to address greenwashing effectively, businesses need to provide transparent and verifiable information about their environmental practices. Third-party certification and participation in labelling programs can help build consumer trust (Boselli & Tamberi, 2021). It also reinforces the point made about H&M's sustainability claims lacking transparency and credibility, and the need for companies to be more forthcoming with information and data (Svensson & Jönsson, 2018).

To sum up, the survey highlights the importance of continued efforts to raise awareness about greenwashing, provide transparent information, and empower consumers through education and knowledge. It aligns with the need for a concerted effort to combat greenwashing and promote sustainable fast fashion practices (Mende and Scott, 2013). Additionally, as Hsee et al., mention, the role of cognition in targeting consumers based on their enjoyment and well-being is also recognized.

Lastly, by empowering consumers with knowledge and encouraging action, we can all play a part in creating a more environmentally friendly and sustainable future.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This section concludes with the findings relevant to the research question of the study. After the conclusion, the authors mention the study's theoretical contribution, limitations, practical implications, and areas for future research.

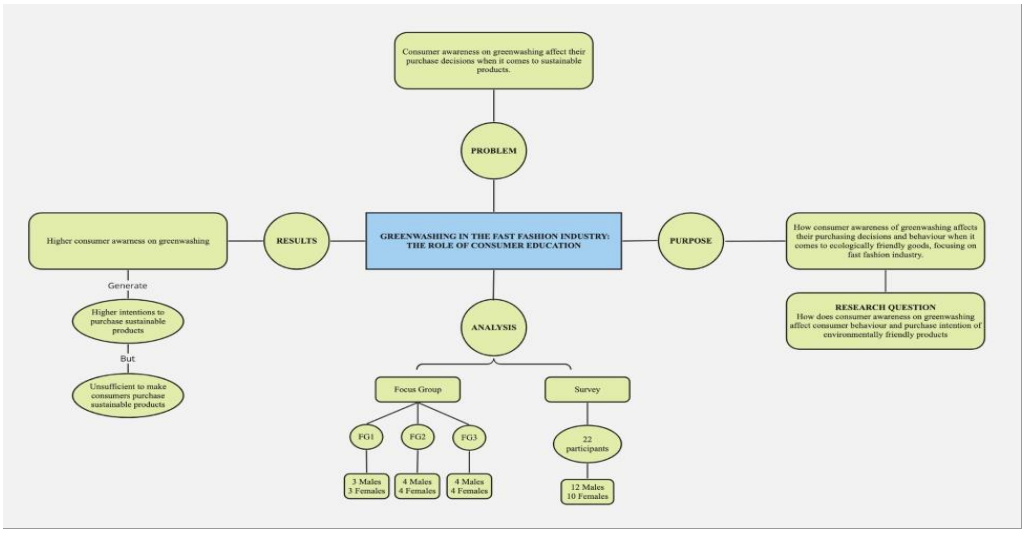


Figure 21: Mental network of the research study

6.1 Conclusions

In order to start with the conclusion, we create a figure to summarize what was about our research and what we end with. As you can see, we found a problem around the topic of consumer awareness on greenwashing and if this affects the purchase decision of the consumer when it comes to sustainable products. Regarding that, we develop a purpose of knowing how the consumer awareness of greenwashing affects their purchase decision and behaviour when it comes to sustainable goods. Our research question marks how we did our analysis, which consists of 3 mixed focus groups and 1 survey, to gauge information about consumer awareness and intentions. Finally, we conclude with some results.

The integration of the presented data and analysis permits us to provide an answer to the study's research question, which states:
RQ: *How does consumer awareness on greenwashing affect consumer behaviour and purchase intention of environmentally friendly products?*

The research found that higher consumer awareness of greenwashing generates higher intentions to purchase sustainable products, but it is insufficient to make consumer actions toward sustainable brands and products.

When we ask the participants their understanding of greenwashing, the findings of the study indicate that consumers have a vague understanding of what is really greenwashing. This lack

of accurate in the awareness of the topic has resulted in ineffective efforts to combat this issue. As Netto et al. mention, consumer intentions to make sustainable choices were hundred by their inaccurate perceptions.

In order to increase awareness, consumer education plays a major role. By implementing educational initiatives, such as integrating sustainability education into school and also, organizing masterclass, it would increase the awareness and would empower consumers to make more sustainable purchasing decisions and hold companies accountable for their green claims.

However, with more awareness comes more intentions to make the change, but it is not sufficient for consumers to end up with a sustainable purchase. Keeping in mind that, we need to work on increasing the awareness of the consumer because this would be the base of the iceberg to start the change. When we would have this base, we would need other stakeholders, such as governments and companies, to help make the change.

In general view, participants displayed intentions to support environmentally friendly products or brands both before and after the focus group. It was observed that some participants already engaged in small-scale sustainable activities prior to the study, indicating that there was already an existing inclination towards eco-conscious behaviour.

Throughout the analysis, a consistent theme emerged regarding the significance of trustworthiness in the relation between companies and consumers. The participants' intentions to purchase sustainable products were closely tied to their level of trust in a brand's environmental claims. This highlighted the importance of companies being transparent and accountable for their sustainability practices to gain consumer trust (Boselli and Tamberi, 2021).

Furthermore, it was evident that while participants expressed intentions towards environmentally responsible consumption, in most of them, it was not necessarily a top priority in their lives. In a broader perspective, greenwashing did not emerge as an immediate and pressing issue compared to other environmental concerns. It was more felt as a long-term phenomenon. Factors such as lack of financial autonomy hindered their ability to afford sustainable products, which often come with higher price tags. These external variables beyond consumers' control significantly influenced their intentions.

Overall, we can conclude that awareness on greenwashing and higher intentions to make the change are not enough. Along the focus group, there was a prevalent variable that had a heavier weight concerning and influencing these two factors: the price.

Consumers gained awareness and higher intentions on the topic, the basic base to make the change. Nonetheless, there was a general agreement towards the fact that most of them had student budgets and were not financially independent, and that was a key variable. There was no possible advancement and implementation of their desired knowledge and intentions for a change since the price and cost came as a priority for most of them.

Among the participants, there was the threat of greenwashing becoming a source of profitable revenue towards companies, and a point or reference towards upcoming new misleading advertising trends.

As we mention in the limitations, if we have had more time, we would interview another generation to see if also, this variable has that much weight as the other two generations, Gen Z and Millennials. People from these two generations are students.

Therefore, we came up with three different outcomes: Since most of the participants are still young, the environmental problems are not irreversible yet, so the younger generations have the power to make the change real. On the other hand, there is an urgent need for stakeholders such as the government, firms and companies, to make an important improvement and adjustments to the current environmental state and to the upcoming one. Implementing taxes on un-sustainable products, investing in consumer education, spreading social awareness about the conceptual ideas related to environmental and sustainable behaviours, changing regulations and easing processes for companies or entrepreneurs to change their strategy towards sustainability, and more.

Finally, creating the figure 10, we wanted to show that awareness on the topic is not sufficient to make the change, but it is the base to start that change. Without awareness it would be impossible to change consumer behaviour and their purchased intentions toward sustainable products. Thanks to that base, consumers would have higher intentions toward the change, and finally, we would need the effort of the government and companies to change aspects around the variable of price.

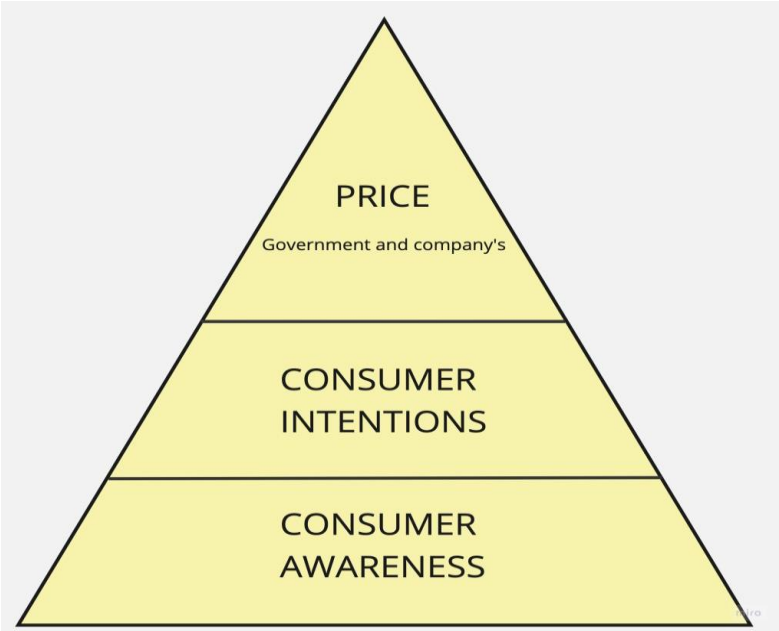


Figure 22: Iceberg theory applied to the final insights

6.2 Theoretical contributions

The study makes few major contributions to literature on combating greenwashing in the fast fashion industry: The role of consumer education.

Firstly, the thesis emphasizes the importance of transparency and third-party certification in addressing greenwashing. It suggests that businesses should provide transparent and verifiable information about their environmental practices to create and build trust with consumers. As we previously see in the literature review, some studies such as the one from Boselli and Tameberi, 2021, Bailey et al., 2017, or the analysed case study of H&M from Svensson & Jönsson, found that consumers are more likely to perceive sustainability claims as credible if they are backed up by third party certifications or endorsements. However, the thesis complies with this information with the results of the focus group, where we can see clearly how what this theory states is true.

Furthermore, we can see in the studies written by (Sabine Kuester, 2012) (David J. Stillwell, Michal Kosinski, & Youyou Wu, 2013) it has found that consumer attitudes toward green products are influenced by their values and beliefs about the environment. The thesis adds more information on the second topic of the literature review of the research "*awareness theories in*

consumer behaviour" That the understanding of these factors can guide efforts to promote sustainable consumption and moreover, develop effective consumer strategies.

Lastly, one of the focuses of this thesis was to examine the role of consumer awareness in relation to greenwashing. In these cited studies: Bailey et al., 2017 and Vermeulen and Seufert 2019, we have found that consumer education programs could help consumers make more informed purchasing decisions and hold companies accountable for their claims. However, thanks to the analysis and result of the thesis research, we can say that if we increase the consumer awareness about greenwashing, it will have a significant impact on consumer behaviour and due to that, it will directly help to counteract misleading marketing techniques.

Other than contributions to literature, this study also adds to future research design. These theoretical contributions lay the foundation for future research in the field of green marketing, sustainability, and consumer behaviour. They pave the way for deeper explorations of the complexities surrounding greenwashing, consumer education, regulatory frameworks and lastly, cross-cultural perspectives.

6.3 Limitations

Our study faced limitations during all the research:

Firstly, we faced limitations in terms of sample size and representativeness. The sample size was small, with only 22 participants which could impact the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, we encountered a challenge in obtaining information from millennials, resulting in a focus primarily on Generation Z. This was due to a lack of contacts from us, the researchers, and this had limited the ability to gather insights from the desired target populations, millennials.

Secondly, in terms of generalization, the study was constrained by its focus on only two generations, specifically generation Z and Millennials. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population as other generations' perspectives and behaviour may differ.

Lastly, time constraints were another challenge encountered during the data collection process. It is noticeable that we had limited time available. We were unable to interact with a larger

number of people or gather more comprehensive knowledge. Expanding the survey's distribution and conducting additional interviews could have provided a more extensive understanding of the awareness of greenwashing. If we include that, we would have allowed for a more well-rounded and informed analysis.

6.4 Practical implications

The study results have found several practical implications for various stakeholders involved in the fast fashion industry and consumer awareness.

Firstly, consumer education initiatives. After conducting the research, we found how important consumer education is in the topic of greenwashing. Consumer education programs should focus on raising awareness about practices in greenwashing providing consumers with tools to identify deceptive claims and promoting critical thinking skills. Policy makers and fast fashion brands can use the research findings to develop and implement those techniques.

Secondly, fast fashion brands can use the findings to guide their marketing strategies and build trust with environmentally conscious consumers. As we can see in the findings of the research, it is very important to provide transparent and substantiated environmental claims. Due to that, brands should invest in credible certifications and labels, clearly communicate their sustainability initiatives and the most important: back to their claims with verifiable evidence.

Thirdly, due to findings of the research we found that industry has to collaborate. In other words, fast fashion brands can collaborate with consumers and certification bodies to develop industry-wide standards and practices to promote transparency and credibility. Stakeholders can establish a unified front against greenwashing and drive into a positive change in the fast fashion industry.

Lastly, Consumers can use the knowledge gained from the study to be more critical and discerning when evaluating environmental claims by fast fashion brands. Additionally, they can engage in information sharing and advocacy to raise awareness among their peers and a promotion of responsible consumption.

6.5 Areas for future research

There are few significant options for areas of future research:

To start with, a significant area for future research could be to extend the investigation of consumer awareness and behaviour beyond millennials and Gen Z. In this study they can compare the attitudes and responses of older generations, for example Gen X and baby boomers, toward greenwashing in the fast fashion industry. Moreover, analysing the impact of different socio-cultural factors on consumer decision making and the effectiveness of education initiatives across generational groups can lead to more targeted and inclusive strategies to address the issue of greenwashing.

Another possible area of future research could be the role of social media and influencers on consumer perceptions of sustainable fashion and greenwashing. Due to the high impact that this new way of communicating has in our daily lives, this future research could examine how consumers engage with sustainability-related content, the extent to which they trust influencer's claims, and the potential for social media to both perpetuate and combat greenwashing practices. In other words, they can research how understanding the dynamics of social media and its impact on consumer behaviour can help develop strategies to promote genuine sustainability and counteract greenwashing.

Lastly, due to the results of our analysis we found that it would be interesting to investigate the area of the regulations and laws and how their impact is. It is crucial to prevent greenwashing practices in the fast fashion industry, and the area who has more power on that topic is the existing regulation and the industry standards. Regarding that, future research could focus on investigating the role of governmental policies, legal requirements, and voluntary initiatives in promoting transparency and accountability. As a society we need a more robust regulation framework.

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179-211.

Akhtar, A., & Ahmad, N. (2019). The new era of consumer environmental responsibility: An exploration of millennial consumers' behaviour towards green products. Journal of Cleaner Production, 235, 1182-1191.

Alevizou, P. J., & Economou, L. (2016). "Green is the new black": An exploration of the green fashion market. Journal of Fast Fashion Marketing and Management, 20(3), 291-313.

American Marketing Association. (2018). Code of Ethics.

Bailey, R. B., Rittenburg, T. L., & Bergkvist, L. (2017). Greenwashing and the Apparel Industry: Consumer Reactions to Pro-Environmental Claims. Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 35(2), 87–103.

Bhatnagar, G., & Jain, R. (2013). Consumer awareness and market competitiveness: A study of packaged goods in India. Journal of Indian Business Research, 5(4), 205-223.

Boselli, R., & Tamberi, M. (2021). Greenwashing and Third-Party Certification: Effects on Consumer Behavior. Journal of Business Ethics, 170(1), 111–126.

Bower, J. L., & Landreth, S. (2001). Consumer understanding and advertising strategy in the extension of brand names. Journal of Consumer Research, 28(1), 47-57.

Consumer. (n.d.). In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/consumer

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, Sage.

Dholakia, U. M., Bagozzi, R. P., & Pearo, L. K. (2004). A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities. International Journal of Research in Marketing, 21(3), 241-263.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method. John Wiley & Sons.

Fletcher, K. (2014). Sustainable fashion and textiles: Design journeys. Routledge.

Fournier, S., & Alvarez, C. (2012). Brands as relationship partners: warmth, competence, and in-between. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22(2), 177-185.

Furlow, N. E. (2010). A Synthesis of Greenwashing Research: Finding Truth in Claims. Journal of Business Ethics, 97(2), 291–311.

Garcia-Santos, G., De-Miguel-Molina, B., & Rodriguez-Molina, M. A. (2020). Greenwashing and its effect on consumer skepticism, cynicism, and purchase intention. Sustainability, 12(22), 9547.

Gentile, M. C., McLaughlin, C. M., & Ryan, C. M. (2019). Sustainability and the Millennial Generation: A Cross-Cultural Study. Journal of Business Research, 99, 365-373.

Gupta, S. & Mishra, P. (2018). Greenwashing in Fashion: A Threat to Environmental Sustainability. Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management, 19(3), 261-272. doi: 10.1007/s40171-018-0191-2

Hojnik, J., & Ruzzier, M. (2016). The role of consumers' perceptions of sustainability in shaping eco-friendly purchase intentions. Journal of Cleaner Production, 134, 342-356.

Hsee, C. K., Yang, Y., Li, F., & Shen, L. (2009). Wealth, warmth, and well-being: Whether happiness is relative or absolute depends on whether it is about money, acquisition, or consumption. Journal of Marketing Research, 46(3), 396-409.

Jindrichovska, I., & Rypakova, M. (2020). The Effects of Greenwashing on Consumer Trust, Skepticism and Behavioral Intentions: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. Journal of Business Ethics, 166(4), 635–652.

Kim, S. Y., Kim, M. S., & Kang, J. H. (2019). Green advertising skepticism and purchase intention: The moderating roles of green advertising value and environmental concern. Sustainability, 11(12), 3434.

Kim, H., & Damhorst, M. L. (2018). Fast fashion: Sustainability, and the ethical appeal of luxury brands. Fashion and Textiles, 5(1), 1-18.

Kokko, K., Similä, J., & Jaakkola, M. (2020). Greenwashing in environmental, social, and governance investing. Environmental Sciences Europe, 32(1), 1-12. https://enveurope.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3

Kozlowski, D. (2019). How sustainable is sustainable fashion? Forbes. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahweinswig/2019/06/11/how-sustainable-is-sustainable-fashion/

Kuester, S. (2012). Consumer attitudes and behaviour: A review of the literature and research agenda. Journal of Customer Behaviour, 11(3), 193-218.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. Sage Publications.

Lee, Y. J., & Kim, M. (2021). Generation Z's willingness to pay for green products: A study of Korean young consumers. Sustainability, 13(2), 690.

Magnusson, M. K., Haden, P., & Holmberg, J. (2018). Green consumers in the Nordic countries: Values, attitudes, and purchasing behavior. Journal of Cleaner Production, 171, 1407-1416.

Mark Sauders, Philip Lewis & Adrian Thornhill (2016). Research methods for business students.

Mark Saunders & Philip Lewis (2014) Doing research in business and management.

Mende, M., & Scott, M. L. (2013). Status consumption in emerging markets: The role of emotions in shaping consumer behavior. Journal of International Marketing, 21(3), 1-21.

Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a Paradigm for Social.

Netto, F. M., de Brito, M. P., & Lima, E. P. (2020). Greenwashing: An Analysis of the Evolution and Growth of the Market and of Consumer Trust in Sustainable Products. Business Strategy and the Environment, 29(2), 516–531.

Nigbur, D., Lyons, E., & Uzzell, D. (2010). Attitudes, norms, identity, and environmental behavior: Using an expanded theory of planned behavior to predict participation in a kerbside recycling program. Environment and Behavior, 42(6), 776-797.

Paul D. Leedy & Jeanne Ellis Ormrod (2019). Practical research planning and design.

Peattie, S., & Peattie, S. (2003). Ready to Fly Solo? Reducing social and environmental risk in small business. Journal of Business Venturing, 18(3), 343-358.

Shen, B. (2020). Greenwashing in the fashion industry: A systematic review of literature. Journal of Cleaner Production, 257, 120517.

Smith, M. W. (1995). Ethics in Focus Groups: A Few Concerns.

Stillwell, D. J., Kosinski, M., & Wu, Y. (2013). Consumer emotional intelligence: Conceptualization, measurement, and the prediction of consumer decision making. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 23(2), 159-178.

Svensson, G., & Jönsson, A. M. (2018). Greenwashing and the Fast Fashion Industry: A Case Study of H&M. Sustainability, 10(8), 1–14.

Tang, Y., Shen, W., & Khachatryan, H. (2018). The impact of perceived greenwashing on consumers' willingness to pay for environmentally certified wood. Journal of Cleaner Production, 177, 891-902.

Verfuerth, C., & Gregoire, Y. (2014). Green consumers' skepticism: A segmentation approach. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 31(4), 295-303.

Vermeulen, I. E., & Seufert, S. (2019). The Role of Consumer Education in Increasing the Effectiveness of Greenwashing Mitigation Strategies. Journal of Business Ethics, 158(3), 669–684.

Vlahos, K. (2019). The truth about greenwashing in fashion. Vogue Business. Retrieved from https://www.voguebusiness.com/sustainability/the-truth-about-greenwashing-in-fashion

World commission on environment and development (1987). Our common future. Oxford University Press.

Wolff, B., Knodel, J., & Sittitrai, W. (1993). Focus groups and surveys as complementary research methods. Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art, 156, 118-36.

7. Annex

7.1 Survey questions

General questions:

- **What gender are you?**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Preferably nit to say
- **What generation are you?**
  - Millennials **(1982-1997)**
  - Generation Z **(1998-2010)**
- **Are you a usual consumer of fast fashion brands (Inditex, H&M, Primark…)?**
  - Yes
  - No

Concept questions:

- **Have you heard about the concept of greenwashing?**
  - Yes
  - No
- **How would you define greenwashing?**
  - Misleading marketing tactic that makes a product or friendly than it actually is
  - A legitimate effort by companies to be more environmentally conscious
  - I'm not sure
- **How concerned are you about greenwashing when making purchase decisions?**
  1. Very concerned
  2. Somewhat concerned
  3. Not very concerned
  4. Not concerned a lot
- **How confident are you in your ability to identify sustainable advertising?**
  1. Very confident
  2. Somewhat confident

3. Not very confident

4. Not confident a lot

- **Do you think that you have been misled by environmental marketing claims?**

1. Yes

2. No

Scale questions related to fast fashion:

- **To what extent do you think greenwashing affects the fashion industry?** (1 not a lot - 5 a lot)

- **Do you actively seek out information on sustainable fashion brands before making a purchase?** (1 not a lot - 5 a lot)

- **Is it important to you that a fashion brand's sustainability claims are transparent and backed by evidence?** (1 not a lot - 5 a lot)

- **Would you buy from a brand that has been accused of greenwashing in the past?** (Yes, or not)

- **How much do you trust sustainability certifications when making purchasing decisions?** (1 not a lot - 5 a lot)

True or false:

Identify if the following examples are greenwashing or sustainable:

Here we have an H&M label for one of their products where we can see that they use things like the color green, words like in this case "conscious," and information related to the sustainable origin or practices used to produce this product in an unclear and ambiguous way. Furthermore, they do not provide any facts to back up these sustainable claims and messages.

1. Greenwashing
2. sustainable
3. Not sure

Here we have an advertisement for the Everlane brand, specifically of jackets that the fabrics are made from 16 plastic bottles.

1. Greenwashing
2. Sustainable
3. Not sure

Using green-colored packaging or a leafy logo to suggest that the product is environmentally friendly, without actually providing any evidence to support this claim.

1. Greenwashing
2. Sustainable
3. Not sure

Promote their electric or hybrid cars as eco-friendly, taking into account that these cars rely on batteries that need the mining and processing of elements like nickel, cobalt, and

lithium. These materials' manufacture can result in considerable pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

1. Greenwashing
2. Sustainable
3. Not sure

Zero-waste and circular economy is a method of managing waste and resources that seeks to reduce waste and increase resource efficiency.

1. Greenwashing
2. Sustainable
3. Not sure

- Adjunt focus group (explain the procedure of focus group)

7.2 Focus group questions

<u>Introductive questions to the concept of greenwashing</u>

- When you see the word "greenwashing" what comes to mind?
- Do you feel familiar with the concept of greenwashing? If you said yes, could you provide an example?

Explain to them what is greenwashing (for the ones who don't know) – show them examples of greenwashing images (not related to the focus of our subject)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYlGxaQrqCM

- Now that you know a little bit more about the concept and have seen some examples… Do you feel like you have been under the greenwashing effect in any purchase you've done? On what? What do you feel are some common tactics that companies use to engage in greenwashing?
- Do you think this concept is having an impact on consumers and the environment? Which one would you say?

- How much do you trust companies that claim to be environmentally friendly or sustainable? Do you think greenwashing can be considered as a form of false or misleading advertising?

Specific questions about concept of greenwashing and our focus study

- Have you ever been misled by greenwashing in the fashion industry? Can you give an example?
- How can consumers be better educated about greenwashing in the fashion industry?
- Do you educate yourself about a brand's environmental practices and avoid being misled by greenwashing claims?
- What does sustainability mean to you in the context of fashion?
- What inspired you to attend this focus group today?"
- "How familiar are you with the concept of greenwashing?"
- What steps do you think brands should take to be more transparent about their environmental practices?
- How do you think the fashion industry balances the need to be profitable with the need to be sustainable? Or does it give more importance to one of the aspects?
- Have you ever switched to a more sustainable fashion brand after discovering greenwashing by your previous brand? Why or why not?
- How important is it to you that the fashion brands you buy from are environmentally friendly?
- How much more would you be willing to pay for sustainable fashion that is certified and proven not
- Do you think that certifications and labels for sustainable fashion are helpful? Why or why not?
- How helpful do you think specific consumer education strategies can be in identifying "greenwashing" and making informed purchasing decisions?
- What role do you think consumers play in encouraging fashion brands to be more transparent about their sustainability practices?
- What would you like to see companies do to prevent greenwashing and demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability?
- How do you think the fashion industry balances the need to be profitable with the need to be sustainable? Or does it give more importance to one of the aspects?

Interactive activities about greenwashing:

- Images/Videos comparison
- How can consumers be better educated about greenwashing in the fashion industry?
- Possibilities education strategies

Final question - (get consumers perspective)

- Do you think that consumers have a responsibility to educate themselves about greenwashing and make informed purchasing decisions?
- How can consumer education and awareness play a role in preventing greenwashing?
- How can consumers encourage fashion companies to prioritize sustainability and reduce greenwashing?
- Did the discussion change your opinions or attitudes on greenwashing? If so, how?
- How do you think the topic we discussed today compares to other issues that you are concerned about?

7.3 Consent form

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

Consent form – Focus group discussion

"Combating greenwashing in the fast fashion industry: The role of consumer education"

Thank you for participating in this focus group, which follows the workshop on the role of consumer education in greenwashing related to the fast fashion industry. The discussion will be conducted by Mar Bosch, Elisa Obeso, and Alba Palao.

The discussion will be about your experience in the workshop, what you could practice, and the changes that may or may not have occurred in your life as a result. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. Please share your experience openly.

The audio recording and transcriptions will be kept anonymous; you can leave the focus group anytime. Should you choose to withdraw, it will not be possible to identify and remove any comments you may have made prior to withdrawing. If you choose to participate in the research, you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer.

Your identity will be known to other focus group participants and the researcher cannot guarantee that others in this group will respect the confidentiality of the group. I will ask you to sign below to indicate that you will keep all comments made during the focus group confidential and not discuss what happened during the focus group outside the meeting.

By signing below, I agree:

- I have reviewed the information sheet and have had any questions about the study answered to my satisfaction.
- I am agreeing to have the focus group audio-recorded.
- I agree to maintain the confidentiality of information shared in this focus group.
- I have agreed to participate in the research study.

Name of participant (please print)	Date	Signature