

An investigation into how fast fashion brands
construct their sustainability communication from the
critical perspective of generation Z in Vietnam

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Abstract

For many years, the fast fashion industry has received an abundance criticism for their negative climate impact. In relation to the Vietnamese fast fashion context, this study purpose is to compare the two Vietnamese fast fashion companies and their sustainability communication, and get the answer on the research question of how Vietnamese consumers in generation Z perceive the two chosen companies' communication and whether Gen Z's consumers can have impact on the industry to become more sustainable with participatory culture in social media.

Theories applied to the study's literature framework are critical discourse theory, convergence- and participatory culture, sustainability communication and greenwashing in fast fashion. In order to answer the question of how Vietnamese generation Z experiences the Vietnamese fashion companies' communication, focus group was conducted with eight participants aged 18–26. The research also uses material from the companies' websites via the use of a multimodal critical discourse analysis.

Throughout MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication, there are various symbols, images and colours that can be associated with the environmental movement, and are supported to varying degrees by statements and calls related to sustainability, but also greenwashing. For companies such as MARC and Gumac, both of which operate in the fast fashion industry, which has been debated for its negative environmental impact, it may be that symbols, images and colours linked to the environmental movement are not enough. As the interviewees also questioned the fact that many messages on MARC's side did not go hand in hand when sustainability communication was interspersed with purchase calls.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
List of Figures.....	6
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. Rationale.....	7
1.1.1. Ecological sustainability communication.....	7
1.1.2. Fast fashion.....	7
1.2. The Vietnamese fast fashion context.....	8
1.3. Questions.....	9
1.4. Purpose and Objectives.....	9
2. Literature Review.....	11
2.1. The environmental impact of the fast fashion industry.....	11
2.2. Marketing on sustainability.....	12
2.3. Consumers' perceptions of sustainability communication.....	13
2.4. Sustainability communication in social media.....	13
2.5. Greenwashing.....	14
2.6. Case companies - MARC and GUMAC.....	16
2.6.1. MARC.....	16
2.6.2. GUMAC.....	17
2.6.3. Justification on case selection.....	18
2.7. Research Gap.....	18
3. Methodology.....	20
3.1. Online data.....	20
3.1.1. Comparative case studies.....	20
3.1.2. Theory on Critical discourse.....	20

3.1.3. Selection.....	21
3.1.4. Multimodal critical discourse analysis.....	22
3.2. Focus group.....	24
3.2.1. Theory on Convergence and participant culture.....	24
3.2.2. Focus group interviews.....	25
3.2.3. Selection.....	26
3.2.4. Interview guide.....	27
3.2.5. Implementation.....	28
3.2.6. Data analysis - Transcription and Thematic analysis.....	29
3.3. Method justification.....	30
4. Findings & Analysis.....	31
4.1. The sustainability communication via the companies' websites - an encouragement to consumption.....	31
4.2. The sustainability communication via the companies' social media - The durability sides for a lasting impression.....	34
4.3. Focus group interview: generation Z.....	42
4.3.1. Fast fashion's sustainability communication - an exaggeration?.....	42
4.3.2. How are MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication perceived?.....	44
4.3.3. Participation in social media - who can influence?.....	48
5. Discussion and Conclusion.....	51
6. Recommendations.....	56
Reference.....	57
Appendices.....	65
Appendix 1 Interview guide.....	65
Appendix 2 Transcription template.....	67

List of Figures

Figure 1 MARC’s website statement, sourced from Marc (2022).....	32
Figure 2 Marc's sustainability communication, , sourced from Marc (2022).....	32
Figure 3 Marc’s sustainability web-banner, sourced from Marc (2022)	36
Figure 4 Gumac’s sustainability page-1, sourced from Gumac (2022).....	37
Figure 5 Gumac’s sustainability page-2, sourced from Gumac (2022).....	37
Figure 6 Gumac’s sustainability page-3, sourced from Gumac (2022).....	37
Figure 7 Gumac’s sustainability page-4, sourced from Gumac (2022).....	37
Figure 8 MARC's sustainability goal, sourced from Marc (2022)	39
Figure 9 MARC's sustainability page, sourced from Marc (2022).....	41

1.Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Below is presented a rationale to what fast fashion and organic sustainability communication is.

1.1.1. Ecological sustainability communication

Sustainable marketing and its communication usually refers to three different parts, economic, ecological and social sustainability. Marketing that includes ecological sustainability communication has emerged as the approach to consumption has changed in society and contributed to more consumers today being willing to change their consumption patterns (Kotler, Armstrong and Parment,2017). This study is only intended to study organic marketing and its sustainability communication. According to Kotler et al. (2017), marketing with an ecological focus can include communication that aims to change behaviours regarding lifestyle and buying behaviour, but also communication that aims to inform and contribute to long-term development.

1.1.2. Fast fashion

The concept of fast fashion means that companies quickly manufacture clothes, in the latest trends, at a low price (Lexico et al., 2019). Niinimäki et al. (2020) describe that the clothes that the fast fashion companies manufacture have a cheap manufacturing process and a short lifespan, which means that the companies rely on consumers to shop often. Furthermore, the researchers present that an average Vietnamese consumes between 13 and 15 kilos of home textiles every year, and that the fashion industry as a whole consumes 92 million tonnes of waste and 79 billion tonnes of water per year.

1.2. The Vietnamese fast fashion context

Many have noticed that the commitment to the environment and sustainability issues is great within Generation Z. These are people born between 1995 and 2012 (cf. Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021) who in recent years have been called the Greta generation and participated in protests such as *Fridays For Future*, and may have contributed to an increased awareness of the climate change (Törner, 2022). The generation gets involved not only in the streets and squares but also on the internet, which means that the commitment spreads quickly. With this, the generation has also been called the digital generation (Törner, 2022). It is a generation that places demands on industries that have a negative climate impact, and may be a contributing factor to companies today having to communicate about their sustainability work.

The fact that sustainability work has become more visible also applies in industries that have received attention for their negative climate impact, such as fast fashion. Fast fashion means that companies quickly manufacture trendy clothes at a low price (cf. Lexico et al., 2019). Two companies that exemplify this in Vietnamese fashion context are the Vietnamese e-commerce company MARC and the store giant and e-commerce GUMAC. In some cases, fast fashion companies' sustainability communication concerns such as climate-compensated deliveries and clothing produced from more sustainable materials. Communication can also touch on aspects such as changing consumption patterns and making smarter choices.

According to Christina Grandien (2020), the increased media attention and higher demands on companies have contributed to the fact that today it can be seen as a must to communicate about sustainability. In social media, it has become increasingly common for consumers themselves to draw attention to the problems of fast fashion by publishing and sharing information. Influencers have also drawn attention to the problems. During the course of this study, Giang oi, one of Vietnam's most powerful Youtuber and influencer on Vietnamese Instagram, stated that she will stop marketing fast fashion due to its environmental impact (Anh, 2022).

An interesting and current research problem from a media and communication science perspective is thus to examine the sustainability communication of permanent fashion companies, as well as female consumers in generation Z's perceptions of this. This is because generation Z is environmentally conscious and in 2019 became the world's largest consumer group (cf. Globalwebindex, 2019). Furthermore, it is also interesting to examine generation Z's

perceptions of participation in social media's significance for the fast fashion industry's change, as the debate may be increasingly present on these platforms.

1.3. Questions

Based on the above mentioned on the existing problem, the following questions are urged to answer:

1. Do MARC and GUMAC have sustainability communication on their digital channels? If yes, what kind of discourses are prominent in MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication?
2. Do these companies do greenwashing via their communication channels?
3. How do Generation Z's female consumers perceive these companies' sustainability communication?
4. How do Generation Z's female consumers perceive the impact of social media on the change of the Vietnamese fast fashion industry?

1.4. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to comparatively study the fast fashion companies MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication, as well as female consumers in generation Z's perceptions of this. To answer the research questions and purpose, the following objectives are:

- to gain understanding on the current condition of Vietnamese fast fashion industry
- to examine the work on sustainability communication of the two case companies MARC and GUMAC via their digital channels.
- to examine the prominent discourses that may exist in MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication
- to examine the possibility of greenwashing in MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication via their digital channels.

- to explore Generation Z's female consumers' perception on these companies' sustainability communication
- to study Generation Z's female consumers' perceptions on the importance and impact of social media for the change in the Vietnamese fast fashion industry.

2. Literature Review

The following section presents previous research that concerns the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry, which motivates both how and why companies in the industry should take measures for a change. Previous research on marketing on sustainability is also relevant, for a greater understanding of the area. Finally, research is presented on consumers' views on both sustainability communication and social media.

2.1. The environmental impact of the fast fashion industry

Niinimäki et al. (2020) have researched the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry and the global value chain for clothing, which is about how clothes in different stages, at different companies are transported all over the world. In order for a garment to be created, it goes through the following value chain: cotton cultivation/synthetic manufacturing, yarn manufacturing, textile manufacturing, clothing manufacturing, distributors, retailers and finally consumers (Niinimäki et al., 2020). In addition, Wang et al. (2017) also present proposals for how the industry can become more sustainable. They describe e-commerce as a new player, which offers new products more frequently than traditional fashion houses. In the early 2000s, fast fashion became a phenomenon, which has contributed to brands producing almost twice as many collections today compared to before (Sandin & Peters, 2018).

Bocken et al. (2018) explain that it takes about 200 tons of water to produce a ton of textile. This indicates that the clothing industry is resource-intensive and has affected both groundwater levels and drinking water in many regions. The clothing industry is not only resource-intensive in terms of the amount of water required, the industry also accounts for about eight percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). Why the industry emits so much carbon dioxide is largely due to the fact that a lot of energy is required to produce textiles (Iran & Schrader, 2017). Furthermore, it also depends on which country or region the production takes place, how much of this energy consumption is renewable (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Niinimäki et al. (2020) explain that all stakeholders in the value chain must take their responsibility and contribute to change in order for the industry to change. Bocken et al. (2018) believe that textile companies need to switch to better technologies, that companies need to design new business models and not least that consumers need to change their buying behaviours. The following study gives the thesis a greater understanding of the clothing industry's climate impact, but also highlights that both companies and consumers must contribute for a change to take place.

2.2. Marketing on sustainability

Segev et al. (2015) have in a study on green marketing presented the changes that have taken place in green marketing over a ten-year period. To do this, the researchers replicated a 1993 study done by Carlson, Grove and Kangun. The results showed that the demands on companies are growing with the public's concern for the environment. According to the authors, this can be seen in marketing as messages about green properties of products and services have increased, and further believe that this shows that marketers want to reach environmentally conscious consumers.

Furthermore, Segev et al. (2015) describe that the main content of the ads consisted of messages about preserving the planet, along with images and colours associated with the environment such as nature and green landscapes. According to Geissdoerfer et al. (2017), this conveys an overall green image of the company, which may further reflect that the company wants to participate in the green movement because of its benefits. Bocken et al. (2018) also describe that they can see a hint of more reliable green marketing as the majority of the environmental claims examined are seen as accepted and less misleading. However, Iran & Schrader (2017)'s study shows that the few green logos that appeared in the ads did not come from standardization agencies, but were rather graphic symbols to confirm the green message. They question these symbols as consumers can interpret it as formal approval stamps and perceive the ad as reliable.

Segev et al.' (2015) discussions that graphic symbols can be seen as formal approval stamps are an interesting perspective for this study, to see if female consumers in generation Z perceive it in a similar way. Furthermore, it is interesting for this study to see if the result is in line with the hint of a more reliable green marketing.

2.3. Consumers' perceptions of sustainability communication

Hultman & Elg (2018) describe that it is common for trade to communicate about sustainability work. Despite this, their interviews for the study showed that many consumers question the sustainability communication of trade and the authors describe that customers cannot always see the difference between what is sales and educational information when it comes to sustainability communication. Therefore, it is interesting to see whether female consumers belonging to generation Z can see the difference between sales and educational information about sustainability, and whether it may depend on which company communicates it.

Furthermore, Hultman and Elg (2018) describe that consumers think it is important to appear responsible for sustainability. On the other hand, it is more common for consumers to choose to buy sustainable non-durable goods that cost more as it is seen as a larger investment (Vuong & Nguyen, 2018). Taplin (2014) believes that retail is thus facing the challenge of introducing a clear link between brand and sustainability, in order for consumers to feel proud to be their customer. It is also important for the stores that sustainability communication does not end up in conflict with other messages as consumers can easily see through them (Colucci and Scarpi, 2013). Thus, it is interesting for this study to take into account about whether Vietnamese fast fashion companies' sustainability communication ends up in conflict with other messages and if the companies have succeeded in establishing a clear link between the brand and sustainability.

2.4. Sustainability communication in social media

Saeed et al. (2019) have studied how consumers' buying behaviours are affected by sustainability-related information in social media. The results of the study show that social media is an important part of the development of sustainability-related information, and that social media can influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

Saeed et al. (2019) describe that the communication about sustainability that takes place between consumer and consumer has an influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. According to Erdil (2015), this can be traced to digitalisation and social media, as these enable consumers to communicate with people far outside their social circle. According to Hussain & Ali (2015), social media has thus contributed to increased demand and demands for transparency from companies, but also to companies that present sustainable initiatives being rewarded. Furthermore, Le et al. (2021) describe that both positive and negative sustainability-related information on social media influences purchasing decisions.

In addition, in Djafaova and Bowe's (2021) qualitative study of generation Z and their buying behaviours in fashion, women belonging to generation Z use the platform Instagram mainly for fashion inspiration and entertainment, but also to share information and for social reasons. Pham et al. (2021)'s study also shows that Instagram has a significant role for fashion trends, and that these are shaped by the users on the platform. Jennings (2016) also believes that there can be a shift in how consumers are influenced before a purchase, and that it is now social media that is in control. Generation Z sees other users on the platform as more reliable than the brands, as these may have an underlying agenda (Carrasco, 2017).

2.5. Greenwashing

According to Miller (2018), companies use greenwashing as a key tool when they want to compromise on their sustainability work. Furthermore, Dahl (2010) describes that companies and organizations apply greenwashing when they paint themselves as more sustainable and environmentally friendly than they really are, in order to gain market share and appeal to stakeholders. The author points out that greenwashing is not a new concept or phenomenon as it has existed since the mid-1980s, however, the concept has begun to appear more and more. Furthermore, the author describes that companies have drawn attention to consumers' increased interest in so-called green products, and that they have thus seen the opportunity to increase their sales by marketing themselves as green. Lyon and Maxwell (2006) also highlight the other side, which is that some companies have become afraid to market themselves as sustainable or that they make green choices as the initiatives can easily be branded as greenwashing by activist organizations.

However, there are different ways to communicate about sustainability. Delmas & Burbano (2011) divide companies into two different categories, green companies that work with sustainability in a good way and brown companies that work with sustainability in a less good way. The authors also classify companies as either loud or silent. By loud companies, they mean those who communicate their sustainability commitments through campaigns, unlike silent companies that do not communicate about it. Companies that apply greenwashing are specified as brown and loud companies. The authors describe greenwashing as something unethical, and that it is thus also more common from brown unethical companies. Furthermore, the authors believe that greenwashing contributes negatively, as it can in the long run lead to consumers having a negative attitude towards so-called green products.

For this study, the seven sins in greenwashing are also relevant, which makes it possible to theoretically make it clear whether companies apply greenwashing. Mulch (2009) describes all the sins, which are produced by the Canadian research institute Terrachoice. The sins include companies that communicate claims that are vague and thus easy to misunderstand, claims that do not have the support of a third party such as certification and claims that are irrelevant to consumers seeking information about environmentally friendly products. Even statements that are true for the specific industry, but that distract the consumer from, for example, the clothing industry's environmental impact as a whole, are considered a so-called greenwashing sin. More sins are companies that communicate that a product is "green" based on only a few criteria and thus excludes other necessary criteria and the use of false certifications. Finally, environmental claims that are untrue also belong to the seven sins, but this is considered unusual.

2.6. Case companies - MARC and GUMAC

In this section, a background is also presented to the two fast fashion companies that have been studied, MARC and GUMAC.

2.6.1. MARC

a. Company profile

MARC is a Vietnamese fast fashion company that was founded in 2006. The company conducts its business as an e-commerce and has built large parts of the business around collaborating with well-known influencers from around the country. Today, the company is one of Vietnam's fastest growing companies (MARC, 2022), and in 2020 the company had sales of approximately 80 billion VND (MARC,2021: 4).

b. Target segments

The company's main target group is female aged 18–30 (Marc, 2019). In an interview from 2022, Jessica Schultz, one of the company's largest investors, stated that the company mainly produces clothes for millennials and generation Z (vnexpress, 2022). Currently, MARC has 3.1 million followers on their Facebook account where they are active daily with stories and posts for their followers.

c. Sustainability work

In 2021, MARC launched a circular store called circle on the company's website, where their customers can sell used MARC clothing, as part of their sustainability work. According to Hang Le, MARC's sustainability manager and designer, generation Z is more likely to buy

second-hand than many other generations, and thus one of the reasons why the company created the circular store. Le further explains that the company works a lot with other sustainability issues as well, for example creating clothes in more sustainable materials and reducing the company's own emissions (VNexpress, 2021).

2.6.2. GUMAC

a. Company profile

GUMAC is a Vietnamese fashion company founded in 2015. At the time of writing, the company has over 160 stores in Vietnam, as well as e-commerce throughout the country (GUMAC, 2022). In 2020, the company had sales of just over 88 billion VND (GUMAC, 2021). At present, the company has just over 530,000 followers on Facebook.

b. Target segments

GUMAC's business concept is to offer trendy clothes to female millennials and generation Z. The company describes that the process from a designer creating a garment to being in a store can in some cases only take two weeks (GUMAC, 2022). This exemplifies how many fast fashion companies work.

c. Sustainability work

In the previous year, 2021, the company launched the new concept Young Light, which is a clothing line for younger girls. This is to target even more the target group generation Z (GUMAC, 2021). In this year, 2022, the company's first innovation program, GUMAC Lab, was launched, where new methods, technologies and materials are used for a more sustainable and circular fashion (GUMAC, 2022).

2.6.3. Justification on case selection

With regard to the scope of the study presented since the beginning, this study only examines two fast fashion companies based on certain criteria.

- The criteria for the companies selected are that they should belong to the fast fashion industry, be Vietnamese, about the same size in terms of sales, reach out to a similar target group and communicate about sustainability. This is to enable a comparative study.
- Another criterion for case selection is that the study only studies the companies' sustainability communication based on the start page and sustainability page on each website.

Based on the above discussion, both MARC and GUMAC are fast fashion chains which are similar in term of revenue (above 80 billion VND), target group (female millennials and Generation Z). In addition, the fact that sustainability work has become, to some extent, more visible also applies in the case companies that have received attention for their negative climate impact, as fast fashion business. Two companies that exemplify this are the Vietnamese e-commerce company MARC and the store giant and e-commerce GUMAC. In their cases, their sustainability communication concerns such as climate-compensated deliveries and clothing produced from more sustainable materials.

Based on the criteria, the companies MARC and GUMAC were selected.

2.7. Research Gap

Based on the above work, it can be seen that there is rich source of international research on the field of sustainability communication between fast fashion companies and young female customers, specifically Generation Z in this case. However, there is no existing research on

how Vietnamese fast fashion brands construct their sustainability communication from the view of consumers, including generation Z.

Due to the lacking of supportive research in the Vietnamese context regarding the research field of the sustainability communication of Vietnamese fast fashion brands from the perspective of generation Z, the following sections present the study's theoretical framework, which deals with critical discourse theory, convergence and participant theory and greenwashing. The theories make it possible to theorize the analysis result about which discourses are present on MARC and GUMAC's websites and whether the companies commit greenwashing. They also make it possible to theorize consumers' relationship to sustainability communication and social media's ways of contributing to change in Vietnamese context.

3. Methodology

To answer the study's questions about prominent discourses, greenwashing and consumers' relationship to sustainability communication and participation in social media, both secondary and primary data were collected. The methods multimodal critical discourse analysis and focus group interviews have been applied.

3.1. Online data

3.1.1. Comparative case studies

a. Justification on case selection

See section 2.6. for MARC and GUMAC's information and case justification).

3.1.2. Theory on Critical discourse

Critical discourse theory is part of the discourse analytical field. The common starting point in the discursive field is that texts are not a reflection of the outside world, but are part of creating and changing it. For research in communication, Fairclough's approach is the most developed in the critical discourse analytical direction (Winther and Phillips, 2020).

Fairclough's theory is based on sociolinguistics, and combines theory of language and language use with societal theories (Berglez, 2019). Fairclough defines the concept of discourse as a specific way of talking about the world from a specific perspective (Fairclough 1995a). By looking at discourses, questions such as why a text is designed in a certain way can then be asked (Fairclough, 1995b). Furthermore, Fairclough (1992) has developed a three-dimensional model that shows how the three dimensions' text, discursive practice and social

practice are linked. The innermost dimension of the model is text and looks at the different properties of the text. The middle dimension, discursive practice, looks at the production and consumption conditions that influence the text (Winther & Phillips 2020). The third and ultimate dimension, social practice, is part of both the production and consumption of texts and is about the overall linguistic and social structure (Berglez, 2019).

Winther & Phillips (2020) describe that the central thing in Fairclough's perspective is that each discourse is shaped by social practice, but also reproduces and changes it. Fairclough's perspective shows that texts produced in a discourse are constructed by social practice but also that the consumption of the text is influenced by discursive and social practices as consumers decode and interpret the content differently based on different previous experiences (Ekström et al., 2019). Fairclough's perspective thus helps to theoretically analyse and reflect on the discourses that shape companies' sustainability communication and consumers' reception of it.

3.1.3. Selection

To collect data on sustainability communication, an observation on the company's website and social media platform was applied via desk research.

The homepages were analysed as these are the first thing the visitor sees, and important for the companies. The sustainability pages were analysed as the companies mainly communicate about sustainability on these. The study has been limited to studying companies' websites only, as these are what consumers visit when buying. After a general observation of the companies' social media, platforms such as Instagram were excluded, as the companies did not use the platforms for sustainability communication at the time of collecting the material.

As web pages can be updated, all material analysed has been downloaded as a PDF. The material was downloaded the following times:

MARC homepage was downloaded as PDF 2022-05-27 at 10:10

MARC sustainability page was downloaded as PDF 2022-05-27 at 10:11

GUMAC's homepage was downloaded as PDF 2022-05-27 at 10:15

GUMAC's sustainability page was downloaded as PDF 2022-05-27 at 10:13

3.1.4. Multimodal critical discourse analysis

According to Eriksson (2012), Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is limited as this mainly focuses on the analysis of texts, and thus considers that an expansion of the perspective is required. Bryman and Bell (2015) also recommend applying other elements in a discourse analysis. In order to analyse the material from case companies' websites, and thereby answer the question of which discourses are prominent, a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) is thus suitable.

MCDA is a further development of the critical discourse analysis (Eriksson & Machin, 2019). The further development is inspired by semiotics and the combination means that attention is paid to both linguistic and visual details. Both the linguistic and visual analysis of the material is important as word choice and visual elements can contribute to associations with specific identities, values and actions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Eriksson and Machin (2019) describe that the perspective is interested in how visual elements such as colour and form contribute to and maintain discourses. An example is that the colour green can contribute to associations that something is sustainable or environmentally friendly. Such an association is created according to Eriksson & Machin (2019) when we have for a long period of time learned to connect an element with a property. MCDA thus makes it possible to analyse both the linguistic and visual in the material from the companies' websites, where the analysis results can then be combined with Fairclough's critical discourse theory.

This study only looks at the consumption discourse and the sustainability discourse, to enable more in-depth interpretations. Berglez (2019) believes that the important thing in the critical discourse analysis is to present how the text interacts with society. Furthermore, Bryman & Bell (2015) describe that the critical discourse analysis requires a more detailed analysis, to see what social consequences the text's presentation of reality contributes. For this study, MCDA as a method meant on the one hand that the study was limited when a more in-depth analysis was required and that the analysis thus did not look at certain parts of the material. On the other hand, the MCDA made it possible to see what social consequences case companies' sustainability communication can think of contributing. This advantage was considered to outweigh the study as companies' representations are part of the discourses that are significant for how consumers think and act (cf. Eriksson & Machin, 2019). In order to make these detailed

interpretations, the discourses that were considered to be most prominent and relevant for the purpose of the study were thus chosen.

Machin and Mayr (2012) describe that MCDA provides a variety of tools for analysis, and in this study iconographic analysis is applied. Furthermore, the concept of relationship is also applied, which is part of the qualitative linguistic analysis that can be combined with critical discourse analysis (cf. Ledin & Moberg, 2019). These tools make it possible to analyse the dimension's text and discursive practice, and then connect the result with the dimension social practice. All analysis tools are described below.

3.1.4.1. Iconographic analysis

An iconographic analysis makes visible what in the language and the visual elements are presented in the foreground and background, as well as which ones may be excluded. The analysis also highlights individual elements in images, such as objects and environments, and how these can be associated with a particular discourse. Furthermore, selected words and visual elements can make visible which discourses are used to adapt values to consumer behaviour (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Based on an iconographic analysis of the study material, questions about the choice of colour, environment and placement in the foreground and background could thus be asked of the material. For example, something is considered to be placed in the foreground and thus prominent if it is a larger font, font in bold, placed high up on the web page or something that stands out in images. Content that is considered to be placed in the background is thus such that it is not prominent, for example if it is written in a small font or placed far down the page.

3.1.4.2. Relation

The concept of relationship means that texts' various relationship-creating parts, such as how the recipient is addressed, are analysed. The concept makes it possible to study the occurrence of statements and prompts in texts but also any attitudes expressed through language such as values and judgments (Ledin & Moberg, 2019). The concept of relationship thus makes it possible to ask questions about which statements or prompts appear in the material, and thus creates an understanding of how the relationship -building parts of the text have been applied by companies.

3.2. Focus group

3.2.1. Theory on Convergence and participant culture

As the study examines perceptions of participation and engagement on social media, media researcher Henry Jenkin's theory of convergence culture and participant culture is also relevant. According to Jenkins (2008), convergence culture means that the content of the media flows more and more with each other and between different platforms. Furthermore, active participation in the media landscape, participant culture, is required for convergence to exist. The concepts are thus clearly related and interdependent (Jenkins, 2008).

According to Jenkins (2008), media convergence means that the content of a medium can change, and in the same way its users and its reputation among users can change. Media convergence is an ongoing process without an end point, and it changes the different relationships that exist between technology, industries and consumers. Today we are in a time when the media is undergoing a major change, and Jenkins is questioning how convergence will affect the participant culture. Convergence means that commercial companies merge with each other and thus create convergence, but also that users of media create their own content. Convergence is thus a process that is controlled both from above by companies and from below by consumers through participation. Companies create content to increase their profits, while consumers use the various technologies provided by the media and try to gain control over the range available. (Jenkins, 2008).

Jenkins (2008) also explains that today's media consumers are more disloyal and difficult to maintain. There are also people who belong to activist groups and fan groups, where a group affiliation is created. Through group affiliation, a shared identity is created and thus a sense of belonging, and with the help of the shared identity, these groups can stand up for their interests. Thus, they can also direct their attention and influence media companies (Jenkins et al., 2014). Although many young people expect a greater influence, the participant cultures are not equal as media companies or individuals can have greater power than an entire consumer group (Jenkins, 2008). However, influencers have gained a growing influence over media users and are now challenging the traditional media houses (Jenkins et al., 2014).

Jenkins et al. (2014) describe that companies are now interested in how consumers create an emotional bond with the brand as it leads to increased customer loyalty. However, it is further described that it is problematic to paint a picture of consumers as "worshippers" of a brand as customers usually do not express support when the brand goes against their own interest.

In order for participants to be willing to share further content, the researchers believe that there must be something that the person is interested in. They believe that based on personal criteria, people choose whether it is worth sharing further posts. Usually, the people also take into account that it should create a value for their social circle as well. Thus, even if something is interesting to an individual, it does not have to mean that they think it is valuable to share (Jenkins et al., 2014).

3.2.2. Focus group interviews

In addition to the use of online data that will be mentioned in data analysis section, a reception study is also applied to analyse consumption and thus discursive practice (cf. Bryman & Bell, 2015). This is to answer the study's question about how female consumers in generation Z relate to companies' sustainability communication and social media's possible contribution to change for the fast fashion industry.

When conducting a reception study, it is common for the answers from the interviewees to be seen as general statements and attitudes to a particular question, but in fact the method is more interested in looking at the discursive in the interview situation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, this study cannot be generalized, as the interview situations are unique for its occasions. On the other hand, the method can be seen as an important piece of the puzzle for gathering the desired knowledge about the interviewees' thoughts and reflections.

To conduct the reception study, qualitative focus group interviews were applied. The method is suitable as it opens up for discussions and exchanges of opinions, which contribute to knowledge of consumers' thoughts (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). Furthermore, the method does not follow with specific rules, but rather different choices and approaches which are adapted to the current study (ibid.). For the study's reliability and transparency, a section follows below that describes all choices regarding implementation and analysis.

3.2.3. Selection

The focus group interviews have only examined female consumers in generation Z's perceptions, as both MARC and GUMAC have stated that it is the companies' target group (GUMAC, 2021b). According to Gabrielova and Buchko (2021), people born between 1995 and 2012 belong to generation Z, which means people between the ages of 10–27. With regard to the ethical aspects, no persons under the age of 18 have been interviewed.

The guidelines for the number of focus group interviews and participants vary. According to Dahlin-Ivanoff and Holmgren (2017), the number of groups depends on when the researcher sees a saturation in the material, but describes that four to five groups are suitable for studies that examine a specific group. Due to the scope of this study, the number of groups was limited to three focus group interviews. In two of the groups, three interviewees participated, and in one group, two interviewees participated when the third was absent. Although the number of focus groups is smaller than recommended, a saturation in the material could be felt. Dahlin-Ivanoff and Holmgren (2017) describe that small groups contribute with fewer experiences, but that the discussion can, on the other hand, be more dynamic and contribute more to the study, which was also the case in this study's interviews. The number of participants in this study was limited to eight people as there are probably many to analyse common opinions about sustainability communication, but not too many to analyse the material qualitatively. However, a careful selection remains important. The final outcome of the interviewees resulted in eight women aged 18–26 years.

When knowledge of Generation Z's views was sought, the selection strategy was applied appropriately. According to Hartman (2014), it is a common strategy in qualitative research that makes it possible to select interviewees based on the information sought. As the strategy requires prior knowledge of the people being interviewed, a so-called snowball selection was also applied, in order to recruit more interviewees (cf. Hartman 2014). The snowball selection means that current interviewees in turn recommended more people who they considered to be suitable for the study. Hartman (2014) describes that snowball selection can be a risky strategy as people can recommend other people who are very similar to themselves, which contributes to a smaller spread. To minimize this risk, the question was asked of recommendations to participants of different ages and with a geographical spread.

3.2.4. Interview guide

To create a structure for the interviews, an interview guide was designed with different themes (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). A semi-structured interview guide contains a number of questions and a clear order for these. The interview guide enables the conversation during the interview to touch on intended themes for the interview, at the same time as the participants are allowed to discuss the answers freely with each other (Hartman, 2014).

The interview guide (see Appendix_1) consisted of the following three themes:

- T1 sustainability communication: how the interviewees generally view sustainability communication and their relationship to fast fashion.
- T2 corporate sustainability communication: how the interviewees view the companies' sustainability communication based on the study material.
- T3 participation and social media: how participation in social media can affect companies and the fast fashion industry.

The interview guide contributed to a common thread for all interviews, while the interviewees could freely discuss the interview's three themes and relevant other questions. The structure of the interview guide is in line with the so-called funnel technique. Hartman (2014) describes that interview guides with the funnel technique consist of questions that are initially open, and then become increasingly specific. The study's interview guide is in line with the funnel technique as each theme consists of open-ended questions which then become increasingly specific, however, it differs from the technique as it is applied to each theme and not the entire interview structure.

According to Patel and Davidson (2019), a pilot study can be carried out to test a certain structure or technology. After a pilot interview, some questions were clarified, and some also had to be removed when the interview became too long. The corrected interview guide is then the one used in all interviews that contributed material to the study. After two interviews, the pattern was also seen that the interviewees compared the material from the other company with the material discussed before. This changed the order for which company's material was presented first before the third interview.

3.2.5. Implementation

To create an open climate, and to make the interviewees feel informed and thus more comfortable sharing their thoughts, the moderator provided a brief informative background before starting the interview. The review touched on relevant concepts such as fast fashion and sustainability communication, but also a brief background on the ongoing debate on fast fashion.

The interviews were conducted digitally with the digital tools Teams and Zoom. A disadvantage of conducting the interviews with a digital tool such as Teams and Zoom was that the interviewees' knowledge and experiences of participating in digital conversations varied, which contributed to the moderator before the interview going through how the digital tool worked and any questions. This is so that difficulties with the technology would not prevent an interviewee from participating in the interview.

An advantage of the digital tools is that the interview could be conducted from the interviewees' home environment, which may have contributed to them feeling more comfortable. Another advantage is the possibility of a wider geographical spread of interviewees. With Zoom, the names of all interview participants could also be anonymised as the names were replaced with a number before they were let into the conversation. With Teams, this was not possible, but the names were replaced with numbers in the transcribed material to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. Bryman & Bell (2015) describe that an additional important ethical aspect in interviews is the informed consent. To secure the informed consent, all interviewees had to fill in a registration form where they, among other things, approved that the interviews were recorded with both audio and video.

When the study was conducted by two people, one of us acted as a moderator during all the interviews. This is so that the moderator could draw attention to what was said during the interviews and which other questions were relevant. The other person was responsible for technical aspects, such as recording. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2014), interviews can be documented with audio or video recording to facilitate the transcript of the interviews, which is then the material for the analysis. The interviews were documented with a video recording as both Teams and Zoom provide a video recording function. Video recording

facilitated the printing of the interviews as some interviewees had equal voices. In addition, it did not contribute the same distraction as if the recording was performed on site with a camera.

Regarding focus group interviews as a method, it is also important to keep in mind that so-called norm answers may occur. Norm norms mean that the interviewees experience certain answers as better than others, and this is something that is affected by social norms. Norm answers are especially common when questions about media use are asked (Johansson, 2000). This study asks questions about media use, but it is also conceivable that normative answers may occur in questions about sustainability communication as consumers often want to present themselves as taking responsibility for the sustainability issue (cf. Hultman and Elg, 2018). To minimize the tendency for norm answers, the moderator explained at the beginning of all interviews that we did not search for answers that the interviewees think we or someone else wants to hear, but their spontaneous thoughts and reflections. Furthermore, the interview guide was shaped with questions from different perspectives, both what the interviewees were addressed by and what they were critical of.

3.2.6. Data analysis - Transcription and Thematic analysis

As the purpose of the interviews was to examine the interviewees' perceptions, only the conversations that concerned the interview guide's three themes were transcribed, and initial information about the study, concepts and the ongoing debate were excluded. According to Bryman & Bell (2015), instructions are important when transcribing, both for the person performing the work and for the reader. The transcription was thus carried out on the basis of a common transcription template (see Appendix_2).

There is always a risk that certain aspects will be lost during transcription. Anyone who transcribes interviews may miss certain phenomena as the underlying purpose or interest can affect what is perceived (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To minimize this risk, the entire part of the interview where the participants discussed was thus transcribed, which meant that we became acquainted with the entire material before the subsequent analysis.

When this study sought generation Z's perceptions, sentence concentration is applied to analyse the material from the focus group interviews and find common sentences (cf. Kvale and

Brinkmann, 2014). In a first stage, the material was categorized more clearly into different themes, to enable a more in-depth analysis (cf. Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). Some of the categories found in the material were general thoughts about sustainability communication, thoughts about the fast fashion industry, the participants' use of social media and whether the fast fashion industry can be influenced by social media. Based on the categorization, a sentence concentration was then carried out to connect common sentences and summarize them in shorter formulations before a theoretical analysis (cf. Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014).

3.3. Method justification

Furthermore, a common criticism of all qualitative methods is that the research becomes more subjective than with quantitative methods. However, this is incorrect, as both methods seek subjective knowledge about people where the researcher shapes the result, only in different ways (Tjora, 2012). On the other hand, it is important to understand the role of the researcher, and according to Bryman and Bell (2015), the analysis work is one of the crucial parts for a study's quality. Having said that, it is important as a writer to do what is possible to ignore your own preconceived notions.

Something that should be added is that it is not possible to completely ignore myself as the writer and the researcher who has shopped from the companies before and have my own experiences of the companies as consumer. This was also a contributing factor to conducting the following study, as the researcher has already been well aware that several fast fashion companies market themselves as more sustainable than they actually are. With this, the researcher can conceivably take a more critical analysis as the researcher suspected that greenwashing could probably occur. Furthermore, the researcher also belongs to generation Z, which means that the researcher has some prior knowledge of the interviewees and may share their views. This is on the one hand a disadvantage as a person who does not belong to the same generation may see the material from a different point of view, on the other hand an advantage when we may have a greater understanding.

4. Findings & Analysis

The following sections present the study's analysis and results. The first two parts form the basis for answering the study's first question, which is about which discourses are prominent, as well as the question of whether companies commit greenwashing. Then follows the analysis and results of the reception study, where the material from the focus groups looks at the study's third question, how the interviewees relate to the companies' sustainability communication and social media's ability to contribute to change.

4.1. The sustainability communication via the companies' websites - an encouragement to consumption

The overall message on both MARC and GUMAC's homepage is consumption, which indicates that the companies' purpose with the page is of economic interest. On the companies' start pages, there are *statements* such as "news every day" and "the latest trends". In these statements, the focus is mainly on the companies' clothing, to encourage customers to shop from their side. With *statements* such as "news every day", consumers are also encouraged to visit the site often as there is always something new. Statements like these, like corporate clothing, are placed in the *foreground* with clear fonts and large images.

Furthermore, companies' claims are varied with different prompts. MARC's homepage contains several *calls* for consumption, such as "Shop now. Pay in March" and "Shop the collection now". These calls are placed in the *foreground* as they have a frame around the text that clearly shows that the consumer can click on. Like MARC, GUMAC's homepage contains several calls for consumption. They highlight the word "shop" together with words such as "now", "news", "basic garments", etc. GUMAC's prompts also have a frame around the text, which prompts them to click on. The purchase invitations on GUMAC's home page are always placed in the *foreground* as they stand out from the other text on the page.

However, sustainability communication differs between companies. MARC's sustainability communication is partly placed in the *foreground* at the top of the page, with a symbol shaped like a small green cloud with the white text "CO₂". This is followed by the *statement* "Free climate-compensated deliveries & returns".




Free climate-compensated deliveries & returns

Figure 1 MARC's website statement, sourced from Marc (2022)

The cloud symbol (see figure_1) can conceivably contribute to associations about nature and the sky, including sustainability. The colour of the symbol is neither blue as the sky nor green usually associated with durability, but rather a blue-green colour. The cloud may also symbolize that the company works with its carbon dioxide emissions as the industry has received great criticism for its emissions. Niinimäki et al. (2020) believe that the textile industry accounts for about eight percent of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions.

Unlike MARC, GUMAC's sustainability communication is only placed in the *background*, with a link far down the page where the visitor can read more. Such a link is also available on MARC's start page, but before the link is presented, the visitor is met by more sustainability communication. First with the cloud symbol that returns, followed by the text "Free deliveries & returns" and *the statement* "All our deliveries are **climate compensated** " below. To the right of this follows "Express shipping", "News every day" and ratings from customers who have shopped from the company in larger and thus also more visible fonts. This shows once again that consumption is placed in the *foreground* and more prominent in relation to sustainability communication.



<p>FASHION FOR THE FUTURE</p> <p>We want the fashion of the future to be based on equality, diversity and respect for nature</p> <p>Read our sustainability commitments</p>	<p>Circle </p> <p>Buy and sell second-hand clothes from MARC in just a few seconds</p> <p>Reduce your fashion print now</p>
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Figure 2 Marc's sustainability communication, , sourced from Marc (2022)

Figure 2 shows two coloured boxes that concern sustainability communication far down on MARC's start page. Although these boxes are placed far down, they are prominent and stand out from other content as the colours may catch the visitor's attention. One box has a blue colour, while the other has a beige colour.

The blue colour differs from the other colour theme that is common to both MARC and GUMAC's respective start page, which is black, white and beige.

The beige colour that MARC has chosen to use in its sustainability communication may be associated with nature. According to Segev et al. (2015), colours close to nature convey an overall green image of the company, and can thus be thought to be the reason why beige appears in the box on sustainability communication. On the other hand, the colour blue is not usually linked to the environment, but it can be associated with water, and can thus be a conscious choice to associate with water consumption, as for example Niinimäki et al. (2020) criticize the fashion industry for.

The blue box contains the *statements* "FASHION FOR THE **FUTURE** " and "We want the fashion of the future to be based on **equality, diversity and respect** for nature". It is clear that MARC has placed words that they consider important in the *foreground* through bold, including the words " **THE FUTURE** " and " **equality, diversity, respect** ". These statements can be seen as accepted and not misleading as they show what MARC wants to achieve.

The statements are also followed by the *call* "Read our sustainability commitments", which is placed in the *foreground* as it has a framework around it. This shows that MARC not only wants to show its commitment to the environment, but also wants their consumers to participate in the change. The company thus also involves consumers, which Niinimäki et al. (2020) describe is an important part of the value chain that consists of several different stakeholders. On the other hand, consumers are only encouraged to take part in the company's sustainability commitments, and not to change their consumption patterns.

The beige box contains the heading "Circle", which is followed by a symbol with three arrows in a circle. These arrows are similar to the symbol commonly used in recycling. MARC's use of this symbol can thus be thought to create an additional environmentally friendly impression of the company, as the symbol can possibly be associated with circularity, recycling and sustainability. This is followed by the *prompt* "Buy and sell second-hand clothes from MARC in just a few seconds". The company works with recycling through second hand, and thus it

can be assumed that they have chosen to use the recycling symbol to symbolize the circular in second hand shopping.

Even in the communication about circular fashion, however, the consumer is encouraged to complete the purchase quickly. MARC thus encourages its consumers to the same buying behavior when they consume second hand as when they shop the company's regular collections. This also appears in the *prompt* "Reduce your fashion print now", which is placed in the *foreground* as this also has a frame around it. In this call, the consumer is urged to reduce his fashion footprint *now*, where the company has reformulated the accepted wording climate footprint to fashion footprint. This, too, may be associated with MARC further with sustainability. However, these calls are not in line with what Niinimäki et al. (2020) describe that consumers should change their buying behaviors and thus the company has not taken sustainability communication all the way, as fast consumption is called for.

After the two boxes, the consumer is met by another *prompt*, namely "Start subscribing & get a 20% discount on your first order". The text encourages the consumer to enter their e-mail address and register. This indicates that sustainability communication does not have its own place on MARC's start page as it is surrounded by purchase calls both before, during and after.

MARC's sustainability communication is admittedly surrounded by calls for consumption, but is nevertheless significantly more present than GUMACs, which only consists of a link placed far down the page. Thus, MARC's start page consists of both the *consumption discourse* and the *sustainability discourse*, in that order, as the content mainly focuses on consumption. However, the discourse on *sustainability* is still present, as communication about sustainability occurs to a certain extent and is also to some extent placed in the *foreground*. On GUMAC's homepage, on the other hand, only *the consumption discourse* is present, as the content cannot be considered to consist of sustainability communication.

4.2. The sustainability communication via the companies' social media - The durability sides for a lasting impression

Common to MARC and GUMAC's respective sustainability side via social media is that sustainability communication is placed in the *foreground*, as the content mainly concerns sustainability. A difference, however, can be seen in present discourses. MARC's sustainability side consists primarily of two discourses, the *sustainability discourse* and the *consumption discourse*, in that order. This is because the content primarily consists of sustainability communication, but also a small part of consumption such as purchase calls. GUMAC's sustainability side, on the other hand, consists primarily of the *sustainability discourse* as the content consists of sustainability communication and no calls for consumption. According to Machin and Mayr (2012: 23–24, 30–31), word choice and visual elements can make visible which discourses are used to adapt values to consumer behaviour. It is thus not surprising that the sustainability pages consist mainly of the sustainability discourse, to match the consumer who visits the page's expectations.

Furthermore, the overall message is the same on each company's sustainability page, which both focus on sustainability and prioritize this communication before consumption, unlike the start pages. GUMAC mainly uses "let's do **good**", and the purpose of the page may thus be to communicate what GUMAC does well. The page begins with the heading "let's do **good** " placed in the *foreground*, followed by a short introductory text about the company's sustainability work. In the title, the word **good is** placed in the *foreground* as it is written in bold and thus may capture the visitor's attention. The text that the company wants to do good also appears several times on the page, with a similar meaning in the related text sections. It is conceivable that GUMAC wants to show that the company is involved in the change and takes responsibility, which Niinimäki et al. (2020) describe is a requirement for the fast fashion industry's change.

Why GUMAC wants to show this can be due to many reasons, possibly a genuine desire to contribute to change for the industry. Another alternative could be that GUMAC wants to reach environmentally conscious consumers by communicating green messages, which Segev et al. (2015) describe as a way for companies to meet the public's concern for the environment. It is also conceivable that sustainability communication is placed in the *foreground* due to the increased demand and demands for transparency that Saeed et al. (2019)'s previous research presents. The link to GUMAC's sustainability page is placed far down on the start page and thus placed in the *background*, possibly this is because the company does not prioritize it as high as consumption on the start page.

A remark regarding MARC's sustainability side also suggests that the company may not prioritize sustainability communication as highly as consumption. The page is written entirely in English despite the fact that the visitor has gotten there from the company's Vietnamese side, which may lead to some visitors having a harder time understanding and taking part in the content. This raises the question of whether the company does not prioritize sustainability communication high enough to translate the page. There are also some differences in the translation in the parts of the material that recur on both the start page and the sustainability page, which is discussed further down in the analysis. On the other hand, MARC's sustainability side has a clear overall message, which is the company's sustainability commitments. This message suggests that the purpose of the page is to make the company's sustainability work visible. This is also what is presented in the *foreground* at the top of the page, followed by a text focusing on what the company has done, is doing and wants to do for the environment.

Thus, like GUMACs, MARC's communication on the sustainability side can thus indicate that they either want to contribute to a change for the fast fashion industry, reach environmentally conscious consumers or are affected by increased demands for transparency. Common to MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication are also conscious choices of colours and environments on the pages.



Figure 3 Marc's sustainability web-banner, sourced from Marc (2022)

In the *foreground* at the top of MARC's sustainability page (see figure 3), the company has placed two women in a forest environment, both with clothes in natural colours such as beige. This colour theme is common to both companies' sustainability pages with different shades of beige, brown and green, but also very blue colours. All colours can conceivably give a

close-to-nature perception as, for example, green is closely associated with the environmental movement and political parties with an environmental focus. The blue colours may be a conscious choice as the colour may be associated with water and the oceans, as well as possibly the fashion industry's water consumption as previously mentioned. The environments in the pictures are also consistently close to nature with either vegetation, water or sky in the background.



Figure 4 Gumac's sustainability page-1, sourced from Gumac (2022)

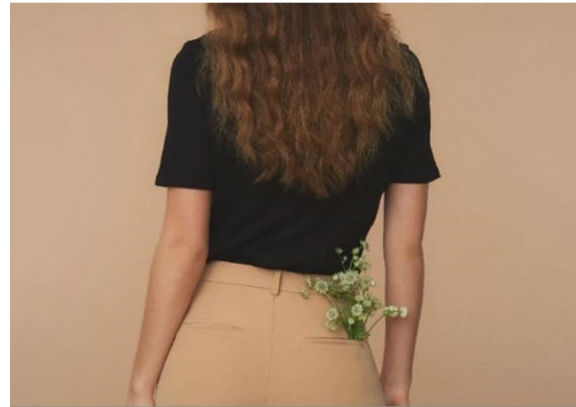


Figure 5 Gumac's sustainability page-2, sourced from Gumac (2022)



Figure 6 Gumac's sustainability page-3, sourced from Gumac (2022)



Figure 7 Gumac's sustainability page-4, sourced from Gumac (2022)

The figures above show all the pictures from GUMAC's sustainability page, which all contain natural colours such as beige and natural environments. Both MARC and GUMAC's choice of colours and environments are thus in line with Segev et al.' (2015) previous research that green marketing mainly contains images and colours that are associated with the environment.

In addition to colours and environments that the visitor may associate with the environment and the environmental movement, both companies strengthen sustainability communication with statements to varying degrees. On GUMAC's page, there are *statements* such as "we will always look for improvements and new solutions" and "we at GUMAC are determined to be part of the solution and therefore we have designed our own plan with clear goals for the organization". The page also contains claims that they, together with other companies, can change the textile industry.

Through her statements, GUMAC shows an understanding that they as a large company have a responsibility, and that they are determined to be part of the change. This is in line with expectations of what companies in the fashion industry should do according to Niinimäki et al.' (2020) research. Although the statements are not misleading, questions are raised about what the company does to be part of the solution and what clear goals the organization has. This information may be accessible via one of the page's links, but it is impossible for the visitor to decide based on the content of the sustainability page. Thus, the claim that GUMAC has formulated clear goals for the organization, without presenting them, can to some extent be seen as greenwashing as one of the seven sins involves presenting statements that are vague and easy to misunderstand (cf. Mulch, 2009).

Furthermore, GUMAC's *claim* that they offer more durable clothing through products with the label "let's do good / Good collection" is interesting. As Segev et al. (2015) present, green logos can be graphic symbols rather than certifications to confirm the message. GUMAC's label "let's do good / Good collection" is not an industry certification, but a label that GUMAC (2020) describes as an encouragement to consumers to make more sustainable choices. This label therefore ends up in the border country, it is not a certification, but at the same time it is more than a graphic symbol as the products with the label are more durable than the products without the label. One question that is raised, however, is whether GUMAC misleads consumers with the label, even though the products are more durable, as it may give the impression that the products are more durable than they actually are. Mulch (2009) describes that claims that lack the support of a third party such as certification, as well as the use of false certifications belong to the seven sins in greenwashing. GUMAC's labeling for more sustainable clothing can thus be seen as greenwashing as it is a claim that has no support from a third party, but also when it commits the sin of communicating a product as sustainable based on only a few criteria (cf. Mulch 2009).

Another interesting *statement* from GUMAC's sustainability side is "offering our customers more sustainable products that respect animal rights and are safe from a customer perspective is a main focus in our daily product development". The statement touches that the company wants to offer sustainable products that respect animal rights. Here it is possible to ask why they choose to focus on animal rights when they create clothes for humans. This is also interesting as the company uses, for example, down, feathers and leather (cf. GUMAC u.å. b). The company's use of these materials does not appear on the sustainability side, but on a page where questions about the company are answered, which shows that important information is omitted. In the text, GUMAC also states that they have sustainability in mind when developing products, and this is left open for the consumer to interpret without further information on the sustainability side. Greenwashing is thus also applied here when the sin regarding vague statements is committed (Mulch 2009).

Also on MARC's sustainability page, there are statements that affect sustainability in various ways, for example through a timeline placed in the *foreground* on the page. In the timeline, the visitor can take part in sustainability information from the company and what commitments they have made, but also goals for the year 2025. The page also includes claims that the company is heading towards a more sustainable future, that they have high goals and want to set an example for the whole industry. This is in line with GUMAC's claims, which can be seen as accepted and less misleading as well as meeting the demands placed on companies in the fashion industry. However, MARC's sustainability page also contains statements that can be questioned.



Figure 8 MARC's sustainability goal, sourced from Marc (2022)

The figure above shows MARC's goals for 2025, where five of eight goals are related to ecological sustainability. The figures are placed in the *foreground* as they are in a larger font and in bold, which may catch the visitor's attention. Figures such as 50%, 80% and 100% are presented together with statements in a smaller font. Of particular interest is *the statement* "100% more sustainable materials". In the statement describes MARC that they should have 100 percent more durable materials, without a description of what it looks like today. Thus, it is impossible for the visitor to know how much more sustainable the company will be. This statement can conceivably create the impression that MARC will have 100 percent sustainable materials by the year 2025, and could thus be seen as a misleading statement. Like GUMAC, MARC thus commits the sin of greenwashing regarding statements that are vague and easy to misunderstand. This also applies to the *statement* "50% reduction of emissions per product sold compared to 2020", where MARC does not present the figures for 2020 and it is thus impossible for the visitor to know how much emissions per product are expected to be in 2025.

On MARC's sustainability page, there is also the *statement* "FASHION FIT FOR THE FUTURE" followed by a text where they describe that they want the company's clothes to be based on "equality, diversity and deep respect for nature". To achieve this, the company further states in a statement that they will do so through an open relationship with their consumers. This can be found on the company's start page, but on the sustainability side, the English-Vietnamese word "respect" has been replaced with "deep respect". The difference may indicate that it is even more important for the company to communicate about respect for nature on the sustainability side, or that it has been lost or was not considered to fit into the English-Vietnamese wording.

Furthermore, both companies' claims are varied with calls for sustainability, placed in the *foreground*. GUMAC encourages visitors to read more about the company's sustainability work by clicking on various links. MARC also does this, but also encourages them to follow their journey, for example. The latter call may give the impression of MARC as both informative and educational, like GUMAC, but also that they assign their consumers a responsibility to participate in the change. The MARC sustainability page thus indicates that the company encourages all stakeholders in the value chain to take their responsibility, which is in line with what Niinimäki et al. (2020) consider necessary for a change for the fast fashion industry.

Furthermore, MARC's page, unlike GUMACs, contains calls for consumption. The page also contains the same material as the start page regarding the cloud symbol (figure_1), text about free deliveries and returns, express delivery, new clothes every day and ratings from previous consumers.



Figure 9 MARC's sustainability page, sourced from Marc (2022)

Figure 9 shows an image placed further down on MARC's sustainability page, which depicts a woman indoors with a white background wearing a blue denim jacket. The image differs from the other nature images as the background is white and indoors, but the blue colour is in line with the other colours applied by the company in sustainability communication. In the picture, the text "MARC REBORN" is placed, which refers to the company's more sustainable collection (cf. MARC, 2022b).

The picture also includes the invitation to shop the collection. The page also contains the *calls* "SHOP MARC" and "BUY and SELL pre-loved MARC fashion in a matter of seconds", which indicates that consumption is part of the company's sustainability communication. This is interesting to put in Hultman and Elg's (2018) perspective that sustainability communication should not end up in conflict with other messages, so that consumers can then

see through the message. It also exemplifies how the *consumer discourse* is also present on MARC's sustainability page, and thus shapes the content with *calls* for consumption.

According to Segev et al. (2015), companies' attempts at an overall green image may reflect that the company wants to participate in the green movement because of its benefits. With this perspective, MARC's sustainability communication can reflect that the company sees the advantage of contributing to a change for the fast fashion industry, but also as an advantage for the company to encourage even more consumption. According to Mulch (2009), a sin in greenwashing is to present information that is irrelevant to consumers seeking information about environmentally friendly products. Although the calls partly concern second-hand and the company's more sustainable collection, it can be seen as a hint of greenwashing when consumption is called for in sustainability communication. It can be seen as the company committing the sin regarding statements that are true for the specific industry, but which distract the consumer from the clothing industry's environmental impact as a whole (cf. Mulch, 2009).

4.3. Focus group interview: generation Z

Below is the analysis of the material from the focus group interviews, which makes it possible to answer the study's question about female consumers in generation Z's perceptions. The analysis is divided into three different themes, where the first theme describes perceptions of fast fashion's sustainability communication. The second theme touches on perceptions of MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication, and finally, the third theme touches on perceptions of the importance of social media for the changing fashion industry.

4.3.1. Fast fashion's sustainability communication - an exaggeration?

The material from the interviews drew attention to, among other things, young female consumers in Generation Z's general perceptions of sustainability communication. Several interviewees believe that sustainability communication has become more common, and then developed that demands from outsiders can be a contributing factor.

... companies that do not adopt environmental thinking on the left may not be as relevant. – Interviewee 6

This is in line with Saeed et al.' (2019) reasoning that social media has contributed to increased demand and demands for transparency from companies, but also that sustainable initiatives are rewarded. This is because several interviewees perceive companies that communicate about sustainability as more relevant.

Furthermore, several of the interviewees perceive themselves as source-critical, and that they do not always trust companies that communicate about sustainability. There is a common opinion that consumers should take communication about sustainability with a “... *pinch of salt...*” as interviewee 7 describes it. However, all admit that despite their hesitation to the companies and the clothing industry, they consume fast fashion. This may possibly be part of what Hultman and Elg (2018) describe, that many consumers today think it is important to appear responsible in the sustainability issue. It may also be due to the fact that the interviewees have a common opinion about the doubt that fast fashion companies actually do what they communicate about.

Old clothes turn into new clothes, for example, things I may not really believe in.
- Interviewee 6

This is in line with more ideas that are being raised, that companies can apply PR tricks where sustainability work is exaggerated. Possibly this may be related to Hultman and Elgs' (2018) ideas that consumers have difficulty seeing the difference between sales and educational information about sustainability. Sustainability communication that is informative can be perceived as selling, and vice versa. Furthermore, the interviewees' perceptions are in line with Djafaova and Bowe's (2021) results, that generation Z today does not have much confidence in brands as they believe that brands can have an underlying agenda with their communication. Saeed et al.' (2019) reasoning that consumers today demand higher

transparency from companies in terms of their sustainability work can also be applied to what the interviewees discuss.

4.3.2. How are MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication perceived?

A common opinion about MARC and GUMAC's respective homepage is that they mainly contain clothes and news. In the material from MARC's start page, collections with influencers and famous people also caught interest. Jenkins et al. (2014: 193) believe that influencers today have gained a greater influence. Djafaova and Bowes (2021) also believe that users on media platforms today shape today's fashion trends and that this is where Generation Z gets its inspiration. This may be a reason why MARC raises the issue of influencers to reach consumers in generation Z, but it may also be a reason why it captured the interest of the interviewees.

The sustainability communication on GUMAC's home page is perceived by the interviewees as hidden. A common meaning that can be found in the discussions about the company's start page is also that GUMAC is perceived as more interested in selling than informing. Some thus perceive GUMAC as less genuine, while others perceive it as the company stands for what they actually are.

. We are part of these fast fashion trends and here you can find new garments all the time that follow the fashion trends. It was a little fun that they have it, because that's what fast fashion is and that they get an incredible amount of criticism for, but they stand for it. - Interviewee 1

MARC's sustainability communication perceives the interviewees differently. On the start page, the information about climate-compensated deliveries and returns, the cloud symbol and the text "fashion for the future" captured the interviewees' interest. On the other hand, an interviewee asks questions about the fashion for the future, as the company also communicates that they have news every day. This is also in line with Hultman and Elgs' (2018) ideas that it is important to

the sustainability messages do not conflict with other of the brand's messages. An interviewee also highlights the fact that at first she only finds sustainability communication that concerns climate-compensated deliveries.

On the start page, my first thought was that the only thing that says about sustainability was the small free climate-compensated deliveries and returns. -

Interviewee 1

Several interviewees share this attitude, and ask themselves what it really means to be climate neutral. These people are thus critical of what the company really means by their statements, and demand the transparency that Saeed et al. (2019) describe that many now demand of companies.

Furthermore, it is interesting how the interviewees perceive MARC and GUMAC's respective sustainability side. A common opinion about companies

sustainability communication on the pages is that they are perceived as aesthetically pleasing, and that this can be thought to appeal to consumers. However, perceptions differ between MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication. MARC is perceived as very informative, and the interviewees captured interest in MARC clearly communicating its objectives. However, several of the interviewees were critical of the fact that the company did not present any explanation for how to achieve these objectives. Here, too, transparency is demanded from the company, as Saeed et al. (2019) describe in their previous research.

You would also like to see, as you both said there, what they are actively doing to achieve these goals. - Interviewee 1

A common meaning that could be found in the interviewees 'general perceptions of companies' sustainability communication was also that it felt double with calls for consumption at the same time as a company works to become more environmentally friendly. Here too, it is thus perceived that the message ends up in conflict with the other sustainability communication, which according to Hultman and Elg (2018) can contribute to consumers reviewing the sustainability communication. One of the interviews also questions the calls for consumption that appear on MARC's sustainability page.

... And then you scroll down, then it is direct advertising for some type of recycled material clothes, which yes, it is good that they push that it is reused with it becomes a bit, I do not know. It got a little weird with advertising for clothes in the middle of their sustainability page, I thought. - Interviewee 2

This quote from interviewee 2 shows that the interviewees review the content on MARC's sustainability page and point out that it feels strange that there is a call for consumption when the page is about sustainability.

In addition to this, the interviewees perceive MARC's sustainability side positively and that it is good that the company has one. Segev et al.' (2015) study shows that demands on companies are growing with the public's concern for the environment. This can possibly be thought to be a contributing factor to the fact that the respondents do not perceive MARC's sustainability communication mostly positively, as it is perceived as informative and thus can be thought to partly calm the concern for the environment.

Even when GUMAC's sustainability side was discussed, this was perceived as necessary, especially to reach the younger target group who are activists. However, some of the interviewees believe that GUMAC's sustainability side is primarily important if the company is reviewed or examined by other stakeholders. As previously mentioned, consumers think it is important that the company has a connection between the brand and sustainability, as Hultman and Elg (2018) describe in their study. Dahl (2010) also believes that many companies have drawn attention to the fact that consumers today have an increased interest in the environment and so-called green products. It is thus conceivable that companies such as MARC and GUMAC create sustainability pages to legitimize themselves in order to find new business opportunities and to be seen as legitimate towards their consumers.

Furthermore, there are perceptions about GUMAC's sustainability side that can be seen as both positive and negative. Positive perceptions mainly concern the images.

On the sustainability side, it was well, what to say, both. They drive quite hard on this with a little green tones, and it looks calm and nice. - Interviewee 1

The quote is largely in line with what Segev et al. (2015) explain in their study that images and colors associated with the environment can convey a green image of the company. But

the interviewee does not think that the nice pictures are enough. In the discussions, there were reflections that it could possibly be about how the consumer is as a person, as well as how experienced and interested they are in sustainability.

This is also what critical discourse theory looks like, how consumption of texts is decoded and interpreted based on various previous experiences and influenced by social practice (cf. Ekström, Waldenström and Westlund 2019: 32). But common to all interviews is that GUMAC's sustainability page does not communicate the information it should provide.

... They were not particularly reassured and would not in any way be able to justify their purchase there from an environmental aspect, based on the sustainability side.

- Interviewee 2

In the quote above, the interviewee explains that she is not reassured by the sustainability side or can justify her decision to shop from GUMAC based on the content. One of the interviewees also thinks that the earthy colours with green and beige were a great contrast to the start page where there were lots of colours. The person thinks it felt like it was not taken from the same website. When the moderator asked the question how it affected the person, the person believes that the company tried to influence her through these colour choices. This is interesting as Segev et al. (2015) believe that colour choices associated with nature can contribute to a green image of a company. On the other hand, Djafaova and Bowes (2021) believe that people from generation Z do not always believe that companies are reliable as they may have an underlying agenda. If the person does not trust the company or feels affected, it can thus be assumed that the colours do not contribute in the desired way.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees are critical of the content, but also point out that they are perhaps more critical than they would normally be, as the quote below describes.

I think they are now looking for more errors than usual. In ordinary cases as a customer, you may know from the beginning what you already want. - Interviewee 7

This shows that some answers may tend to be normative answers as the interviewees may be more critical of the material than if they visited the site in other contexts. This can also be thought to be part of the *discursive practice*, which is the middle dimension in the previous model presented for critical discourse analysis (cf. Fairclough, 1992). Winther & Phillips

2020) describe that the discursive practice looks at them, among other things, consumption conditions that influence the text. The situation for consumption of the material is as the interviewee 7 describes it in the quote above different as the interviewees in other contexts would have visited the sustainability side as a consumer and not the interviewee. Thus, it is conceivable that *the consumption discourse* is what influences the interviewees' perceptions in ordinary cases, while in the interview situation it is the *sustainability discourse* that influences their perceptions.

4.3.3. Participation in social media - who can influence?

Interesting regarding participation in social media is that none of the interviewees continuously share information or opinions about ongoing events or debates in social media. Rather, they see themselves as observers of the participation of others, as a way of keeping up to date on what is happening. Jenkins et al. (2014: 232) believe that many people have a number of criteria for sharing a post, and usually take into account that such things they share should create value for their social interaction and the people they share the information with. Furthermore, the interviewees also describe that they usually read the other parts, but not always.

I would probably more likely look at something a friend had shared than if it had been an influencer. It often feels like an influencer has the task of sharing something for publicity or something like that. - Interviewee 4

The quote above highlights the common sense that they are more likely to read something that a friend has shared. On the other hand, when the interviewees discuss who they think can influence through social media, everyone perceives that someone with influence is required. Those in power such as influencers, celebrities and politicians are mentioned in the interviews.

Jenkins et al. (2014) believe that influencers today have gained a greater influence over media users and thus challenge the traditional media houses. Despite this, Jenkins (2008: 15) believes that today's participant culture is not equal as people within a media company can

have a greater power than an entire consumer group. The interviewees do not believe that an individual who has no platform has the power to influence alone. However, one of the interviewees believes that an individual has the opportunity to start a revolution.

Or that it will be like something like with Greta Thunberg, that it is a person who on something left manages to start a revolution almost... - Interviewee 2

The reference to Greta Thunberg in particular is interesting as Jenkins (2008) believes that people who belong to activist groups create a group affiliation and thus also a shared identity. For example, Thunberg started what the interviewee in the quote above calls a revolution, by getting more people to demonstrate in a similar way. These people have since created a group affiliation by being activists.

Furthermore, some believe that social media can influence the fast fashion industry through participation and engagement in social media as many messages are spread precisely through these platforms. Or as interviewee eight describes it, "...the power of media". However, some question whether it is really possible to influence the industry with only social media.

I think it's pretty deeply rooted how it's built with fast fashion, so it's pretty hard using social media to get it to change. Maybe something other than just social media is needed to make the industry change. - Interviewee 4

Furthermore, several interviewees perceive that individual companies could be influenced through participation in social media, but that many people are then required to go together. They also believe that the more consumers who put pressure on companies, the more measures companies will also take. This can be linked to what Jenkins (2008) believes, that depending on how groups direct their attention, they can influence companies through participation. Jenkins et al. (2014) believe that the growing influence of influencers can also be involved and challenging.

For example, one of the interviewees mentions that influencers could share information on their social media about companies that do not have control over their sustainability communication. Furthermore, the interviewee believes that it would then reach many people, which in turn could lead to a drive towards the companies as people would probably share the information further.

During two of the interviews, so-called drives were discussed on social media. The discussions were about MARC, and that in recent years they have been the subject of drives where both influencers and private individuals shared information about the company on social media. On the other hand, both interviewees who raised the discussion in each interview point out that they have now forgotten what the train was about.

That was a while ago when MARC was in the windy weather? Now I do not even remember what it was about, but it did not happen very much with it. - Interviewee

5

Regarding this discussion about MARC, the perception was also raised that many people shared a lot about the events on social media, and that it contributed to thoughts of refraining from trading with the company.

... I have since had it a bit in mind, that there was something with MARC, before I go in and possibly have to buy something. - Interviewee 3

According to Saeed et al. (2019), communication about sustainability that takes place between consumer and consumer has an influence on purchasing decisions. The authors believe that social media makes this possible as communication can take place far beyond consumers' social circle. Thus, it is conceivable that similar so-called drives that deal with sustainability may contribute to companies being questioned by generation Z. Jenkins et al. (2014) believe that many companies try to create an emotional bond with their consumers, but that consumers today usually do not express support for companies if they go against their own interests. For MARC, this meant that many consumers chose to refrain from shopping from the company and also that some are now more thoughtful. On the other hand, the interviewees also point out that many of those who shared content on social media in connection with the drive to boycott the company are still acting from there today. It is thus conceivable that the interviewees do not perceive that participation in social media in the form of drives or the like in the long run can contribute to a change for the fast fashion industry.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the study has been to comparatively study the companies MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication, and how female consumers in generation Z perceive this and social media's significance for the fast fashion industry's change. The purpose has been investigated on the basis of the study's four research questions:

1. Do MARC and GUMAC have sustainability communication on their digital channels? If yes, what kind of discourses are prominent in MARC and GUMAC's sustainability communication?
2. Do these companies do greenwashing via their communication channels?
3. How do Generation Z's female consumers perceive these companies' sustainability communication?
4. How do Generation Z's female consumers perceive the impact of social media on the change of the Vietnamese fast fashion industry?

The results of the study are discussed below.

In order to answer the study's first question, both of the companies studied have sustainability communication on their digital channels. Regarding what kinds of discourses are prominent in MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication on each website, it is important to look at the content of the websites. The companies' websites primarily feature the consumer discourse on the start page and the sustainability discourse on the sustainability side. According to Fairclough (1995a, 1995b), a discourse means talking about the world from a specific perspective, and ensuring that discourses can answer questions about why a text is designed in a certain way. The fact that MARC and Gumac's start pages primarily consist of the consumption discourse may thus be the reason why the content primarily encourages consumption and thus places sustainability communication in the background. Furthermore, the sustainability discourse on the companies' sustainability pages shows that the text is created

in a discursive practice where characteristics that convey an environmentally friendly impression are the norm.

Both MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication indicate that companies want to take responsibility. They communicate that they as a company have a responsibility to participate in the change of the fast fashion industry, which is in line with Niinimäki et al.' (2020) proposals for a more sustainable clothing industry. However, MARC takes another step and also encourages consumers to participate in the change, which Gumac does not. According to Niinimäki et al. (2020), consumers should also change their buying behaviors. This is interesting as it indicates that Gumac wants to communicate about sustainability, but not that consumption patterns should change. It is thus conceivable that the company partly applies sustainability communication for financial interests. In this perspective, MARC's encouragement of consumption on the company's sustainability side is also interesting, and that the discourse of consumption is present. Although MARC encourages consumers to participate in the change and encourages them to consume circular fashion, consumers are encouraged to do so quickly. The visitor is also encouraged to shop other collections on the company's website. Thus, MARC can also partly be thought to communicate about sustainability for financial interests.

Furthermore, it is clear that both MARC and Gumac want to convey an overall green image of the company. Segev et al. (2015) describe that content that concerns the preservation of the planet, together with images and colours associated with the environment, conveys an overall green image of companies. Throughout MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication, there are various symbols, images and colours that can be associated with the environmental movement, and are supported to varying degrees by statements and calls related to sustainability. According to Hultman and Elg (2018), consumers think that it is important to appear responsible when it comes to sustainability, and that it is important to have a clear link between brand and sustainability for the consumer to be a proud customer. It is thus conceivable that MARC and Gumac see business opportunities with sustainability communication, as it makes it possible to reach environmentally conscious consumers (cf. Segev et al., 2015).

The second question of the study, the companies commit so-called greenwashing, can to some extent be answered with a yes. By and large, both MARC and Gumacs go sustainability communication in line with what Segev et al. (2015) describe, that there can be a hint of a more reliable green marketing as the majority of environmental claims are seen as accepted and less

misleading. Furthermore, analysis results show that both MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication raise the issue with the industry as a whole. But for companies such as MARC and Gumac, both of which operate in the fast fashion industry, which has been debated for its negative environmental impact, it may be that symbols, images and colours linked to the environmental movement are not enough. As a result, the concept of greenwashing is relevant. According to Miller (2018), companies apply greenwashing when they want to compromise on sustainability work, and Dahl (2010) describes that it is applied when companies paint themselves as more environmentally friendly than they are to gain market share and appeal to consumers. This is highly relevant in MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication, as the study's multimodal critical discourse analysis suggests that both companies can be criticized for applying greenwashing.

Furthermore, both companies can be seen as loud companies that communicate their sustainability commitments, but also as brown companies when they apply greenwashing (cf. Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Delmas & Burbano (2011) believe that greenwashing from brown and loud companies should be seen as unethical, and that it can contribute to a negative attitude towards so-called green products among consumers. With this perspective, MARC and Gumac's sustainability communication can be seen as a negative contribution to the fast fashion industry's change towards more sustainable, even if they themselves raise the industry's problems.

According to Lyon and Maxwell (2006), many companies have become afraid to market themselves as sustainable as the initiatives can be branded as greenwashing by activist organizations. This study shows that both MARC and Gumac apply sustainability communication to create an overall impression of the company as sustainable. Winther & Phillips (2020) describe that texts are part of creating and changing social practice, thus our world. Thus, MARC and Gumac's texts are part of the creation and change within the sustainability discourse and the consumption discourse. The three-dimensional model, which means that the dimensions' text, discursive practice and social practice are linked (cf. Fairclough 1992), thus contributes to the perspective that MARC and Gumac can conceivably work against themselves and their industry. This is because the use of greenwashing can both contribute to consumers becoming even more skeptical of sustainability communication in general, and that the fast fashion industry's attempts at change can be seen as greenwashing as the sustainability discourse in solid fashion is affected by companies' sustainability communication.

The study's question, how do female consumers in generation Z relate to companies' sustainability communication and social media's ability to contribute to change for the fast fashion industry, sought knowledge about women's own perceptions and reflections. The interviewees perceived the companies' sustainability communication as aesthetically pleasing. The close-to-nature colours and pictures were perceived by them as pleasant on each sustainability page. However, they felt that the images were not enough to justify their purchases from the websites. The interviewees also experienced MARC's sustainability page as more informative in comparison with Gumac's.

Other perceptions that the interviewees raised were that both companies had substandard information regarding sustainability on the start pages as the content mainly encouraged consumers to consume. The interviewees also perceived Gumac's sustainability communication on the start page as hidden and thus also less genuine than MARC's, as their sustainability communication was more visible. Here, however, the perceptions were twofold as Gumac was also perceived as more genuine because they explicitly state that it is a solid fashion company on the start page.

Furthermore, the interviewees were critical of the objectives presented on both companies' sustainability pages. MARC's objectives perceived the interviewees lacked a basis in how they would be achieved. Regarding Gumac, however, it was perceived that the company did not communicate its objectives at all. Dahl (2010) describes that many companies have drawn attention to consumers' increased interest in green products in particular, and thus they raise such messages to appear more sustainable than they actually are. Miller's (2018) reasoning about greenwashing as a compromise for companies' sustainability work is also interesting for this. It thus did not matter what the content looked like on the sustainability pages, as MARC, which presented a lot of information, was perceived as beautifying its content, while Gumac, who presented less information, was perceived as substandard. The interviewees instead demanded transparency from the companies.

The interviewees also questioned the fact that many messages on MARC's side did not go hand in hand when sustainability communication was interspersed with purchase calls. Hultman and Elg (2018) believe that it is important that sustainability messages do not conflict with other of the brand's messages.

It is also interesting to mention the interviewees' self-awareness that they looked at the material with a more critical eye than they would have done otherwise. This indicates that sustainability

issues contribute with a risk of norm responses, but also to appear as environmentally conscious as something important in the prevailing social practice. It may be shown that the discursive practice, thus which consumption conditions influence (cf. Winther & Phillips, 2020), affects how sustainability communication from the fast fashion companies MARC and Gumac is perceived. Thus, it may be the case that consumers perceive companies' sustainability communication more positively during a visit where the discursive practice is consumption.

Regarding how social media can affect the fashion industry as a whole, the interviewees had divided views. Some of the interviewees thought that it would be possible to influence the industry as a lot of information today is spread via social media. One of the interviewees describes this phenomenon as "the power of media". Others were more questioning whether only participation in social media can contribute to change as fast fashion today is something that is deeply rooted, and thus believe that something more would be needed for change to take place.

On the other hand, the interviewees considered that it is easier to influence individual permanent fashion companies than the entire industry. The interviewees considered that it is difficult for an individual to make a difference for both the industry and companies, and that in such cases a person is required to make a revolution like Greta Thunberg did with the school strike. They considered that consumers would probably be required to come together to put pressure on companies, for a change to take place and for companies to take more action. This can be compared to that Jenkins et al. (2014) describe that people who have a shared group identity can direct their attention to influence media companies. In this context, it is conceivable that the reasoning can also be applied to fast fashion companies. Furthermore, the authors explained that if people are to share something, it must be something that they are interested in and that creates value for their social circle (Jenkins et al., 2014). Thus, it is conceivable that a shared group identity is required for social media to be able to contribute to a change for the fast fashion industry. All interviewees agreed that people with great influence, such as influencers, are the ones who have the greatest opportunity to influence the fashion industry through social media. This is because they reach out too many people at once, and can create gear towards companies. This is interesting from the aspect that the interviewees themselves mentioned the drive that took place against MARC, but forgot exactly what they were about. Thus, it is possible to ask whether such drives actually contribute to any change.

6. Recommendations

Sustainability communication is a well-studied subject, but at the same time a subject in constant development and something that is becoming increasingly important in communication. Based on this study, several possible future researches can be presented, for example to study influencers' sustainability communication. As the introduction to the study describes, a powerful Swedish influencer has made the decision to no longer market fast fashion. This, as well as the interviewees' perceptions of influencers' power to influence the issue, thus contribute to it being an interesting topic to study. Furthermore, relevant future research is to study several generations' perceptions of solid fashion's sustainability communication, for a comparative study between different generations. It may also be interesting to carry out a critical multimodal analysis of more fast fashion companies' sustainability communication, and thus see if greenwashing is something that is generally applied in the industry.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview guide

Interview guide

Introduction

Theme 1 - general about sustainability communication.

- What do you generally think about communication about sustainability?
- Do you trust companies that communicate about sustainability?
- What is your relationship to the fast fashion industry?
 - *How often do you shop fast-fashion?*
 - *How often do you shop from MARC and GUMAC? - "Other" question*

Theme 2 - Corporate sustainability communication

Show material from MARC home page and sustainability page.

- Have you been on the home page or the sustainability page before we showed it to you?
- What catches your attention on the pages?
 - *What do you think is important in this material?*
 - *What in the material appeals to you the most?*
 - *Is there anything in the material you are critical of?*
- Do you have any other thoughts about the material?

Show material from GUMAC's home page and sustainability page.

- Have you been on the home page or the sustainability page before we showed it to you?
- What catches your attention on the pages?
 - *What do you think is important in this material?*
 - *What in the material appeals to you the most?*
 - *Is there anything in the material you are critical of?*
- Do you have any other thoughts about the material?

Theme 3 - Participation and social media

- Have you ever shared information or opinions about an event or ongoing debate on social media?
 - *What would make you share a post or similar?*
 - *You who do not share further posts or the like, what is the reason then?*
- If someone you follow shares a post or similar, do you usually go in and read what it says?
 - *Does it matter if it's an influencer or a friend who shares?*
- Do you think that participation and engagement on social media can contribute to change?
 - *In which way (s)?*
 - *Can participation and commitment contribute to change for the fast fashion industry?*
 - *In which way (s)?*

▪ *Consequential question about influencing individual companies*

- Do you have any other thoughts you want to share about current participation in social media?

Do you have any other questions / thoughts / reflections regarding what we have discussed during this hour?

Summary of the interview and conclusion.

Appendix 2 Transcription template

Transcription template

Fill-in words and outlines are not included. Spoken language is transcribed into written language. Questions asked by the moderator are written in italics.

IV = interviewer

Numbers from 1 to 15 = interviewees

() = inaudible speech

(...) = longer pause

(l) - laughter

WORD - underlining means emphasis

- interrupted him/herself

(-) = Speaking to each other

(... X minutes...) = Irrelevant content X number of minutes