Why Being Green is Harder Than it Seems

Discovering the Effect of Green Brand Knowledge

On the Perception of a Green Claim

By

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Abstract

Title:	Why Being Green is Harder Than it Seems: Discovering the Effect of Green Brand Knowledge On the Perception of a Green Claim
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Authors:	Lydia Parry and Linda Strålman
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Keywords:	Green brand knowledge, green brand awareness, green brand image, claim credibility, greenwashing.
Thesis Purpose:	The purpose of this study is to quantitatively discover whether green brand knowledge has an effect on the perception of green claims with Swedish Millennials and Gen Z. As to whether it is perceived as credible or greenwashing.
Methodology:	Quantitative methods were applied in this research. To test the hypotheses a combination of Spearman's rank correlation and Simple Linear Regression were deployed on the collected data.
Theoretical Perspective:	This study builds upon previous brand knowledge and green claim literature. However, where previous research has green brand knowledge as the dependent variable and the green claim as the independent, this study changed the order of the variables. Establishing a more holistic perspective on green brand knowledge and its role within sustainable branding.
Empirical Data:	Two identical online inferential surveys were created, study 1 Patagonia and study 2 H&M. The surveys were then distributed to Swedish citizens and residents within the Millennial and Gen Z group (n=154).
Conclusion:	All four green brand knowledge facets were shown to have a negative effect on perceived greenwashing. Therefore, the study showed that green brand knowledge did affect perceived greenwashing. The strongest predictor being green brand image. Only green brand awareness was shown to have a positive effect on claim credibility.

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Linda Strålman   Lydia Parry

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter will outline the concepts of green brand knowledge and green claims that will help understand the setting of the study, Moreover, the variables of this study; green brand knowledge, claim credibility and greenwashing are addressed in the problem formulation. Following this the research purpose will be discussed leading to the research question. Lastly the objectives of this study will be presented.

Jenny is 27 and lives in Uppsala. Like most Swedes she is aware of sustainability issues and tries to make environmentally conscious choices within her everyday routine. She needs a new car and again wants to make a more sustainable choice. So, she searches for sustainable cars on google. Her eye automatically goes to Volvo, a popular brand among peers. Volvo is a brand that she trusts and has no reason to believe is anything less than credible. She then sees the Volvo XC40 Recharge SUV. The advert describes it as their first entirely electric SUV with zero emissions from the exhaust pipe (Volvo, 2020). Jenny is instantly attracted to both the car and the green promise; however, she decides to search more, just in case. She saves the page and back clicks. Her eyes then go to the Volkswagen e-up! She feels unsure but looks anyway. *'Driving without any local emissions helps keep CO2 levels down'* (Volkswagen, 2020). Her mind goes back to the Dieselgate scandal and she begins to question the claim. Although it was nearly identical to Volvo's, she cannot help but question its credibility. She closes the page and goes back to Volvo.

The example of Jenny choosing a car illustrates the phenomenon of how a brand can affect a consumer's perception of a green claim. Although the car industry will not be the focus of this study, this example demonstrates how this phenomenon could occur.

1.1 Background

The climate discussion is an unavoidable issue that has left modern society both as the victims and perpetrators. As a result of this perpetual concern, the need for accountability within society and its structures has increased drastically (Reinhardt, 2007). Consequently, the idea of business, consumption and how organisations operate, has been dragged to the forefront for critique (Watson, 2016). However, as the pressure to become sustainable surges, more industries have and continue to attempt at creating positive branding outcomes, from their mitigation of climate risk (Reinhardt, 2007). Despite many efficiency and cost trade-offs, most companies understand that there are valuable benefits in being perceived as green within today's consumer context (Reinhardt, 2007). Although there is not a one fits all approach or viewpoint, for the majority, it is clear that being sustainable is a good business to be in (Reinhardt, 2007; Watson, 2016; Barnes, 2019).

There is one facet of the economy that has adopted the role of educator within sustainable business, marketing (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020). The concept of responsible advertising aims at marketers being able to educate consumers into making more environmentally friendly choices (Barnes, 2019). Pavan Sukhdev (n.d.; cited in Barnes, 2019), a leading environmental economist, suggests that marketing can make brands with higher ethical credibility more attractive. This idea of marketing playing a positive role is still met with mixed reviews. With many implying that modern marketing practices are part of the problem through generating excessive consumption (Abu-Saud, 2013; O'Brien-Nicholson, 2018). Additionally, and potentially most concerning for marketers, advertisements and claims related to sustainability continue to be met with increasing scepticism (Watson, 2016). This is due to the practice of greenwashing.

The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) definition of greenwashing is the *'behaviour or activit[y] that make[s] people believe that a company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is'.* As the idea of being sustainable becomes almost a prerequisite to being in business, the potential loopholes companies are using to be perceived as green, increases (Lee, 2008). With famous cases such as Nestle's bottled water and Chevrons 'People Do' campaign, research suggests that greenwashing has not stopped with consumer awareness (Watson, 2016). However, the techniques used have grown in sophistication (Watson, 2016). In that companies are constantly finding new innovative ways to mislead, knowingly or otherwise (Schmuck, Matthes, & Naderer, 2018). Maier (2011) argues that this increase in greenwashing sophistication is likely to have a damaging effect on society's relationship between themselves and the planet. As a result, green claims made by companies, true or false, are becoming increasingly picked apart and less trusted. Yet, surely some claims are true and how do consumers decide this? As consumers become less able to simply trust green claims, how they categorise what to believe and what not to believe becomes increasingly important for companies trying to make a difference (Lee, 2008).

Ganz and Grimes (2018) argue that some companies are working towards limiting their environmental impact, however, they are not reaping the benefits that come from having an environmentally sustainable strategy. In order to benefit from this strategy, companies need to not only be sustainable but also be perceived as sustainable (Ganz & Grimes, 2018). However, this may be more difficult than it seems as consumer scepticism is threatening the credibility of companies' green claims (Ganz & Grimes, 2018). Moreover, as a result of certain companies' usage of exaggeration and fabrication, the credibility of all green claims has seemingly reduced (Ganz & Grimes, 2018). However, there are ways companies can work on being perceived as sustainable and increase the credibility of their green claims (Ganz & Grimes, 2018). In order for companies to avoid mistakenly using non-credible claims the Federal Trade Commission (USA) has issued guidelines for using green claims in advertising (Bergeson, 2008). The guide gives special attention to claims including terms such as; *'environmentally friendly', 'environmentally preferable', 'degradable',* and *'recyclable'* (Bergeson, 2008).

One industry, in particular, is varied in both its perception of being sustainable and the credibility of the advertisements made by companies within it, fashion (Ro, 2020). Perdsen, Gwozdz and Hvass (2016) state that fashion is a well-documented industry for having significant environmental impacts and subsequently, leaving companies open to critique in both the media and academia. One unique impact that causes problems for the industry is the concept of trends and the frenzied rate at which new products are released (Ro, 2020). Hence, an increasing number of resources are being used and a concerning amount of waste is generated (Ro, 2020). However, Hvass and Pedersen (2019) suggest that, due to the rise of the conscious consumer, the public's critique of fashion brands has increased its influence on their practices. Due to consumer awareness and consistent media, consumers can visibly see the differences in different fashion companies and their sustainability (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016; Joy et al., 2015). This, in conjunction with the already lasting relationships consumers make with fashion brands, means that green associations become increasingly important (BoF, 2019).

Nevertheless, it is well understood that due to the overwhelming climate concern, fashion companies are increasingly experimenting with new initiatives to gain green associations (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). As a result, the amount of green advertisements within fashion has also increased (Ro, 2020; Cheng, 2019). This has again been met with mixed reviews. Although many companies have been revered for their efforts, a large portion of fashion brands have been left painted as greenwashers despite their attempts at improvement (Billinton, 2019; Chan, 2020).

There are two generations that have increased this pressure on industries such as fashion, Generation Z and Millennials (Cheng, 2019; Petro, 2020; Barnes, 2019). Bresman and Rao (2017) defines Millennials as those born between 1984 and 1996 and Generation Z are those born from 1997 onwards. In a 2019 study, it was shown that 62% of Generation Z and Millennials prefer to buy from sustainable brands and 50% of Millennials and 54% of Generation Z are willing to pay as much as 10% more for sustainable options (Petro, 2020). Not only are these two groups taking on the responsibilities of the conscious consumer, but they are actively putting more pressure on society to overturn harmful practices (Barnes, 2019). This is seen through leaders within the climate debate emerging from these groups, for example Greta Thunberg (Barnes, 2019).

With the emergence of Greta Thunberg, Sweden as a nation has been put back in the spotlight for sustainability (Wilde, 2016). With consistent innovations towards renewable energy and sustainable living, Sweden is somewhat viewed as a leader in the war against climate change (Wilde, 2016). For years Sweden was voted the most sustainable country in the world, up until 2019 when Norway overtook (RobesoSAM, 2019). Additionally, according to a 2019 study, Sweden was ranked as having the best reputation for its actions towards preventing climate

change (Valet, 2019). This high awareness is also seen within Sweden's education as sustainability becomes increasingly integrated into teaching (Felgendreher & Löfgren, 2018). This is benefitted by the fact that Sweden is the 15th most educated country in the world, with 43% moving on to higher education (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2019). In summary, Sweden is globally considered an example of a nation that has a continued high moral and contribution levels towards the climate crisis (Svenska Institutet, 2018).

To understand Swedish consumers specifically, the Gullers Grupp (2018) conducted a survey on behalf of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The survey aimed to understand Swedish knowledge and attitudes towards a climate-neutral society. The survey clearly indicated that Sweden is climate conscious and for the majority believe that, both individually and collectively, they can make a positive impact on society. Furthermore, 80% are willing to pay more for companies that work with limiting climate change (Gullers Grupp, 2018). Subsequently, it could be implied that Swedish consumers are seeking green alternatives, however, are likely to be analytical over the claims the alternatives make.

However, to look at Swedish Millennials and Generation Z specifically, it is clear that their commitment to the climate crisis is even more prevalent than their older counterparts (WWF, 2017, 2018; Jung, 2019). WWF (2018) suggests that 63% of Swedish women within the Millennial and Generation Z groups worry about climate change, 33% more than the rest of the population. This concept of Swedish women being more concerned is also agreed upon within Jung (2019). However, for both genders, climate change is the most important social question for the two groups, with 6 out of 10 worrying how environmental problems will affect their future (WWF, 2017). Additionally, within these groups, 94% believe it is important to live sustainably, 33% believe that within five years they will most likely rent or borrow products such as cars or clothes (WWF, 2018). Finally, 31% take personal responsibility to stop climate change (WWF, 2018). As well as their personal responsibility, Swedish Millennials and Generation Z also want companies to follow suit (Jung, 2019). 83% believe that companies need to contribute to a more environmentally friendly society and are therefore critical of companies processes and marketing (Jung, 2019). With Millennials requiring visionary company messages and Generation Z wanting hard facts and figures to show improvement (Mynewsdesk, 2017). Subsequently, Swedish Millennials and Generation Z advocate that what you buy reflects who you are in relation to climate change, causing a personal expectation for these groups to purchase more sustainable options (Jung, 2019).

1.2 Problem Formulation

The problem this study focuses upon is the phenomenon of brands affecting the consumers' perception of green claims. Companies are increasingly concerned with how their brand is perceived by consumers (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). Moreover, today, sustainability plays a crucial

role in positioning and marketing the brand as a superior alternative (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). Therefore, in today's context a company's sustainability associations have become as important, as other values in forming consumer perceptions. Considering the aforementioned example when Jenny was choosing a car; it is evident that her pre-existing brand knowledge, which is the cumulation of thoughts, feelings, images and associations that defines how a consumer perceives a brand (Keller, 2006), plays a crucial role in her choice of car. What is also apparent is that her knowledge of the two different brands affected her trust in the credibility of the companies' green claims. The relationship between green brand knowledge and the perception of green claims will be the focus of this study.

General brand knowledge is a crucial aspect in understanding the consumer's perception of a brand (Keller, 2006). The different facets of brand knowledge: brand awareness, -image, -thoughts, -experiences, -feelings and -attitudes, are all affected by the information communicated and the interaction the consumer has had with the company (Brunk & de Boer, 2020; Escalas, 2004; Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020; Jokšaitė, Banytė & Virvilaitė, 2007). The information communicated by the company is often in the form of advertising claims. Therefore, the information may be used as a tool to market the brand (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort & Hillier, 2008). The importance of having a positive brand knowledge stems from the idea that once a consumer has formed their perceptions, they remain relatively consistent and difficult to change (Jokšaitė, Banytė & Virvilaitė, 2007; Tan & Trang, 2019). If we refer to Jenny, the previous Volkswagen scandal may have contributed to a negative brand perception of the company. Despite Volkswagen efforts to rebuild their brand image, in Jenny's case the association sticks. Subsequently, she may have questioned the claim because of the brand knowledge formed during the scandal. Therefore, her trust lies within the company whose associations are untarnished, meaning the claim is easier to believe.

However, the literature suggests that the rigidity of brand knowledge is softened when put into a greener context. Green communications have been proven to have a positive effect on the consumer's attitudes towards the brand (Leonidou, Leonidou, Palihawadana, & Hultman, 2011). Furthermore, academia argues that green marketing can help build a pro-environmental brand image, increase corporate credibility and begin the process of gaining green brand equity (Leonidou et al., 2011; Musgrove, Choi & Cox, 2018; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Despite this relationship, many green claims and communications are not successful. The literature suggests that this is due to the number of brands using green communications (Leonidou et al., 2011; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020). Hence, consumers have become increasingly sceptical over the legitimacy and credibility of green claims (Leonidou et al., 2011; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Szabo & Webster, 2020). Although the number of brands using green communication should be considered, this study will question whether there are other reasons why green communications are not successful.

This increased scepticism is especially documented within controversial industries (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020). As mentioned, the fashion industry is varied in both its external perception of being sustainable and the credibility of the advertisements made (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016; Ro, 2020). There are two specific companies that the literature has highlighted when considering green claim success; H&M and Patagonia (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010; Rattalino, 2018). H&M is a closely observed fashion brand (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). As one of the global leaders within affordable fashion, they have inevitably fallen to the overwhelming green pressure and drastically increased their green initiatives and claims (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). However, these efforts have been met with largely unfavourable reviews within the media (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). Over recent years, H&M has received numerous accusations of greenwashing from various publications regarding their marketing (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). With suggestions that their efforts have the purpose of positive PR rather than any overwhelming sustainability benefits (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). Belz and Schmidt-Riediger (2010) argue that their main goal is to avoid damage to their reputation and brand image, rather than committing to sustainability.

However, a brand that has been successful in making green claims is Patagonia. In 2019, Patagonia was named the UN Champion of the Earth, which is the UN's top environmental honour (Leighton, 2019). Patagonia is continuously revered in its commitment to environmental activism (Beer, 2018; Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010; Leighton, 2019). This has not only benefited their product innovation and marketing, but also their brand awareness and sales (Beer, 2018). Despite past scandals where they have used false claims to market their products, for example the 'Responsible Wool Standards'-scandal (PETA, 2018), Patagonia seems to be continuously successful in its marketing (Beer, 2018). Belz and Schmidt-Riediger (2010) suggest through green claims they have been able to develop a green brand image and position themselves as having a superior socio-ecological quality. Due to this positioning and association of quality, Patagonia has become a successful example of green brand equity creation (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010)

How is it that there is such a contrast in green claim success between the two companies, when in reality many of their efforts and processes remain similar (H&M Group, 2018; Patagonia, 2017; Rattalino, 2018). What is it about Patagonia that means they are believed, whereas H&M is questioned? This distinction between what antecedents one brand may have over another is largely not discussed within green claim literature. As highlighted, there is a clear controversy in the fashion industry regarding sustainability (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). Part of which is seen in the success level of these brands in their use of green claims (Beer, 2018; Billinton, 2019). Therefore, the fashion industry, specifically H&M and Patagonia, are compelling vehicles in which to test the phenomenon of green brand knowledge and its effect on the perception of a claim.

The majority of green claim or green marketing studies have had green brand knowledge and perception factors as the dependent variables, subsequently, analysing how the brand is affected by the green claim (Akuturan, 2018; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Leonidou et al., 2011; Marder, Dodd & Leonard, 2012). It is only Musgrove, Choi and Cox (2018) and Özsoy and Avcilar's (2016) studies that prove there is a relationship between brand factors and claim credibility. However, Musgrove, Choi and Cox's (2018) study only indicated corporate credibility to have a potential effect on a green claim. Moreover, this was only within the context of the hospitality industry and did not expand to green brand knowledge. Additionally, Özsoy and Avcilar's (2016) study focused on consumer environmental attitudes as their independent variable and not brand knowledge factors. However, their study indicated that the higher the environmental concern, the higher the scepticism towards a brand and their marketing campaigns.

Musgrove, Choi and Cox (2018) and Özsoy and Avcilar's (2016) studies and the contrast between Patagonia and H&M, leaves us to question what other green brand knowledge factors can affect the success of green claims. Indicating a gap in the literature. The importance of this stems from both a theoretical and managerial standpoint. Theoretically, to interchange the variable order and place the green brand knowledge as the independent variable could help academics understand the relationship between brands and green communications more comprehensively. Furthermore, from a managerial perspective companies should understand what factors will affect the success of a green marketing campaign. Will it be well received? To what extent should the original brand be altered before they can successfully release green messages? This effect of green brand knowledge on green claims will be the focus of this study. As a result, the following research question has been formulated.

1.3 The Research Question

Does a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge affect their perception of a green claim?

1.4 The Research Objectives

Within this study, the aim is to discover if a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge has an effect on their perception of a brand's green claim. This will be achieved by taking the original elements of Keller's (2003) brand knowledge framework and adapting them to fit within the green branding context. Subsequently, it will test whether consumers' pre-existing green brand awareness, -image, -experiences and -attitudes (including feelings and thoughts), are related to the success of a green claim. Namely, do they find the claim credible or do they perceive it as greenwashing.

This will be achieved through two surveys distributed to Millennial and Generation Z Swedish nationals and residents. The surveys will focus on two well known brands, Patagonia and H&M. These brands have been chosen as they represent varying ends of the green perception spectrum. Patagonia is considered a brand that has high credibility and is successful in creating a green brand image (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). However, H&M has received a great deal of critique within the media regarding their sustainability efforts and is, subsequently, using communication strategies that aim at damage control (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010; Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018).

1.5 Aimed Contribution

The aim of this study is to discover whether a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge has an effect on their perception of a brand's green claim, whether it is credible or greenwashing. Focusing on Swedish Millennial and Generation Z consumers. Through this, a new perspective on green branding and green claim literature will be gained, by understanding the brand's effects. In the following literature review it will become apparent that the majority of previous studies have looked at individual facets of green brand knowledge as the dependent variable and green claims as the independent (Akuturan, 2018; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Leonidou et al., 2011; Marder, Dodd & Leonard, 2012). Furthermore, focusing specifically on Swedish Millennials and Generation Z allows this study to gain the perspective from a country that is revered for its contribution to solving climate change and a demographic that is more environmentally aware and active than their older counterparts (Svenska Institutet, 2018; Jung, 2019). Subsequently, this study's contribution stems from its focus on green brand knowledge as an affecting factor. Allowing for a better understanding of whether existing perceptions of a brand can affect the credibility of a green claim on an aware consumer group.

1.6 Outline of Thesis

This thesis consists of eight main chapters. The first chapter included the introduction and background information on the topic. The chapter also included the problem formulation which led up to the research question. Moreover, the aims of the study were presented. The following chapter is the literature review where previous literature will be introduced and discussed, together with relevant concepts. The third chapter is the hypothesis development. Including the theoretical framework which the hypotheses are formulated from. The fourth chapter focuses on the chosen method, starting with the philosophical perspective of the study and a detailed description of how the research was performed. Thereafter follows the fifth chapter, where the results of the study are presented. The study includes two surveys, and the findings from each are presented separately. In the sixth chapter, there will be a discussion about the technical aspects of

the results. This is followed by the seventh chapter which is the main discussion, including discussion of the findings from each of the two surveys. Thereafter the main contributions of the study are considered. Lastly, the eighth chapter will provide the reader with the main conclusions. Followed by theoretical implications, managerial implications, limitations of the study, and finally, potential areas for future research.

2.0 Literature Review

The following section establishes the conclusions, contradictions and gaps within the pre-existing literature from the various appropriate fields. The research areas reviewed are ethical brand perception, brand knowledge, green claims, greenwashing and green brand knowledge. Through this discussion hypotheses will be drawn, and a theoretical model will be developed to guide the study.

2.1 Ethical Brand Perception

Even though this study focuses on sustainability, the field of business ethics is appropriate to discuss. Business ethics is a well established and mature research field (Liu, Mai & MacDonald, 2019). In Liu, Mai and MacDonald's (2019) review of 6308 research articles within business ethics from February 1982 to December 2016, it is apparent that sustainability is a topic often associated and discussed in the field. Moreover, Syed Alwi, Muhammad Ali and Nguyen (2017) argue that to be sustainable is a part of being an ethical company. Furthermore, Brunk (2012) argues that a company's ethicality can have a crucial role in forming a consumer's overall perception of a brand. Therefore, in order to fully understand the consumer's perception towards the brand, the ethical brand perception is relevant.

Syed Alwi, Muhammad Ali and Nguyen (2017) define an ethical brand as a firm that upholds its moral responsibility to its stakeholders. They suggest that ethicality is abstract at the corporate level. However, it can be categorised into economic, social and environmental responsibilities. How ethical a brand is can have a crucial role in forming the consumer's overall perception of a brand (Brunk, 2012). What defines an ethical or unethical brand is based on the consumer's subjective moral judgement of what is right and wrong (Brunk, 2010). According to Syed Alwi, Muhammad Ali and Nguyen (2017), being an ethical brand is equivalent to; acting morally, considering economic, social and environmental responsibilities, having integrity, being honest, taking accountability, having commitment to doing the right thing and creating added value for the firm, customers and its stakeholders. They argue that adopting an ethical behaviour will be perceived as doing the right thing and the brand will thus gain integrity, honesty and accountability. This will result in an improved company reputation and brand loyalty (Syed Alwi, Muhammad Ali & Nguyen, 2017).

Brunk (2012) argues that the consumer's perception of how ethical a company is, affects the company's overall reputation. Subsequently, the moral evaluation of a company plays an important role in forming the corporate reputation (Brunk, 2012). Moreover, Lim (2016) argues that companies that act ethically, and care about their consumers and others in the ecosystem, will

financially benefit from it. As a result, companies have become more concerned about their ethical image (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011). Additionally, Brunk and Blümelhuber (2011) argue that companies engage in ethical behaviour to showcase their ethicality and create favourable brand perceptions. In the same way as companies engage in sustainability practices to showcase their efforts and gain green associations (Jones, 2019). In addition, Brunk and de Boer (2020) argue that it can become problematic when the company makes ethical promises but does not act accordingly. In other words, when the consumer receives different contradicting information about the brand, this can result in a damaged brand reputation (Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

2.1.1 Consumer Perceived Ethicality

Consumer perceived ethicality is a way for organisations to assess how their actions are perceived in the context of business ethics (Brunk, 2012). This conceptualises the potential impact of campaigns related to Corporate Social Responsibility, for example sustainability. Highlighting how virtuous behaviours and mistakes can impact a consumer's ethical perception of a brand (Brunk, 2012). Brunk (2012) states that it is crucial for companies to understand how the consumer forms these ethical perceptions. However, it is also important to realise that the consumer's perceived ethicality represents the consumer's overall *subjective* impression of the brand. Therefore, this may not be an accurate reflection of the brand's actual behaviour (Brunk, 2012). For example, an ethical brand may not be perceived as such if the consumers are not informed that the company is avoiding damaging behaviour. Similarly, an unethical brand may be perceived as ethical if the company is communicating ethical efforts well. However, as previously stated, the brand reputation can be damaged if the consumer realises that the brand does not act accordingly (Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

2.2 Brand Knowledge

Within branding literature there are various theories and terms derived to comprehensively group the processes and factors that lead to consumers forming a set of opinions on a brand. Keller (2006) illustrates brand knowledge as the cumulation of thoughts, feelings, images and associations that defines how a consumer perceives a brand. In brief, the brand knowledge concept claims that the resulting descriptive and evaluative brand information creates personal meaning, which is then stored in the consumers memory (Keller, 2003; Keller, 2006). In contrast, Brunk and de Boer (2020) defines brand perception as the consumer's interpretation of stimuli integrated into an overall impression of the brand. However, if we consider Veloutsou, Chatzipanagiotou and Christodoulides' (2020) argument for the importance of brand perceptions, they suggest that the strength of dislike towards the brand stems from„either individual or collective, negative perceptions. Therefore, it could be considered that brand perceptions precede the accumulative brand knowledge (Keller, 2003; Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

The following subsections will go on to discuss the different facets of the brand knowledge model (Keller, 2003). However, for this study, two facets will be omitted: attributes and benefits (Keller, 2003). These have been removed as both are more descriptive, functional aspects of the brand related products specifically. Whereas within this study a focus on the brand at a more abstract level is required.

2.2.1 Brand Awareness

Keller (2006) highlights two key factors within brand knowledge; brand awareness and image. In his earlier work in 2003, he defines awareness as the identification of a brand and whether it satisfies the pre-established needs. However, in Keller's (2006) later work, he takes on a more analytical and concrete approach to discussing brand awareness. He claims it as the strength to which a consumer can recognise and recall a brand under different conditions. He goes on to imply that the breadth of brand awareness surrounds how many differing purchase situations a consumer can be in, when a brand comes to mind. Whereas, depth is the ability for consumers to recognise and recall both aided and unaided (Keller, 2006). Alexandra and Cerchias (2018), discuss the outcomes of awareness in that consumers are likely to have a more positive response when faced with a familiar brand. Through their case and literature-based research, they clarified that high brand awareness, in conjunction with positive associations, can lead to better perceived quality and lasting connections with customers. What becomes of interest here, is the idea of positive associations being a necessary mediating variable for brands wanting to reap the benefits of awareness (Alexandra & Cerchias, 2018). One association of interest that Alexandra and Cerchais (2018) highlights is credibility.

Herbig and Milewicz (1995) define credibility as the believability of a brand's current intention. That stems from the level of consistency in which the brand, in the past, has retained efficacy. Within this relationship, it could be suggested that if the familiar brand has credibility it will be met with positive responses (Alexandra & Cerchais, 2018). Yet, Herbig and Milewicz (1995) insinuate that credibility cannot be assessed in isolation, as a brand's reputation is also defined by the consistency of said efficacy. However, the analysis of reputation is not made based on what the current intention is, but the summation of past behaviours (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Subsequently, a brand can be consistently credible, yet, if their reputation is poor, more weight is likely to be placed on that. How does this relate to awareness? Belz and Schmidt-Riediger (2010) suggest that brands with higher familiarity are likely to be watched more closely. Thus, brands with higher awareness need to invest more in maintaining a positive reputation and good credibility, as errors are more likely to be noticed than that of a less familiar brand (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). Furthermore, if in the past a familiar brand has diminished its

credibility, this association is more likely to resist change within the consumers mind (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). To put it simply, a brand with higher awareness has more to lose from the slightest mistake.

2.2.2 Brand Image

Brand image consists of the beliefs and views of a brand, interpreted through the abstract characteristics that consumers perceive (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Tan & Trang, 2019). Hatch and Schultz (2001) take on a broader perspective and suggest that brand image is the complete impression of the company held externally. More specifically, Keller (2006) describes brand image as the consumer's perceptions and preferences towards the brand that leads to held associations. In addition, Tan and Trang (2019) argue that brand image is what comes to a consumer's mind when the brand is mentioned. They further argue that it is shaped by past information and the consumer's experience with the brand. Even though there are many interpretations of what a brand image is, what is clear is that brand image is both abstract and concrete in its interpretation and is a concept that is continuously evolving (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Furthermore, an important part of brand image is that it is a crucial part of brand equity (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001). Faircloth, Capella and Alford (2001) found in their study that brand image has a positive direct effect on brand equity. Hence, brands with high equity are more likely to have a positive brand image than brands with low equity (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001).

There is a contradiction in the literature as to the origin of brand image and whether it is built internally or externally. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) imply that the difficulty of achieving a strong brand image is that it stems from the consumers emotions and reasoning. Suggesting that brand image stems from the consumers perception of reality and not the *brand's* reality (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). However, Tan and Trang (2019) argue that the brand image is a result of the organisation's effort to create an impression of the brand in the mind of the consumer. They also argue that brand image is built to position the consumer's perception of the brand. When competitors emerge, there is a need to position the brand as unique compared to others and highlight the advantages to create a competitive advantage (Tan & Trang, 2019). In other words, they suggest that brand image is the result of a company's strategy to create a certain perception and associations towards the brand.

Although brand image is suggested to be the result of a company's branding strategy (Tan & Trang, 2019), it is the consumer perception that constitutes the brand image (Keller, 2006). Therefore, the image may not be equivalent to what the company had in mind (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Tan and Trang (2019) argue that it is not easy to form a brand image and that it takes time. They argue that this is due to the fact a brand image is constituted by external impressions that take time to form. They also argue that once a brand image is formed, it will be difficult to

change and remains relatively consistent in the long run. Sjödin and Törn (2006) add to the discussion that the image may differ among consumers as they may have different associations and attitudes towards the brand. Furthermore, even though Tan and Trang (2019) argue that brand image is difficult to change, they also state that it is the current view consumers have. Consequently, this suggests that the brand image could have been different in the past and may change in the future.

2.2.3 Brand Experiences

The concept of experiences refers to brand related episodes either in previous purchases or consumer behaviours in connection to the brand (Keller, 2003). Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) study into brand experience resulted with the creation of the first comprehensive brand experience scale. Before formulating the scale, they denoted that brand experience is the specific and subjective sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses of a consumer after experiencing the brand. An experience can involve being exposed to different brand specific stimuli such as design, identity, packaging and communications (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Andreini et al. (2018) agree with the idea of subjectivity, yet, deepen the concept. They suggest that brand experiences can resolve societal concerns and can be used by consumers to express personality and help construct their social identity (Escalas & Betteman, 2005; cited in Andreini et al., 2018). Escalas's (2004) earlier work touches upon this as he discusses experiences in relation to consumer narratives. Namely, the stories consumers create about a brand from the personal, or impersonal, encounters they have had with it. Subsequently, when consumers experience a brand, they are likely to integrate the stories with external information and their own self concept, creating a narrative surrounding that brand (Escalas, 2004).

Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) go on to suggest that brand experiences can vary in both intensity, length and spontaneity. Suggesting that those brand experiences that are deliberate and over a longer period, are more likely to be stored within the consumer's memory or brand knowledge (Oliver, 1997; Reicheld, 1996; cited in Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Under this logic, it could be suggested that as an advertisement is for the majority not deliberate nor long in duration, this would not be stored. However, Bapat's (2018) study of banking brands showed that advertisements had a significant effect on the subject's brand experience responses. Implying that advertisements should be considered a key stimuli. Furthermore, Bapat (2018) and Andreini et al. (2018) discuss an aspect of brand experience that Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) overlooks, relationships. Bapat (2018) suggests that the importance of relational brand experiences lies more within service-based sectors. However, Andreini et al.'s (2018) conceptual model indicates that brand experiences can activate meaningful consumer relationships with brands, themselves, peers and society.

Nevertheless, the importance of brand experience within brand knowledge is shown by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008). They propose that past brand experiences can influence both the cognitive and the affective stage of a consumer response. In the cognitive stage, the consumer's experience with a brand forms knowledge which influences whether the information is supported or argued against. Furthermore, in the affective stage, experiences can also form part of the sensory element (Hastak & Olsen, 1989). As they have pre-existing associations and imagery which can cause time-specific emotions to resurface (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008).

2.2.4 Brand Thoughts

Keller (2003) defines thoughts as the personal cognitive responses (CR) to information given by a brand. Within Park, Stoel and Lennon's (2008) review of CR literature they discuss the Hierarchy of Effects Model. This model establishes that consumer behaviour in response to stimuli occurs in three steps; cognitive, affective and conative (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008). For the purpose of discussing brand related thoughts, the focus will be on the cognitive stage. The cognitive stage consists of developing awareness and knowledge and subsequently, responding with thoughts (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008). Hastak and Olson's (1989) study indicates that once a consumer is exposed to brand related information, they create spontaneous thoughts. These can either provide support to the information or form counterarguments. In other words, consumers either respond positively or negatively with their thoughts.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008) expand on this and suggest that CR's do not only involve thoughts or knowledge. However, it also involves sensory elements such as imagery, associations and fantasies. Escalas (2004) supports this when discussing advertisement driven thoughts in the form of narratives. Suggesting that when brands present external information to a consumer, they are likely to process it as a story involving themselves. If the narrative is positive the consumer can envision or fantasise the brand, helping them to fulfill a goal, need or be interwoven into a path of identity development (Escalas, 2004). Hastak and Olson (1989) support this idea of thoughts developing associations. Within their study they exposed subjects to a set of fictitious adverts, testing two of them specifically. They found that CR's have a strong mediating role in determining cognitive structures, attitudes and beliefs regarding the brand. Furthermore, they denoted that CR's have a dominating effect on how consumers cumulatively evaluate a brand. Subsequently, if consumers respond to brand related information with a counterargument, or negative thoughts, they are significantly more likely to form a negative evaluation of the brand (Hastak & Olson, 1989). Nevertheless, this study involved fictitious brands. Therefore, it is difficult to make conclusions as to whether the CR's have the same effect for a consumer who has pre-existing knowledge on the brand. What is clear

is that CR's, or thoughts, play a significant role in the development of a consumer's relationship with a brand.

2.2.5 Brand Feelings

Feelings are the personal emotional responses to brand related information (Keller, 2003). Within the Hierarchy of Effects Model, feelings fall within the affective category (Park, Stoel & Lennons, 2008). This means that during information processing, there is a sensory response system that means emotions occur leading to an affective response (AR) (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Jokšaitė, Banytė and Virvilaitė (2007) suggest that feelings towards a brand are developed after some level of interaction with it. Whether it be directly through a purchase or indirectly through an advertisement or secondary source. When discussing what emotions are commonly felt, Watson and Spence (2007) state that it is difficult to fully understand. This is due to the amount of potential feelings and the complexity consumers find in logically explaining how they feel towards a brand. However, Batra and Ray (1986) performed a study categorising the potential emotions felt within an AR. This was done by examining the past literature and merging discovered responses into fourteen categories (*see Table 1*). They suggest that a consumer's emotional response to a brand related stimulus is automatic and usually occurs without effort. However, they also indicate that external factors must also be considered, and that the AR can be largely influenced by the mood of the consumer at the time (Batra & Ray, 1986). More recently, Laros and Steenkamp (2005) has developed a consumer emotion hierarchy. This is similar within its categorisation, however, concludes by outlining the basic positive and negative feelings a consumer can face. The positive emotions consist of contentment, happiness, love and pride. Furthermore, the negative emotions consist of anger, fear, sadness and shame (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005).

Watson and Spence (2007) would call these studies a category approach. Although they would agree that it demonstrates affective responses to a stimulus, they would also suggest that it is limited in showing when a particular emotion is felt. Nevertheless, Batra and Ray's (1986) study concluded that, like the CR stage, the AR stage is key in consumers developing attitudes and preferences towards the brand. Jokšaitė, Banytė and Virvilaitė (2007) support this by suggesting that feelings or emotions are one of the main factors as to whether a brand is subjectively attractive.

Batra & Ray (1986) Categorisation of Affective Responses	
Negative	**Positive**
Scepticism	Pride
Anger	SEVA (Surgency, Elation, Vigor, Activation)
Fear/Anxiety	Deactivation (Quiet Pleasure)
Pity	Social Affection
Guilt	Surprise
Disgust/ Scorn	Interest/Expectancy
Shame	Drives

Table 1: Affective Response Categories (Batra & Ray, 1986)

2.2.6 Brand Attitudes

Finally, attitudes are defined as the overall evaluation and individual resolution to the received brand information (Keller, 2003). Hastak and Olson (1989) describe attitudes as the post experience cognitive structural elements. In other words, they form and remain once the CR and AR has been made. Subsequently, it can be assumed that both brand related thoughts and feelings accumulate to brand related attitudes (Hastak & Olson, 1989). Faircloth, Capella and Alford

(2001) denote that the importance for marketers to understand brand attitudes stems from its effect on consumer held brand equity. Consumer held brand equity meaning the biased consumer actions towards an object, whether they have the motivation to purchase or not. They state that attitude influences equity through its influence on brand image, which in turn defines attractiveness, purchase intention and then equity.

Najmi, Atefi and Mirbagheri's (2012) field review indicated that the idea of attitudes is constantly evolving and there are several methods to evaluate it. However, there was a consistent mediating factor within the various approaches, brand beliefs. Mitchell and Olson (1981; cited in Gardner, 1985) suggest that brand beliefs have a significant effect on the formation of the brand attitude. However, Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) imply that attitudes are the sum of all the consumers' evaluative beliefs, where the beliefs are defined by a set of evaluative attributes. This concept stems from the Expectancy Value Model (Ajzen, 2008). This model suggests that attitudes are formed through subjective beliefs. However, it also suggests that logic is not the key driver for attitude formation, but ideas that serve the consumer's needs (Ajzen, 2008). Ajzen (2008) adds to the discussion that attitudes are rarely formed from unbiased judgements but prejudice, self-serving attributes and social judgements. Subsequently, it could be suggested that attitudes towards a brand are not solely formed from the consumer themselves, but society and other external factors also play a role. However, it is difficult to conclude that brand attitudes are solely formed by beliefs. If we refer back to the field of CR it states that both affective and cognitive responses can influence a consumer's attitude which then forms a cognitive structure (Millar & Tesser, 1986; cited in Hastak & Olson, 1989; Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008). Moreover, there are wealth of studies to suggest that attitude formation can be affected by advertising information (Gardner, 1985; Najmi, Atefi & Mirbagheri, 2012; Swelden, Van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2010) Subsequently, although beliefs play a significant part in formulating attitudes it may not be the only affecting variable.

One contradiction within the literature is the rigidity of brand attitudes. Swelden et al. (2010) state that attitudes that are conditioned through advertising are resilient and arduous to change once formulated. Furthermore, Jokšaitė, Banytė and Virvilaitė (2007) state that once an attitude is formed, it is for the majority permanent. The idea of attitude permanency is questioned with the influence of marketing. Lutz's (1975) study suggests that a message can be persuasive enough to change a single cognitive element. If that single cognitive element is changed, it can affect the overall cognitive structure and subsequent attitude. However, Lutz (1975) also suggests that negative information can have a greater impact on the cognitive structure than positive. Implying that negative attitudes are harder to alter than positive ones. Although the idea of attitude change remains contested, the literature clearly indicates that a formed attitude is a rigid one. Therefore, the original attitude formation is of great importance to marketers (Jokšaitė, Banytė & Virvilaitė, 2007; Lutz, 1975; Swelden et al., 2019).

2.3 Credible Green Claims

Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) state that as the value of green increases, so does the investment of companies into green products, processes and brands. Although it is understood that companies making sustainability activities visible can improve consumer reactions, the ways in which to effectively communicate green claims is still somewhat ambiguous (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Subsequently, a scepticism over many of the claim's credibility and, subsequently, a brand's authenticity becomes apparent (Leonidou et al., 2011; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020). This difficulty in achieving claim credibility was seen in Özsoy and Avcilar's (2016) study. When using PLS-PM to test the relationship between consumers' environmental concern and claim credibility, the relationship was not significant, and the hypothesis was not supported. However, they were able to find a significant relationship between environmental concern and advertisement scepticism (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). This is an indication that consumers are more likely to be sceptical than willing to accept a credible claim. However, Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) denote that many organisations do invest greatly into making and communicating virtuous green products and initiatives. Subsequently, it will be the literature regarding these credible green claims that is focused on within this section.

When discussing green communications, there are various forms that can reach consumers. However, within this study the focus will be green advertisements, as it is the most common (Usrey, Palihawadana, Saridakis & Theotokis, 2020). Schmidt, Langner, Hennigs, Wiedmann, Karampournioti and Lischka (2017) define green advertisements as a communication that focuses on the triple bottom line: planet, people and profit. However, Leonidou et al. (2011) expand on this in that any communication which features ecological, environmental sustainability or pro-nature messages that are directly linked to the concerns of their stakeholders, are counted. Ishaq and Di Maria (2020) state that green communications should focus on educating consumers and making them aware of the efforts being made. Leonidou et al. (2011) reinforce this, yet add a more realistic dimension. That despite the pro-environmental messages, most green advertisements still have commercial motivations.

2.3.1 Formulating Credible Claims

As stated, there is still an allusivity as to the exact science of successfully formulating a green claim or message (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). However, there is a discussion within the literature as to the various techniques that try to improve the message's prosperity. Transformational advertising is a method that aims to alter beliefs and attitudes towards a brand (Keller, 1987; cited in Schmidt et al., 2017). This is done through retrieval cues that have a strong enough impact to transform the consumer's meaning of a brand within their memory (Keller,

1987; cited in Schmidt et al., 2017). This method is commonly used by marketers in this context (Keller, 1987; cited in Schmidt et al., 2017).

The concept of retrieval cues relates to Usrey et al.'s (2020) discussion of green advertisements in the form of signals. Meaning cues for consumers that can create a blatant meaning. They suggest that this is especially used within green advertisements to explicitly show the product to be eco-friendly. Usrey et al. (2020) define this as green emphasis or explicit green signals. Namely, those advertisements that aim to make the green benefits the most prominent feature. The concept of strong signals or claims is debated in the literature regarding its effectiveness. Chang (2011) states that consumers become more sceptical, or discount the credibility of strong green claims, as it indicates that there was a higher level of investment. Subsequently, there is a movement towards more moderate claims such as Usrey et al.'s (2020) encouragement of green understatements or implicit green signals. Where the green features are not as prominent (Usrey et al., 2020). Concluding that downplaying green benefits can in many cases be beneficial to the advertisement.

The concept of signal intensity could be a form of framing (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) refer to framing as promoting an interpretation within a message. They outline two important framing concepts for green claims, valence and efficacy. Efficacy refers to the number of claims used to emphasise a message, and valence as to whether it is expressed positively or negatively (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala., 2014). Within Usrey et al.'s (2020) signalling, the intensity within the message lies within the green attributes and that is the basis for the claim in being successful. Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) would contest this and suggest that it is the valence of the claim which defines its acceptance. In their study they support the existing consensus, in that negative framing is most effective in influencing both consumer attitudes and behaviours. In that instead of the claim emphasising that something helpful, for example being recyclable, they should emphasise that there is a lack or reduction in harmful attributes, for example no pesticides (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014).

Yet, as established there is an increasing scepticism over green claims (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Leonidou et al., 2011; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020). Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) believe that for credible green claims, this stems from it becoming ineffective. They imply that a cause of ineffectiveness could stem from framing efficacy. Namely, when a brand uses multiple claims to emphasise the message which can lead to information overload. This in turn causes confusion, loss of clarity, or worse, conflicting statements (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala 2014). Suggesting that if a company chooses to use multiple claims that do not align perfectly, they are less likely to be believed and they could risk losing not only current but future credibility.

2.3.2 Claim Benefits and Prerequisites

There are several benefits for organisations communicating green claims. However, the literature indicates there are necessary mediators for the claim to be successful. On a product level, Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) state that green claims can help deliberately emphasise product attributes and reinforce associations of being green. Furthermore, Jones et al., (2008) suggest that by emphasising commitment to sustainability, a company can differentiate their brands' products. This aids Leonidou et al. (2011) when they suggest that companies are more inclined to release product related messages, rather than image or environmentally fact-based claims. However, on a brand level Grillo et al. (2008; Iyer & Banjeree, 1993; cited in Leonidou et al., 2011) denote that green advertisements can act as the catalyst to companies achieving a pro-environmental brand image, whilst opening their offerings to consumers who consider themselves conscious. Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) reinforce this by stating that the social environment can benefit a green claim in that participation in these products or initiatives can help consumers verify their social identity as a conscious consumer. Moreover, Lim (2016) argues that when companies engage in sustainable practices and communicate it correctly, it builds the company reputation by increasing environmental legitimacy.

Although Lim (2016) discusses environmental legitimacy as an outcome, Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) discuss the concept as a prerequisite. They imply that legitimacy is the external perception that the actions made by a company are desirable. This, along with reputation, can give source credibility and can help give a claim integrity (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). To achieve this, they state that organisations must be willing to disclose the impact their products or initiatives have on the environment. This in turn achieves an overall corporate credibility (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Keller and Aaker's (1998) experimental study into corporate marketing, outlines the idea of corporate credibility. In short, whether a consumer perceives a brand to be good at what it claims to do (Keller & Aaker, 1998; Keller, 2012). They divide this consumer perception into three categories: expertise, trustworthiness and likeability. Expertise is defined as how much the consumer perceives the company as competent in satisfying needs (Keller, 2012). Trustworthiness is whether consumers believe a company is honest, dependable and sensitive (Keller, 2012). Finally, likeability, is to what extent a consumer perceives the company as interesting, attractive, fun or any other adjective that means they want to be a part of the brand (Keller, 2012). Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) state that once corporate credibility is achieved, it confirms a brand's reputation and environmental legitimacy. Which, subsequently, allows them to use their environmental commitment as a signal to accept their claim and alleviate any potential concerns about greenwashing (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala 2014). However, for brands without corporate credibility and legitimacy, concerns may be more resisting and difficult to overcome.

The benefits to corporate credibility in green claims can be seen in Musgrove, Choi and Cox's (2018) study of the hospitality industry. They suggest that organisations with high corporate credibility will have less weight put on the information given within future claims. Subsequently, their claim is more likely to be successful and generate positive consumer responses. However, they denote that claim type is likely to influence this, concluding that substantial green claims are more likely to be believed than those that are vague. The concepts of corporate credibility and environmental legitimacy are the first indications, within the literature, that brand factors can affect the success of a green claim, and not just be a result (Musgrove, Choi and Cox's, 2018; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala 2014).

2.3.3 Green Brand Equity

As established, the value placed on being green within today's business context has grown drastically (Lee, 2008). With some suggesting that it has become somewhat of a prerequisite to being in business, whilst holding great potential equity (Lee, 2008; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020). Subsequently, the academic discussion into green brand equity regarding how it is achieved, and its potential benefits, has quickly evolved. In its traditional sense, Voss and Gammoh (2004; Ishaq et al. 2014; cited in Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020) define brand equity as the ability of a brand to influence the overall organisation's financial performance. However, being green or sustainable brings the idea of equity into a new, and in many ways contradicting, context.

Through Ishaq and Di Maria's (2020) empirical review of the evolution of sustainability and brand equity, they state that there is no explicit framework to link the two. Yet, they imply that, driven by external pressures, organisations go through a process of connecting various decision-making and social causes strategies. Many of which are determined by operations, consequently, indicating trade offs between sustainability and efficiency. This is contradicted by Li, Li and Sun (2019) who state that green brand equity consists of five aspects: image, reciprocity, trust, satisfaction and attachment. Implying that green brand equity should be looked at through a consumer relationship lense. Subsequently, the term *consumer-based green brand equity* has been coined (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010; Chen, 2009; cited in Li, Li & Sun, 2019). Suggesting that green equity stems from the consumers' perceptions, affections and behaviours towards a brand committing to environmental concerns. This relates to Chen (2009) who shows through a questionnaire-based study that green brand image, satisfaction and trust are all positively related to green brand equity.

Each article's individual take on green brand equity highlights various steps within its formation. Ishaq and Di Maria's (2020) review looks from a managerial perspective as to how it is achieved. However, Chen (2009) and Li, Li and Sun (2019) demonstrate the potential outcomes, yet from a consumer-based standpoint. Considering Szabo and Webster's (2020) discussion into green branding and credibility, they understand that green branding is likely to cause more scepticism than that of traditional branding. Therefore, Li, Li and Sun's (2019) variable of trust becomes more relevant. Consequently, the concepts of relationships, trust and credibility should be key considerations (Li, Li and Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020)

Furthermore, Li, Li and Sun (2019) suggest that as the relationship perspective is in many cases ignored, efforts into gaining green equity can become obsolete. This is due to the poor alignment in strategies, meaning communications can lead to a lack of brand knowledge and scepticism. Akturan (2018) also discusses the idea of scepticism in the form of green brand credibility and its relationship to equity. In the study, the focus is on high and low involvement products and find that brand credibility is positively related to equity. Therefore, it can be said that having credible, trusting relationships are key drivers towards gaining green brand equity (Akturan, 2018; Li, Li & Sun, 2019). However, the Akturan (2018) study focuses on products. Yet, Chen (2009) implies that the real difficulty within establishing green equity is incorporating sustainability within the overall corporate vision, not just within product promotion. Again, negating Ishaq and Di Maria's (2020) perspective of issues being more operational.

2.4 Greenwashing Claims

Sustainability has become an important part in forming consumer perceptions (Chen, 2009). Therefore, companies have become concerned with how their sustainability efforts are being perceived by consumers (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Brunk & de Boer, 2020). As previously mentioned, Ishaq and Di Maria (2020) state that green communication includes educating consumers and making them aware of the company's sustainability efforts. However, some companies are more interested in using green communication to appear green rather than actually being green (Budinsky & Bryant, 2013). This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of greenwashing. Jones (2019) explains this as companies falsely portraying their environmental responsibility through advertising. In other words, when companies claim to be committed to sustainability, but it is rather an attempt to market the brand (Jones et al., 2008).

2.4.1 Vague Claims and False Claims

Jones (2019) explains that greenwashing only emerges when a company's performance contradicts the actual track record. Companies knowingly or unknowingly use different techniques to do this (Jones, 2019). These greenwashing techniques are called; hidden trade-off,

no proof, vague, irrelevant, lesser than two evils, fibbing/lying and false labels (Jones, 2019). Consumers have difficulties seeing through some of these greenwashing techniques (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Specifically, the two types of claims often used in greenwashing, vague and false claims (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Marder, Dodd and Leonard (2012) argue that consumers are becoming more aware of greenwashing and can identify greenwashing claims. However, Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018) argue that this is only true for false claims. They argue that companies can use vague claims to enhance the consumers' brand perception, since they are less able to identify them as greenwashing.

False claims, on the other hand, can according to Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018) be detected by the consumer. Damaging the attitudes towards the brand by increasing greenwashing associations. Therefore, false claims should be avoided (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Yet, Budinsky and Bryant (2013) argue that if there is a coherent message with elements, such as visuals, attached, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate false from true claims. Furthermore, the ability to detect false claims is said to also depend on how environmentally knowledgeable the consumer is (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). It is suggested that consumers with a higher environmental knowledge can detect false claims to a greater extent (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018).

However, this ability to detect greenwashing is not as strong for consumers who are simply environmentally *concerned* (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Consumers with higher levels of environmental concern feel a necessity to protect the environment (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Therefore, previous studies have found that concerned consumers are strongly affected by environmental claims (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). However, Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018) suggest that concern does not necessarily mean the consumer is able to detect misleading advertisements. Consequently, these types of consumers have a higher risk of being exposed to greenwashing. Furthermore, Fuentes (2015) argues that companies reformulate sustainability issues to align with the lifestyle of their target consumers. This becomes important as consumers use products to help build their identity (Fuentes, 2015). Consumers are argued to be active and use products for their own purposes (Fuentes, 2015). Therefore, companies adapt sustainability issues and frame them to be aligned with the targeted consumers' lifestyle. Subsequently, companies can exploit consumers with higher environmental concerns because of their desire to build a sustainable identity. Making them easier to target alternative solutions to.

2.4.2 Evaluating Greenwashing

The focus when evaluating greenwashing, is often on the green claims made in advertisements. Therefore, previous research has been devoted to the analysis of advertising discourse, when it comes to greenwashing (Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Maier, 2011; Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer,

2018). Consequently, the practices that contradicts the green claims in the advertisements tend to be neglected (Jones, 2019). On the contrary, Jones (2019) argues that companies use advertising to display their environmental responsibility for environmentally aware consumers, while at the same time hiding practices that would not be approved. This stems from the belief that if the consumers are made aware of the sustainability efforts, this may contribute to a green brand image (Leonidou et al., 2011). Consequently, green advertisements may not reflect what companies are doing, yet, it is a strategy to strengthen the image. In other words, to look at the advertisements and the claims made are not enough. In order to assess if the company is using greenwashing, one must evaluate if the company's actions contradicts the claims made.

Furthermore, Jones (2019) argues that one cannot solely assess whether a claim is greenwashing by looking at a company's advertisements or corporate sustainability reports. To analyse a green claim, you need to have a comprehensive understanding of the system from which greenwashing emerges. This includes a critical analysis and evaluation of the underlying processes at three different levels: micro (product level), meso (company level) and macro (industry level).

Firstly, at the product level, the information needed involves an analysis of every stage of the product life cycle, including resource extraction, production, distribution, packaging, disposal etc. (Jones, 2019). Secondly, at the company level, a detailed corporate sustainability analysis is required (Jones, 2019). This includes political involvement, legal history, economic ties and long-term environmental impacts (Jones, 2019). In ensuring an accurate analysis, company transparency is required, as well as a comprehensive comparison of competitors (Jones, 2019). Finally, at the industry level, an industry wide analysis of company level information would be needed (Jones, 2019). Including information regarding greenwashing efforts specific to this industry (Jones, 2019). Jones (2019) argues that we can only say that a company is sustainable once we have this holistic overview. However, how willing companies are in giving this holistic overview may be questionable, as it requires companies to be 100% transparent.

2.4.3 Greenwashing's Affect on Brands

Jones (2019) argues that if the consumers remain unaware of practices that contradicts green advertisements, consumers will keep their favourable attitudes towards the company. Consequently, when not detected, greenwashing favours the brand attitudes and thus has a positive effect. However, greenwashing can also damage the brand. Brunk and de Boer (2020) suggest that one piece of negative information, such as the revelation of greenwashing, can have devastating consequences. They further argue that negative information can form a negative brand perception, no matter if there is positive brand information available also. This may be an effect of their suggestion that once a negative perception has been established, even virtuous behaviours may be interpreted as greenwashing (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). Therefore, trying to

immediately recover through further ethical or sustainable strategies may carry risk, as the brand's behaviour may be inconsistent with their now established position.

However, this unwillingness to forgive is said to be softened over time (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). As despite negative brand perceptions being difficult to change, *in the long run*, consumers tend to be more forgiving if a brand's misbehaviour is counterbalanced by virtuous behaviours. Subsequently, after a scandal, brand managers may have to anticipate long time periods of communicating positive brand information to recover brand perceptions. However, this may be difficult if the media continues communicating negative brand information. What is clear, is that, in the short term, greenwashing, if discovered, can be devastating (Brunk & de Boer, 2020; Jones, 2019). Yet, in the long run, with continued virtuous behaviours, there is a chance of recovery (Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

2.4.4 Incongruence Between Image and Communication

Even though Jones (2019) argues that companies use sustainability efforts to market their company, this may not always be the case. Companies may engage in sustainable practices but when they try to communicate this, it will still be perceived as greenwashing. This may be the result of incongruence between a brand's communication and its image (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Sjödin and Törn (2006) argue that an advertisement that is incongruent with brand associations makes the consumer question its credibility. As a result, an advertising campaign showcasing a brand's sustainability will not increase perceived ethicality but damage the brand instead (Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

In Arbouw, Ballantine and Ozanne's (2019) study, they investigate consumer attitude change in response to sustainable brand communication. They do this by using ads that are incongruent with the brand's image. They argue that if an already established image is incoherent with the brand's communication, it leads to less favourable brand evaluations. They explain that when companies incorporate new brand values, such as sustainability, these might be incongruent with the consumer's already existing beliefs and associations. This may lead to unfavourable brand associations which indicate that incorporating new brand values may be difficult. Arbouw, Ballantine and Ozanne's (2019) results suggest that less favourable brand evaluations can be a result of incongruence between advertisement and the brand. In addition, they found that congruent advertisements were perceived more favourable and increased brand attitude. This result indicates that if a company already has an established image, that is not built upon sustainable values, the brand may be damaged if the company communicates new sustainability efforts. This is supported by Sjödin and Törn (2006) who argue that if a brand's communication is incongruent with the consumer's associations and knowledge, it can create an incoherent corporate brand image. Arbouw, Ballantine and Ozanne's (2019) results support the idea that consumers react favourably to something that matches their expectations.

2.5 Green Brand Knowledge

Huang, Yang and Wang (2014) define green brand knowledge as the green brand node in the consumer's memory that relates to green commitments and their environmental concerns. Expressed through environmental associations (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Most studies that refer to green brand knowledge do not use the entire model as defined by Keller (2003) but simply awareness and image. However, this study will not only include awareness and image but experiences and attitudes (including feelings and thoughts). It is now understood that successful green claims can have insurmountable benefits for a brand, their image and subsequently, their equity (Leonidou et al., 2011). Moreover, as Musgrove, Choi and Cox's, (2018) study has indicated, factors that should be considered a part of the brand knowledge framework, can affect the credibility of a green claim. Subsequently, this section will establish this study's framework for green brand knowledge.

2.5.1 Green Brand Awareness

As previously stated, brand awareness relates to whether the consumer can recognise and recall the brand under different conditions (Keller, 2006). Moreover, a high brand awareness indicates that the brand is known by the consumers (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). However, green brand awareness is dissimilar, as it is an indication to how aware a consumer is that a brand is specifically green (Zubair Tariq, 2014). Zubair Tariq (2014) defines green brand awareness as the ability for a consumer to recognise and recall that a brand is green. To create green brand awareness, the marketers have to provide information regarding the company's sustainability efforts by using green communication (Zubair Tariq, 2014; Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020). Subsequently, green communication will affect whether the consumer has green brand awareness or not. This also implies that the information the consumer has access to, is dependent on what information the company chooses to disclose. Jones (2019) argues that companies use advertising to display their environmental responsibility. In other words, using their sustainability efforts to market their brand, leaving the consumer unaware of practices that contradicts the green advertisement. Subsequently, the reason why the consumer recognises and recalls the brand as green, may be a result of the green communication of the company. This can be both an accurate reflection of the company's sustainability efforts, or, as Jones (2019) suggests, a tool to market the company.

Alexandra and Cerchias (2018) argue that consumers are likely to have a more positive response when faced with a familiar brand. In addition, Özsoy and Avcilar (2016) argue that consumers tend to take the global reputation of a brand into consideration when evaluating the believability of an advert. They found in their study that adverts of globally well-known brands had low scores in scepticism and high scores in believability (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). They further argue that if

a company has positioned its brand as trustable, global, powerful and sympathetic, they can use deceptive claims without making any negative impact on their target audience (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). Therefore, it could be suggested that consumers value a brand's reputation when evaluating the credibility of a brand. Moreover, a brand that has positioned itself as trustable, global, powerful and sympathetic is likely to be able to use deceptive claims because the consumer recognises the brand as green (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). Namely, that the brand has high green brand awareness.

2.5.2 Green Brand Image

As previously stated, brand image is the consumer's perceptions and preferences towards the brand (Keller, 2006). Based on the definition of brand image, Chen (2009, p. 309) has defined green brand image as *'a set of perceptions of a brand in a consumer's mind that is linked to environmental commitments and environmental concerns'*. In brief, the green brand image is the consumer's perceptions of a brand's sustainability efforts.

Within studies that use green brand image as the dependent variable they suggest that green communications can be a catalyst in achieving this image (Leonidou et al., 2011). However, this assumes that all communications will be perceived as credible or true. Whereas other research suggests this is not always the case (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Brunk and de Boer (2020) state that the consumer can form brand perceptions from positive and negative brand related information. From a green perspective, this would entail that negative information about the brand's sustainability efforts would form negative brand perceptions which could lead to an unfavourable green brand image. Negative information could be in the form of the consumer detecting greenwashing. For example, if the brand makes a false claim about sustainability, this can, according to Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018), be detected by the consumer. Subsequently, increasing greenwashing perceptions, damaging the green brand image. This is supported by Chen, Huang, Wang and Chen (2020) who argue that greenwashing negatively influences the green brand image.

However, even though greenwashing negatively influences the green brand image, this is only apparent if greenwashing is detected. As has been established, some greenwashing techniques are difficult for the consumer to expose, meaning companies may take advantage (Schmuck, Matthes & Naderer, 2018). Moreover, Özsoy and Avcilar (2016) argue that the increase in consumers' environmental concern will lead to more companies using deceptive and misleading green claims. Namely, to increase sales, market share and to create a green brand image. The wish to have a positive green brand image may therefore be a reason for companies to use greenwashing. However, incorporating new brand values, such as sustainability, to create a green brand image, may not have the desired result. As previously stated, Arbouw, Ballantine and Ozanne (2019) argue that communications that are incongruent with the consumer's already existing beliefs may

lead to unfavourable brand associations. Subsequently, establishing a green brand image by using green communication may be difficult and risk damaging an already established brand.

2.5.3 Green Brand Experience

Wu, Wei, Tseng and Cheng (2018) state that the concept of *green* brand experience, in comparison to its traditional counterpart brand experience, is novel and not heavily developed within academia. However, they do state that it involves the same subjective sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses post interaction with a brand, as outlined in Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) study. Dissimilarly, whereas Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) state that traditional brand experience can form from any related stimuli, Wu et al., (2018) derives green brand experience from green specific stimuli. This includes stimuli such as green design, identity, packaging and, the focus of this study, communications (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Specifically, green claims.

To refer to Andreini et al.'s (2018) study, they suggest that brand experience can help consumers express personality and understand their social identity. Mourad and Ahmed (2012) extend this into the green context by stating that from a green product's functional benefits, consumers receive an experience of themselves engaging in environmental care. Subsequently, it could be suggested that storing past green brand experiences within the consumers' brand knowledge, can help them define which brands can improve their green self identity (Andreini et al., 2018; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). However, this need to fulfill a conscious identity through green brand experiences can also lead to shortsightedness with green claims (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). Marks and Kamins (1988; cited in Özoy & Avcilar, 2016) explain that a positive experience with a brand can lead to easier acceptance toward advertisements of that brand even if it carries deceptive green claims. Implying that consumers are less likely to question the claim made by organisations if they have had a previous positive green brand experience.

Furthermore, Mourad and Ahmed's (2012) study shows that green specific experiential benefits are positively related to consumer satisfaction. Specifically, the consumer's need to contribute to the welfare of society when encountering a green brand (Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). Namely, Wu et al. (2018) state that when consumers are choosing a green brand to experience, they do not simply want the green product. However, they want interesting environmental experiences that allow them, as a consumer, to engage in environmentally positive actions when they experience or use a brand. This again aligns with Andreni et al. (2018) in that brand experiences can help resolve social concerns. Therefore, under Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) logic, if a consumer stores feelings, cognitions and behaviours of doing something environmentally positive through a brand, their future associations using green brand experiences should be benefited.

2.5.4 Green Brand Attitudes

Attitudes are defined as the overall evaluation and individual resolution to the received brand information (Keller, 2003). Hastak and Olson (1989) describe attitudes as the post experience cognitive structural elements. In other words, they form and remain once the cognitive and affective response has been made. Subsequently, it can be assumed that both brand related thoughts and feelings accumulate to brand related attitudes (Hastak & Olson, 1989). Therefore, within this study green brand thoughts and feelings will not be analysed separately but will be encompassed within its accumulative green brand attitudes. Frequently, studies discussing green brand knowledge and attitudes explain them as separate entities (Hartmann, Ibáñez & Sainz, 2005; Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Potentially because within the previous literature, the concept of green brand knowledge only includes awareness and image (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Subsequently, green brand attitudes are seen as a result of brand knowledge and not a part of it. Nevertheless, this study follows Keller's (2003) multidimensional brand knowledge model. Therefore, attitudes will be viewed as an independent variable.

However, do green brand attitudes differ from traditional brand attitudes? As discussed, beliefs, formed through a set of evaluative attributes, have a significant role within attitude formation (Gardner, 1985; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Huang, Yang and Wang (2014) illustrate that there is a consensus within green marketing literature. That environmental knowledge and the concept of the conscious consumer has had great influence over environmental attitudes. Subsequently, the more aware consumers become, the higher the consumers' involvement is in said issues. Furthermore, they discovered that green brand positioning and green brand knowledge, both separately, have significantly positive relationships towards green brand attitude formation (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Which can in turn influence purchase intention. Subsequently, it could be suggested that how attitudes form does not change, just the evaluative criteria (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In that the evaluative attributes used to generate beliefs, in this context, refers to whether a brand acts according to the consumers' environmental knowledge (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014; Gardner, 1985; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This relates to Ajzen's (2008) argument that social judgements play a role in generating attitudes, as the more aware we become of green issues the more we as consumers need to interact with brands that share that value (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). In summary, the process of generating green brand attitudes does not differ, however, the evaluative criteria become environmentally based.

There is another parallel between both traditional and green brand attitude generation with the influence of advertisements. Swelden et al. (2010) imply that advertisements and other brand related information can have a significant impact on how a brand attitude is developed. Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz (2005) increase its importance as they imply that consumers can develop attitudes purely through advertisement exposure. Especially, as several studies have

shown, in many cases an attitude can be achieved through a single exposure. Chang's (2011) study supports this through discussing the relationship between green advertisements and attitudes. He states that within green advertising many consumers are left with ambivalent attitudes. One significant predictor of ambivalence highlighted was scepticism. Chang's (2011) study illustrates that when organisations develop claims that are high in strength or indicate that there was great investment in achieving them, it creates scepticism and consequently ambivalent attitudes. Namely, Özoy and Avcilars (2016) study concluded that advertisement credibility had a significantly positive effect on brand attitude. Both studies indicate that there is a relationship between the advert credibility and brand attitude. Pickett et al. (1995; cited in Hartmann, Ibáñez & Sainz, 2005) also discuss the shortcomings of stimuli. However, in relation to valence. They imply that marketers tend to try and form positive green brand attitudes by appealing to the affective response in consumers through emotional appeals. However, they state that purely emotional appeals can lead to weaker green brand attitudes, as the claim can seem weak or vague. Implying that it needs to appeal cognitively also.

Nevertheless, as stated, most research focuses upon green brand attitudes as a result. Yet, within this study, attitudes are considered an independent variable. Namely, how these pre-existing attitudes affect the believability of a green claim. Both Chang (2011) and Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz (2005) have shown how weak or overly ambitious claims can result in weaker attitudes. However, if a consumer's attitude already exists, how does it affect their credibility? This study aims to understand this relationship in reverse.

3.0 Hypothesis Development

The following section will show how the different variables of green brand knowledge are predicted to relate to the variables of claim credibility and perceived greenwashing. Subsequently, leading to hypotheses being derived for testing.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 is a theoretical framework derived from the literature review. Showing how the different variables relate with each other towards answering the research question. The individual facets in the framework cumulatively form this study's interpretation of green brand knowledge. Therefore, to understand the phenomenon comprehensively, each facet will be analysed individually, in relation to claim credibility and perceived greenwashing. The arrows indicate that each facet can have an effect on both credibility and perceived greenwashing. How these variables are predicted to interact will be addressed in the following section.
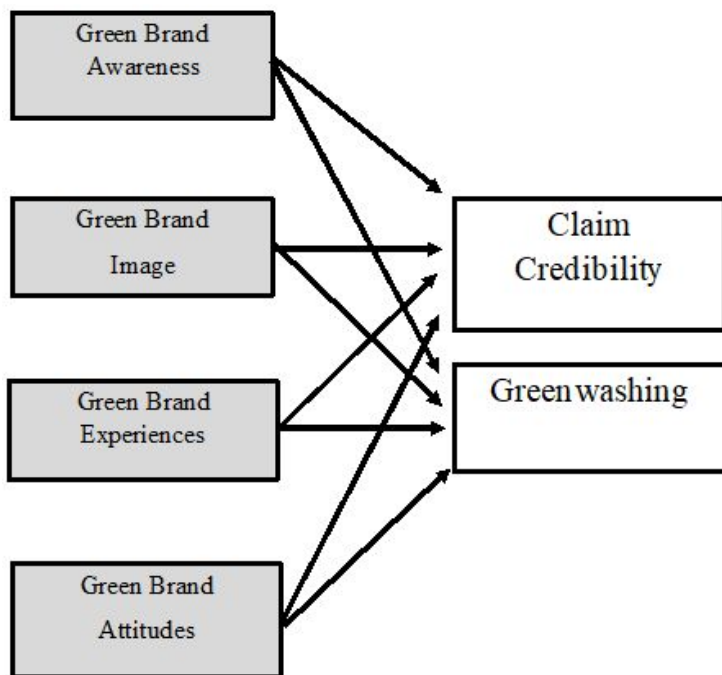
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3.2 Green Brand Awareness (GBA), Claim Credibility (CC) and Perceived Greenwashing (PGW)

Zubair Tariq (2014) argues that if companies create GBA among environmentally concerned consumers, then consumers will become familiar with the brand and this will influence their purchase intention. He found in his study that there is a strong relationship between green advertisements and GBA. Unlike brand image and brand attitudes, which can be positive or negative, traditional brand awareness is usually measured from low to high (Keller, 2006). From a green perspective, this implies that a high GBA would indicate that the consumer is likely to recognise and recall the brand as green (Zubair Tariq, 2014). Whilst a low GBA would indicate that the consumer is not likely to recognise and recall the brand as green (Zubair Tariq, 2014). Therefore, it is predicted that a high GBA will positively affect CC and negatively affect PGW.

H1a) Green brand awareness will positively affect green claim credibility

H1b) Green brand awareness will negatively affect perceived greenwashing
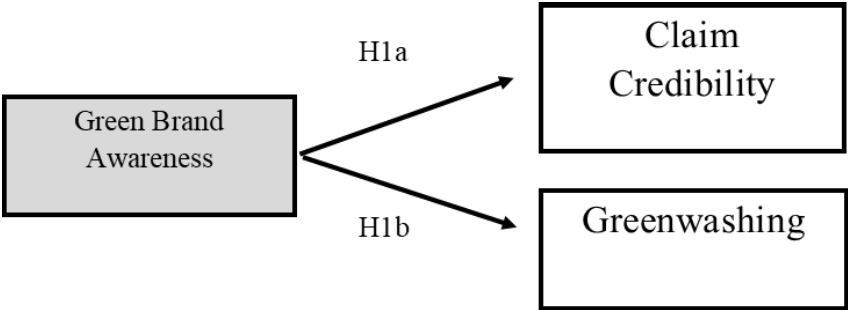
Figure 2: Theoretical model for H1

3.3 Green Brand Image (GBI), Claim Credibility and Perceived Greenwashing

GBI is the consumer's perception of a brand's environmental commitment and concern (Chen, 2009). Subsequently, a positive GBI would imply that the consumer perceives the brand as being committed and concerned. Herbig and Milewicz (1995) define credibility as the believability of a brand's current intention. Therefore, it is likely that consumers would believe the brand's intention if it came from a company with a positive or higher GBI. Therefore, it is predicted that if GBI increases it will positively affect CC.

H2a): Green brand image will positively affect green claim credibility.

However, if the brand has a negative GBI this would imply that the consumer does not perceive the brand as being committed or concerned (Chen, 2009). If a company with a negative GBI, uses green claims, this may cause incongruence between the GBI and the communication (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Sjödin and Törn (2006) argue that incongruence between communication and brand image can damage the credibility of the communication and make consumers question the advert. Hence, a consumer may not find a brand with a negative GBI as credible, if they use green claims, since this is inconsistent with the brand image. Therefore, it is predicted that a brand that has a positive or higher GBI will negatively affect PGW.

H2b): Green brand image will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

Figure 3: Theoretical model for H2

3.4 Green Brand Experiences (GBE), Claim Credibility and Perceived Greenwashing

Mark and Kamins (1988; cited in Özoy & Avcilar, 2016) have already indicated that there is a relationship between brand experience and advertisement perception. They state that a positive experience can make it easier for consumers to support an advertisement even if it is deceptive. Indicating that brand experience becomes a key determining factor as to whether they support or argue against brand related information (Hastak & Olsen, 1989).

Subsequently, it can be assumed that GBE has the same level of influence and so it should be predicted that there is a relationship between GBE, PGW and CC. Regarding direction, both Wu et al. (2018) and Mourad and Ahmed (2012) indicated that consumers benefited both individually and within societal contexts from environmentally positive GBE's. Therefore, it is predicted that if a brand has benefited the consumer with a favourable GBE, they may associate that brand as helping them develop their green identity. This should mean that consumers are more willing to support a claim given by a brand that has given them this experience. Yet, if it was a negative experience, they would be more likely to dismiss the claim. Therefore, it is predicted that if a brand has a higher or positive GBE it will positively affect CC and will negatively affect PGW.

H3a) Green brand experience will positively affect green claim credibility

H3b) Green brand experience will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.
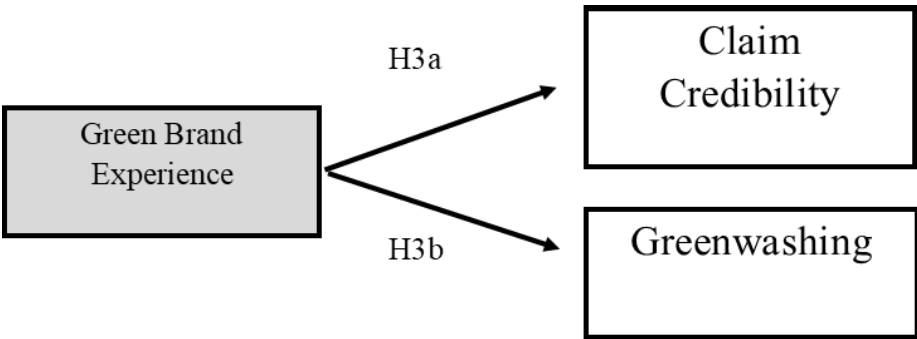
Figure 4 Theoretical model for H3

3.5 Green Brand Attitudes (GBAT), Claim Credibility and Perceived Greenwashing

Özoy and Avcilar (2016) have already indicated that advert believability can positively increase brand attitudes. Therefore, it is predicted that there is a relationship between GBAT, PGW and CC. Furthermore, when predicting the direction of the relationship, the concept of beliefs and consumer held environmental knowledge must be considered (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Gardner, 1985; Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). It is said that consumers formulate GBAT within criteria developed from their environmental knowledge (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Therefore, if consumers feel that a company's practices are damaging to issues within their criteria, they are likely to develop negative GBAT's (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Subsequently, if a consumer then receives a claim from the same brand, they are less likely to support it due to the GBAT's that have already developed. However, if a company does meet their environmental criteria, positive GBAT's are likely to form (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Therefore, the consumer may be more supportive of future green claims. Thus, it is predicted that a positive or higher GBAT will positively affect CC and negatively affect PGW.

H4a) Green brand attitudes will positively affect claim credibility

H4b) Green brand attitudes will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.
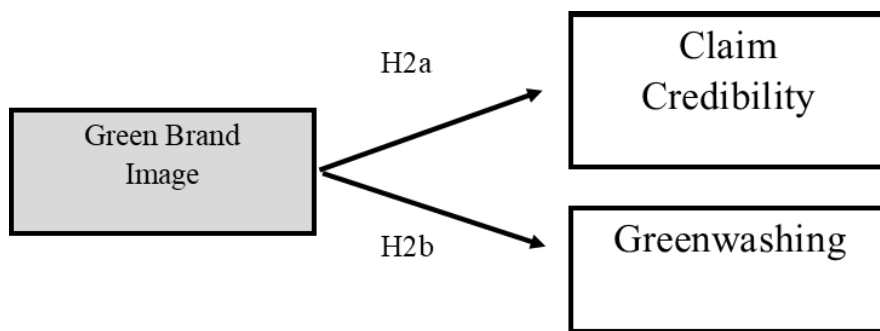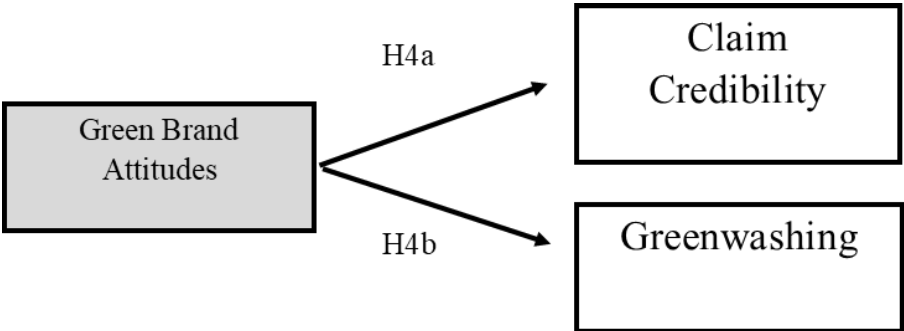

Figure 5: Theoretical Model for H4

4.0 Method

The following section will discuss the methodology and chosen method for this study. Explaining the study's research philosophy and motivation behind the chosen method. The research quality will also be outlined, and ethical concerns will be addressed.

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Research Philosophy

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2015), researchers must deliberate philosophical issues, as these can affect the quality and the contribution of the research within management and business. There are central philosophical positions that will affect the design of research and hence the results (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, time was dedicated to deliberate the chosen field, how this should be studied and what results were expected. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) state that research debates among philosophers often concerns ontology and epistemology. Ontology concerns philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and existence (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). However, epistemology concerns theory of knowledge and is a general set of assumptions about ways to investigate the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

4.1.1.1 Ontology

There are different approaches within ontology. Realism and internal realism relate to quantitative studies (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). However, relativism and nominalism relate to qualitative studies (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This is a quantitative study, therefore, within the realism spectrum. Realism puts emphasis on the world as concrete and external (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The viewpoint of this approach is that science can only progress through observations that have a direct correspondence to the phenomenon that is being investigated (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In addition, realism assumes that there is a single truth and that facts exist and can be revealed. Internal realism is not as extreme as realism, and assumes that truth exists, but is obscure (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). By using an internal realism approach in this study, it means that the observations gathered can provide direct correlations to the investigated phenomenon (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As this study focuses on GBK, which is the green brand node in the consumer's memory that relates to green commitments and their environmental concerns (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Therefore, this study works under the

assumption that the truth is slightly more obscure and that science cannot access what is in the consumer's memory directly. Subsequently, an internal realism lens is used in this study.

4.1.1.2 Epistemology

An internal realism ontology is associated with a positivist epistemology (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). There are two different epistemological views; positivism, which is associated with quantitative research, and social constructionism, which is associated with qualitative research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Positivism assumes that the social world exists externally, and that ideas, beliefs, opinions and personal judgement must be tested and not just accepted (Burns & Burns, 2008). This study applies a positivist epistemology, where the main assumptions are objectivity, reliability and generalisability (Burns & Burns, 2008). To accomplish this, researchers view the world as objective with universal laws and causality (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, researchers use precise, objective, measures associated with quantitative data, and their research is based on causal explanations through hypothesis testing (Burns & Burns, 2008). This includes methods such as experimental studies and structured questionnaires (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, a positivist view requires the observer to be independent from what is being observed. In addition, the ability to generalise is possible through random sampling so that the researcher can draw conclusions about the population (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

The weaknesses of positivism are that it is inflexible, implications for actions may not be obvious, not helpful in generating theories, and much of the data gathered may not be relevant to real decisions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). However, the main strengths of positivism is, according to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), that it can provide wide coverage, it is fast and economical, it uses statistical data from large samples and outcomes can be used by policy makers.

4.1.2 Research Approach

The research approach for this study is a quantitative scientific research method. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) scientific research methods are closely related to positivism. The scientific research method has four characteristics: control operational definitions, replication and hypothesis testing (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Firstly, control lets the researcher identify the causes of their observations. It is important to eliminate influence of environmental and human variables to determine the cause and effect (Burns & Burns, 2008). Therefore, control is a necessary process, because without it, the cause of an effect cannot be isolated (Burns & Burns, 2008). Secondly, operational definitions refer to measurable variables (Burns & Burns, 2008). The independent variables measured within GBK

are: GBA, GBI, GBE and GBAT. The dependent variables measured are: CC and PGW. In order to measure these variables pre-tested scales have been used to make sure that they are measurable and avoid confusion. These scales are further explained in section *4.3.5 Measures*. Thirdly, Burns and Burns (2008) argue that the result of a study is only reliable if the result is the same when the study is repeated. This is called replication and is an important part in obtaining reliable results (Burns & Burns, 2008). Finally, scientific methods include hypothesis testing, where the researcher systematically creates hypotheses with specific operation variables and tests these (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Burns and Burns (2008) argue that some of the limitations associated with scientific methods, derived from the philosophy of positivism, are that they are less easily applied in the human behavioural sciences. This is due to the tendency of humans to reflect on their own behaviour, as well as seek meaning and purpose in their own and other's behaviours (Burns & Burns, 2008). These considerations are appropriate as sustainability is perceived as a sensitive topic (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Moreover, it is largely understood that there is an attitude-behaviour gap associated with sustainability (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Both of these factors could be a limitation in the study as they may affect consumers' interpretation of their own opinions, behaviours and events (Burns & Burns, 2008).

4.1.2.1 Quantitative Reasoning

As this study investigates how a consumer's pre-existing GBK affects the consumer's perception of a green claim, it seemed appropriate to do a quantitative study. This allows for the gathering of data from many consumers and test relationships between the aforementioned variables. For this purpose, specific consumer opinions or interpretations were not wanted, but rather an understanding of the general opinion among consumers. This was possible through the quantitative research approach as general assumptions about the target group could be collected (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Nevertheless, there are benefits of doing a qualitative study, as some of the concepts are abstract and hard for respondents to understand (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001). Therefore, to discuss it with them in an interview or focus group would have been beneficial (Carson et al., 2001). However, as there were pre-tested measures for the variables it was understood that there were valid ways to statistically measure these abstract concepts. Therefore, to contribute to the research it was appropriate to use a quantitative approach. Furthermore, previous studies investigating the GBK facets have, for the majority, had a quantitative approach (Chen, 2009; Chen et al., 2020; Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014; Wu et al., 2018). The fields of PGW and CC have also been dominated by quantitative studies (Jones, 2019; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016; Zubair Tariq, 2014). However, since the correlation and causality between GBK, CC and PGW has not been studied before, it was understood that this would make an important contribution to the existing literature.

4.1.2.2 Deductive Reasoning

Burns and Burns (2008) state that positivism tends to be associated with research methods that include deductive reasoning. The deductive approach starts from existing theory, the researcher then uses existing theory to formulate hypotheses and then makes observations that confirm or reject the hypotheses (Burns & Burns, 2008). The deductive approach includes working from general to specific (Burns & Burns, 2008). Additionally, quantitative deductive studies may unveil unexpected results (Burns & Burns, 2008). This study's hypothesis development is derived from existing theories about brand knowledge, green brand knowledge, credibility and greenwashing.

4.2 Research Design

The aim of this thesis is to discover whether a consumer's pre-existing GBK has an effect on their perception of a brand's green claim, whether it is credible or greenwashing. The cumulative process of answering the research question began with deriving hypotheses from the literature. The research design consists of two nearly identical surveys that are distributed, through social media, to Swedish Millennial and Generation Z nationals and residents. The brands used as the vehicles to test the cause and effect are H&M and Patagonia, the reason for their choosing is explained in section *4.3.2 Brand Selection*. Each survey contains pre-existing scales to test for the independent variables of GBK: GBA, GBI, GBE, GBAT. However, once the independent variables are questioned an identical claim for both surveys is shown, which then tests the independents' effect on the dependent variables of CC and PGW. This research design allows for the analysis of whether the GBK variables affected the credibility of a claim that the respondents understood to be from the allocated company. The hypothesis analysis is performed through correlation and regression (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As a result, it is possible to see whether GBK does have an effect on the perception of the claim.

The following hypotheses are used to test the relationships needed to answer the research question:

H1a) Green brand awareness will positively affect green claim credibility.

H1b) Green brand awareness will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

H2a): Green brand image will positively affect green claim credibility.

H2b): Green brand image will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

H3a) Green brand experience will positively affect green claim credibility

H3b) Green brand experience will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

H4a) Green brand attitudes will positively affect claim credibility

H4b) Green brand attitudes will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

4.3 Research Strategy

The strategy for this study is a survey method with an experimental mindset. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) state that inferential surveys predominate the academic management research and is often used in the marketing field. The aim of inferential surveys is to establish relationships between variables and concepts based on prior assumptions and hypotheses regarding these relationships (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Generally, inferential surveys assume an internal realist ontology and a weaker form of positivist epistemology (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The researcher needs to identify the main dependent variables and independent variables, where the independent variables are hypothesised to have an effect on the dependent variables (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Subsequently, the independent variables: GBA, GBI, GBE and GBAT, will be tested to understand whether they affect the dependent variables: CC and PGW. Through the survey method, clearly structured individual surveys for each company were created (Malhotra, 2010). It was understood that for the study to carry internal validity, there could not be any differences in which way either the companies or claims were presented (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, by conducting two surveys it meant that manipulation of results could be avoided (Malhorta, 2010). Subsequently, the structure, questions and claims were identical (Malhorta, 2010). Thus, the difference in results for the two companies came from the respondents' GBK and not researcher bias (Burns & Burns, 2008).

This need for control and consistency ruled out the possibility of using the method of archival research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Using this method, the study would have required identical existing data sets on the two companies for Swedish consumers, consisting of the same dependent and independent variables. If this data was dissimilar or biased the study would lose its validity (Burns & Burns, 2008). This method may have been more suited if only one company was being analysed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Subsequently, it was understood that a survey method would be the most appropriate through researcher control and less risk.

The experimental mindset stems from the random assignment of surveys to the participants and group composition (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The results of this study do not depend on the differences between certain demographics. As the only determinants are age and

that they are Swedish or have lived in Sweden for three or more years. However, it was understood that equal group composition within each survey was important for external validity (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). If both studies are, for the majority, equally weighted and gender biases can be avoided, as women and men tend to have different perspectives on sustainability (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004; WWF, 2018).

The experimental mindset may leave questions as to why a full experimental method was not chosen. Crowther and Lancaster (2012) suggest that researcher experience should be a key consideration when choosing a method. Subsequently, the lack of combined experience in performing experiments led to a more mixed approach. The collective higher levels of experience in performing surveys meant there was less risk in producing an invalid or unreliable study. However, with the experimental mindset, it was possible to take randomisation and composition of participants into consideration (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

4.3.1 Pilot-study

Within Lund University's *BUSR31 Qualitative Research Methods* course a pilot study was conducted for the thesis. The study focused on consumer perceived credibility and authenticity of H&M's sustainability initiatives (Parry & Scott, 2020). The study's method was two separate focus groups with students within H&M's target market (Parry & Scott, 2020). Although the study was a pilot and had not reached saturation in terms of data collection, the findings helped indicate points of interest for this study (Parry & Scott, 2020). To summarise the study's findings, it was apparent and consistent within both groups that participants were hyper-critical of H&M's practices, which was consistent with the media's portrayal of H&M as a greenwasher (Parry & Scott, 2020; Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). The simple conclusion to the study was that although H&M had some redeemable features such as design and price, participants found it incredibly difficult to see the brand's efforts as authentic or credible (Parry & Scott, 2020). However, one interesting perspective that arose was Patagonia and how they can be seen as sustainable when some of their practices are very similar to H&M's (Parry & Scott, 2020). This was supported by sustainability reports (Patagonia, 2017; H&M Group, 2018). The results of the study did support the literature regarding reputational damage on brands accused of greenwashing (Jones, 2019; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016; Zubair Tariq, 2014). Furthermore, it was also supported by previous reviews of H&M's practice (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). Subsequently, although there were many limitations to the pilot study, the brands that were discussed influenced the further research taken towards brand selection (Parry & Scott, 2020).

4.3.2 Brand Selection

Although this study uses fashion brands, it should be clear that the aim is to explore the green brand knowledge phenomenon. Subsequently, the choice of industry and brands is important, as they are the vehicles to test the relationships. However, their selection is not intended to limit the results to the specific industry. As to the choice of the fashion industry, Perdsen, Gwozdz and Hvass (2016) state that fashion is well documented for having significant environmental impacts. Subsequently, leaving companies open to critique in both the media and academia (Hvass & Pedersen, 2019). However, Hvass and Pedersen (2019) suggest that due to the rise of the conscious consumer, the public's critique now has more influence on industry practices. As a result of consumer awareness and consistent media attention, consumers can visibly see the differences in fashion companies and their sustainability (Joy et al., 2015; Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). This in conjunction with already lasting relationships consumers have with fashion brands, means that green associations become increasingly important (BoF, 2019; Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016).

Moreover, unlike other industries the higher price categories are not immune to criticism (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; cited in Joy et al., 2015). However, due to their association of quality, in some instances, they can more easily counteract criticism (Joy et al., 2015). Nevertheless, due to the overwhelming climate concern, fashion companies are increasingly experimenting with new initiatives to gain green associations (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). This compilation of external pressures, documentation and innovations towards sustainability, makes the fashion industry well-suited for assessing whether GBK affects the credibility of green claims.

When selecting the brands there were two specific criteria. The first was that they were a global well-known brand. The second criteria was that the individual brands had to represent different perspectives on GBK, embedded in the literature. In other words, one brand was discussed as having more positive green brand associations and the other having less or more negative green brand associations (Keller, 2003). For these reasons Patagonia and H&M were chosen for analysis.

Patagonia is considered an accomplished green brand and seems to be continuously successful in its marketing (Beer, 2018; Belz & Schmidt-Riedger, 2010). However, what makes this brand interesting, is that in reality many of their practices are similar to that of other less revered companies (H&M Group, 2018; Patagonia, 2017; Rattalino, 2018). For this reason, it is believed that Patagonia represents a brand with a positive GBK and therefore used in study 1 to test *H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a (see section 4.2 Research Design).*

The second brand, H&M, is a closely observed fashion brand. Over recent years, H&M has received numerous accusations of greenwashing (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). This was

reinforced by the qualitative pilot-study (Parry & Scott, 2020). For these reasons, H&M was chosen as a more unfavourable GBK brand and therefore used in study 2 to test *H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b (see section 4.2 Research Design)*.

4.3.3 The Claim

The claim used in both surveys was *'75% of cotton used by H&M Group/Patagonia is recycled or sustainably sourced'*. The origin of this claim was from a H&M sustainability report (H&M Group, 2018). However, the original figure was 95%. Despite its actuality, keeping such a high figure led to concerns, as it may have seemed too high to be credible for either company. Potentially, leading to scepticism and subsequently, null findings (Leonidou et al., 2011; Li, Li & Sun, 2019; Szabo & Webster, 2020). Therefore, it was reduced to 75%.

However, the benefits of this claim were that it carried blatant green cues in the buzzwords *'recycled'* and *'sustainably sourced'* (Keller, 1987; cited in Schmidt et al., 2017). Özsoy and Avcilar (2016) suggest that terms such as *'recycled'* or *'sustainably sourced'* are often used within green claims because they are easily understood. Subsequently, the respondents would automatically know that this claim was designed to promote the brand performing in a green way (Özsoy and Avcilar, 2016). Furthermore, it was simple and easy to comprehend, which was crucial as the claim was in English and for most respondents, that was their second language. Moreover, as only the figure had been adjusted, it was understood that this was a viable claim that clothing companies would use. Subsequently, respondents would be less likely to question anything other than the claim came from the company. This was a risk that was crucial to reduce.

The importance of the claim being identical for both companies stems from the need for validity. Crowther and Lancaster (2012) define validity as a study measuring what it is supposed to measure. Subsequently, if the study were to use two differing claims to test the effect, it could lead to uncertainty as to whether the claims' differences caused effect.

4.3.4 Survey Design

To create the study's surveys the Sosci software was used, as it allowed for randomisation of survey distribution. There were two individual surveys that were randomly distributed between respondents. The Patagonia survey to test study 1, *H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a* and H&M survey to test study 2, *H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b*. Both surveys were identical, however, within section 3 the specific brand was introduced. Here the respondents were informed to answer the rest of the survey in relation to their opinions on that specific brand. The decision was made to not give the respondent any additional information on the brand as to not to alter or change their perceptions. However, the respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the brand or not. If the respondent answered no they were removed as not applicable (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The survey itself consisted of nine sections, excluding the cover and end page, all of which can be seen in *Appendix A*. The cover page outlined the purpose and focus of the study. Moreover, it explained that as sustainability is considered a sensitive or ethically concerned area they would remain anonymous, apart from a few necessary demographic details (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). These details would give an understanding whether it was a representative population sample (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The demographic information within section 2 determined whether the participant was Swedish or had lived in Sweden for three or more years, their age, gender, level of education and employment status. If the respondent was not Swedish and had not lived in Sweden for three years or more, or was over the age of 36, they would be eradicated from the study. The remaining demographics may have been considered sensitive so there was a '*Would rather not say*' option (Malhorta, 2010).

The questions regarding GBA, GBI, GBE, GBAT came prior to that of the green claim and the subsequent testing for CC and PGW. In section 9 the claim was introduced with the following statement; *'Below is a claim from H&M/Patagonia. In the following section you will be answering questions regarding your opinion on the credibility of this claim.'* Below the claim the CC and PGW questions ran consecutively. This was done for two reasons. One, respondents would easily be able to scroll up and see the claim. Two, there was a concern that dividing the scales into CC and PGW may have manipulated the consumers' answers and therefore affect the validity of their responses (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

A final thoughts page with an open text question was provided in section 10. This was able to be completed in both English and Swedish. This was optional, but gave respondents the opportunity to expand on anything from the survey. However, respondents were informed that if they did choose to answer their words may be used as empirical evidence (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Finally, the end page thanked respondents for their participation and disclosed that the claims were fictitious and had no relation to the brand in question. It went on to ask them to not disclose this information to others who wanted to complete the survey.

4.3.5 Measures

To form the questions within the survey, tested measures were taken from previous literature. The variable questions for GBA, GBI, GBE, GBAT and PGW were tested with a seven point likert scale; *Strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree* (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). To test for GBA, Huang, Yang and Wang's (2014) four item scale was used. Originally, this scale focused on sustainable cars, however, it was adapted to clothing. For GBI, Yu-Shan and Chen's (2012) five item scale was used, again with minor adaptations for clarity. GBE was taken from Wu et al. (2018). Originally this five item scale focused on branded products, however, for the purpose of the study the questions were adapted to just focus on the brand. GBAT was adapted from Huang,

Yang and Wang's (2014) scale that analysed both the cognitive and affective elements of GBAT. Subsequently, both the GBK facets of thoughts and feelings could be considered within the analysis (Keller, 2003). PGW was measured with Chen and Chang's (2013) five item scale. However, one item '*The brand deceives me by means of visuals or graphics in its environmental features',* was removed as it was not applicable to the claim (Chen & Chang, 2013). For CC, Ganz and Grimes' (2018) nine item scale was used. This variable was tested with a seven point likert scale, however, only the first and last points were labelled, for example unbelievable-believable (Ganz & Grimes, 2018). See *table 2* for the scales' items.

Source	Scale	Items
Huang, Yang & Wang (2014)	Green Brand Awareness (GBA)	● *I have heard of the brand* ● *I know the brand's related environmental information* ● *The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing* ● *The brand has a good reputation*
Yu-Shan & Chen, (2012)	Green Brand Image (GBI)	● *The brand is regarded as the best benchmark of environmental commitments* ● *The brand is professional about its environmental reputation* ● *The brand is successful in its environmental performance* ● *The brand is well established about environmental concern* ● *The brand is trustworthy about its environmental promises*
Wu et al. (2018)	Green Brand Experience (GBE)	● *This brand induces environmental feelings and sentiments* ● *I do not have strong environmental affection for this brand* ● *This brand is an environmentally emotional brand* ● *I engage in environmental actions and behaviours when I use this brand* ● *Using this brand results in environmental experiences*
Huang, Yang & Wang (2014)	Green Brand Attitude (GBAT)	*COGNITIVE:* ● *I think the function of the brand is more reliable than that of other clothing brands* ● *I think the brand can represent my socioeconomic status* ● *I think the function of the brand can fit my needs* ● *I think the price of the brand is satisfactory for me* *EMOTIONAL:* ● *I like the brand's outlook* ● *My friends would have a positive opinion when they discovered I purchased this brand* ● *The function of the brand is trustworthy*

		● *Wearing the brands clothes makes me feel relaxed and happy*
Chen & Chang, (2013)	Perceived Green Washing (PGW)	● *The brand deceives through words in its environmental features* ● *The brand deceives me by means of green claims that are unclear* ● *The brand exaggerates or overstates its green functionality* ● *The brand hides important information, making the green claim sound better than it is*
Ganz & Grimes, (2018)	Claim Credibility (CC)	This advertising claim is… ● *unbelievable–believable* ● *untrustworthy–trustworthy* ● *not convincing–convincing* ● *not credible–credible* ● *unreasonable–reasonable*

Table 2: Scales Items

4.3.6 Pre-test

Before releasing the surveys, two pre-tests, one for each survey, was conducted with two members of representative population. The main critique that came from both pre-tests was that in some cases the questions from the pre-existing scales were somewhat unclear. This was a concern as the surveys' language was English meaning most respondents would answer in their second language. Yet, there was a concern in rephrasing the items as it may affect the scale's reliability (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, where questions could be changed without changing the meaning, they were altered. Secondly, originally the claims were to be presented in the form of two nearly identical adverts with images and the brands logos. Within the first pre-test the respondent made a comment that it was not believable in advert form, and that the focus should be on the claim itself. This was therefore changed, and the imagery was removed. This change was done before the second pre-test and as a result no negative comments towards the claim were made. Therefore, the study went forwards with the edited final claim.

4.4 Sampling

During the time of this master thesis the COVID-19 outbreak limited the sampling options. Preferably, a probability sampling would have been used. However, due to the restrictions this was not possible. Nevertheless, the contributions from this study are still believed to be reliable and valid.

The purpose of the sample is to provide accurate generalisations about the sampled population (Burns & Burns, 2008). According to Burns and Burns (2008) researchers should use a systematic sequence which includes: defining the population, identifying the sampling frame, determining the sample size, selecting a sampling technique, and collecting the data.

4.4.1 Population

The study's population is defined as Swedish Millennial and Generation Z citizens, or residents who have lived in Sweden for three or more years. The population is between the ages of 16 to 36 to fit within the Millennial and Generation Z group (Bresman & Rao, 2017). Furthermore, the use of residents as well as citizens is due to the age groups carrying similar environmental concerns across cultures and the likelihood of cultural integration (Cheng, 2019; Petro, 2020; Barnes, 2019, Jung, 2019). Since this is a difficult number to predict, statistics of people between the ages of 15 to 34, who are registered as living in Sweden were used to estimate the population size. This gave a population of 2 612 195 (1 258 333 women and 1 353 862 men) (*see Table 3*) (SCB, n.d.). However, 15 year old's were not included due to ethical considerations (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Population based on age and gender 2019			
Age	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
15-19	272 837	296 072	568 909
20-24	277 075	310 624	587 699
25-29	359 711	379 985	739 696
30-34	348 710	367 181	715 891
Total	**1 258 333**	**1 353 862**	**2 612 195**

Table 3: Population based on age and gender (SCB, n.d.).

4.4.2 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame is a list of the target population which includes information such as names, telephone numbers and email addresses (Burns & Burns, 2008). In this case there was not a list of information for all that were in the population. Moreover, the surveys were anonymous due to the sensitive nature of sustainability (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Thus, the participants were not asked to state their names and phone numbers. Therefore, there was no sampling frame used in this thesis.

4.4.3 Sampling Size

Larger samples are usually required for survey research (Malhotra, 2010). However, the sample size of similar studies should also be considered (Malhotra, 2010). Other studies within the field have had sample sizes of 529 (Wu et al., 2018), 425 (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014), 362 (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016), 261 (Chen et al., 2020), 254 (Chen, 2009), and 207 (Zubair Tariq, 2014), which gives an average of 340. However, considering this study's limited resources, a total sample aim of 200 was deemed appropriate (Malhotra, 2010). This is not an extensive number to represent the population. However, it was a realistic number that could be achieved. The aim was missed, and the total sample size was 189. Yet, the study's time frame limited the ability to collect more data (Malhotra, 2010). However, the sample size is above normal distribution and was considered acceptable for this study (Burns & Burns, 2008).

4.4.4 Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling design was used for this thesis. This means that the probability of each member in the sample responding cannot be defined (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Subsequently, it is difficult for the researcher to confidently claim that conclusions from the sample apply to the larger group it was drawn from (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The sampling design used in this study was a mixture of convenience and a variation of stratified sampling. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants because they are easily accessible (Burns & Burns, 2008). Hence, personal networks and Facebook groups were used to gather data.

Stratified sampling is usually associated with probability sampling and involves dividing the population into homogeneous groups based on characteristics, and then drawing a person from each stratum to the sample (Burns & Burns, 2008). However, due to current situation and resources, the selection process could not be done in a pure stratified sampling design. As, it was not possible to create different strata. Consequently, in some cases there was no access to prior information regarding the gender and age of the possible respondents. Yet, in most cases respondents were targeted as they fitted the sample population's characteristics, simulating taking respondents from a stratum. This was important for generalisability in ensuring equal group composition. Furthermore, the allocation of respondents to H&M and Patagonia, was done randomly, to better ensure similar demographic compositions in both survey groups.

4.5 Data Collection Method

Due to the aforementioned circumstances, face to face data collection was not possible. Subsequently, the data was for the majority collected through social media, such as Facebook,

Instagram, Whatsapp and LinkedIn. Using social media meant large groups could be contacted as well as specific individuals that could start a snowball effect (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As stated, the demographic aspects did not contribute to the hypotheses testing, but was to show a representable sample. Subsequently, using a variety of different social media platforms meant different demographic groups could be accessed. The most effective tool for collecting respondents was Facebook pages for buying and selling clothes in Sweden. This gave access to consumers interested in specifically second-hand clothing. Therefore, they were likely to have an interest in sustainable clothing.

4.6 Data Analysis

4.6.1 Data Preparations

Before beginning analysis, the data sets from both surveys were prepared (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This involved removing respondents that were not applicable from the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Subsequently, those who were over the age of 36, those who had lived in Sweden for a maximum of two years and those who were not familiar with the brands, were all removed. Consequently, from the H&M data, 4 were removed from living in Sweden for a maximum of two years, 1 due to unfamiliarity towards the brand and 5 due to age. Leaving 78 within the H&M sample. For Patagonia, 5 were removed for their limited time in Sweden, 16 were removed due to brand familiarity and 4 due to age. Leaving, 76 within the Patagonia sample. Hence, the total sample size was reduced from 189 to 154. Following the data cleaning, the results for question 18 *'I do not have a strong environmental affection for this brand'* were reverse coded as this was the only question within the survey that had a negative meaning (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4.6.2 Descriptive Data

As stated, this study is not a descriptive study meaning the hypotheses do not depend on any specific demographic, except for the pre-set generation groups (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015). However, within the experimental mindset, group composition was integral in achieving representativeness and avoiding biases (Burns & Burns, 2008). Therefore, means and standard deviation testing was used for gender (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Standard deviation statistically measures the groups variance from the mean, showing how evenly distributed the sample was within those specific demographics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The tests for gender was to see whether one gender overwhelmed the other. The remaining descriptive data for demographics were expressed by both frequencies and percentages to have a more comprehensive overview of the sample's characteristics.

4.6.3 Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, Spearman's rho correlation and Simple Linear Regression testing were used. Correlation testing indicates the likelihood of a relationship occurring between variables within a population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Spearman's correlation measures the strength of the linear relationships between an independent and dependent variable (Burns & Burns, 2008). Spearman's correlation is used when there are few subjects and the data is ordinal (Burns & Burns, 2008). Although this test does not indicate whether the independent specifically affects the other it does show whether there is a positive or negative relationship between the two (Burns & Burns, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Within this study Spearman's correlation did not singularly allow for rejection of the null hypothesis. However, if a significant relationship was indicated, it meant that the hypothesis could be tested for regression to see whether the independent had a direct effect (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Pearson's correlation is also shown in the results. This was shown as this correlation is used in the simple linear regression testing (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Regression testing is a method used to estimate a score for a variable based on the score for another variable (Burns & Burns, 2008). Through regression testing it is possible to predict the value of the dependent variable from the known value of the independent variable (Burns & Burns, 2008). Subsequently, through using this test, the study was able to define whether the GBK facets did have an effect on CC or PGW. Allowing for rejection of the null hypothesis if significant (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, the standardised beta coefficient was given as it indicates how strong the predictor is in contributing to the prediction of the dependent variable (Burns & Burns, 2008). The strongest predictor is the one that has the largest standardised beta coefficient (Burns & Burns, 2008). Moreover, the r square value, or effect size, was also given to determine the amount of variation in one variable that is explained by the variation in another (Burns & Burns, 2008). Through regression it was possible to see the percentage and the weight in which these variables caused an effect.

4.7 Quality Criteria

4.7.1 Validity

A deductive study's validity is based on whether it measures what it is supposed to measure (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). As previously mentioned, the study's internal validity stemmed from the surveys determining whether GBK has an effect on the perception of a green claim. Subsequently, for the surveys to measure this successfully, certain internal validity criteria were understood. It was understood that there could not be any differences in which way either companies or claims were presented (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, both surveys carried the same questions, structure and claim. The only difference being the brand

name that was presented in the different sections. This aimed to reduce any potential bias from either the difference in brands presentation or the claim. If the claim had been different for each survey, that may have led to bias results in that the difference in claim led to claim credibility or otherwise. Hence, it would be difficult to suggest that it was GBK alone that had an effect. Moreover, for content validity it was crucial to ensure that the measurements represented the traits that they aimed to measure (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). Subsequently, to ensure that each variable was represented within the survey, question items were taken from previously tested scales (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). This meant that there were no concerns as to whether the range of GBK variables were available for testing within the questions.

4.7.2 Reliability

Crowther and Lancaster (2012) state that reliability is the understanding that a study's findings can be replicated on different occasions without any major changes. Regarding external reliability, it is understood that there was a time limit as to the completion of this study. Therefore, the option to test for reproducibility over time was not available under the circumstances. However, due to the use of previously tested scales, it was likely that the study could be reproduced in the future (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Yet, this study, specifically, relies on the evaluation of GBK on two brands. Therefore, whether the results are entirely reproducible, relies on both the future actions of the brand and the consumers perception. Therefore, it is difficult to state with certainty that this study has external reliability. However, it is possible for the survey to be reproduced exactly, under different circumstances (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

However, in terms of internal reliability there was the use of Cronbach's Alpha (Burns & Burns, 2008). Cronbach's Alpha analysis was used to measure the internal consistency between the items in the scales, in other words, assuming homogeneity of items. Subsequently, the internal consistency determined the scale's reliability (Burns & Burns, 2008). The alpha level, indicated if the items in the scale were measuring the same construct (Burns & Burns, 2008). The items that did not measure the same construct were deleted as this increased the internal reliability (Burns & Burns, 2008). Burns and Burns (2008) state that 0.7 and above is an acceptable level for assuming homogeneity of items. This study's Cronbach Alphas can be found in section *5.2 Reliability Testing*.

4.7.3 Generalisability

Crowther and Lancaster (2012) state that generalisability is the probability in which the results from a study would represent the results of the population it was based upon. It is impossible to suggest that the final sample size of 154 could represent a population size of 2 612 195 (SCB, n.d.). However, both surveys overpassed the minimum for normal distribution (Bryman & Bell,

2011). Furthermore, to ensure external validity, sample composition was crucial in understanding whether the findings could be applicable externally (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). Specifically, to avoid any biases within genders (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). A random generator added to the survey meant that respondents were automatically allocated a brand to avoid bias of choice (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Through using social media it became possible to target an equal amount of both men and women. This made the sample compositions more equal and devoid of one gender overpowering the other (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Moreover, the study specifically focused on Generation Z and Millennials, meaning those born from 1984 to 1996 and 1997 onwards (Bresman & Rao, 2017). As a result, those who were not eligible in regards to age were removed as to make sure the participants represented the sample (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover, as stated, 43% of Swedes undergo higher education making Sweden the 15th most well-educated country in the world (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2020). Subsequently, respondents were asked to disclose their education level as to see whether that was also representable for the population.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Burns and Burns (2008) argue that the ethical considerations associated with scientific research methods are that there is a heavy emphasis on objective measurement and control. However, behind all statistics and numbers lie human experiences, meanings and personal interpretation (Burns & Burns, 2008). Therefore, participants were given an option to write final comments on the last page. This was a good way to let the participants express the feelings and thoughts they had not been able to share throughout the survey. Also, they could exit off the survey at any time if they chose to not want to continue.

Moreover, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2015) name key principles in research ethics that were considered for the survey. Sustainability is considered a sensitive topic, so precautions had to be taken in making respondents feel comfortable in answering (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Subsequently, in the beginning of the survey it was made clear that the participants were anonymous and would not be answering any questions regarding their lifestyle. To protect the anonymity of individuals and confidentiality of the research, the data will be automatically deleted on the 19th of June. Additionally, to avoid deception about the aims of the study, it stated in the beginning; *'This survey focuses on claims made within sustainable branding.'*. Consequently, respondents were aware of what area of questions would follow.

Lastly, to test the credibility of a green claim the following claim was used for H&M; '*75 % of cotton used by the H&M Group is recycled or sustainably sourced'*, and the following for Patagonia; *'75 % of cotton used by the Patagonia is recycled or sustainably sourced'*. Since these

claims are fictitious, the following was stated on the last page of the survey; *'The claims presented in this survey were fictitious and were made for the purpose of the study. The claims have no relation to the brands the study focuses on.'*. This was to make sure that the participants understood the claims were not stated by the brands and kept within Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson's (2015) key principles of ethics. In that there was no deception of the nature of the study and there was complete honesty and transparency in communicating about the research.

5.0 Results

The following section will present the results from both the H&M and Patagonia survey. It will address both the demographic and composition of the samples. Followed by hypothesis testing and the results for both Spearman's Correlation and Simple Linear Regression.

5.1 Descriptive data

This section will show the variances within the samples' demographic information. Both survey samples will be looked at separately and then any points of interest in the sample, as a whole, will be addressed.

		Frequency			Percentage		
		Patagonia	H&M	**Total**	Patagonia	H&M	**Total**
Gender	*Male*	34	31	**65**	44.7%	39.7%	**42.2%**
	Female	42	46	**88**	55.3%	59%	**57.2%**
	Other	0	1	**1**	0%	1.3%	**0.7%**
Age	*16-20*	12	19	**31**	15.7%	24.4%	**20.1%**
	21-25	46	43	**89**	60.5%	55.1%	**57.8%**
	26-30	18	14	**32**	23.7%	17.9%	**20.8%**
	31-35	0	2	**2**	0%	2.6%	**1.3%**
Swedish Citizenship	*Yes*	73	74	**147**	96%	94.9%	**95.5%**
	No	3	4	**7**	3.9%	5.1%	**4.5%**
Education Level	*Middle school*	0	0	**0**	0%	2.6%	**1.3%**
	High school	14	24	**38**	18.4%	30.8%	**24.6%**
	Bachelor	31	36	**67**	40.7%	46.2%	**43.5%**
	Master's or higher	31	18	**49**	40.7%	23.1%	**31.9%**
Occupation	*Unemployed*	59	58	**117**	77.6%	74.4%	**76%**
	Employed	15	20	**35**	19.7%	25.6%	**22.7%**
	Student	0	0	**0**	0%	0%	**0%**
	Self-employed	2	0	**2**	2.6%	0%	**1.3%**
	Retired	0	0	**0**	0%	0%	**0%**

Table 4: Demographic Data

5.1.1 Study 1: Patagonia

For study 1 the total sample after data preparation was 76. Regarding gender, 34 (44.7%) were male and 42 (55.3%) were female. The somewhat equal composition is also represented in the mean. Males were represented through 1 and females 2 and the mean statistic for age was 1.55 with a low standard deviation *(s=.501)*. Therefore, although there is still a higher percentage of women, it is not believed that a gender bias will necessarily affect the results as it is not an overpowering amount (Burns & Burns, 2008).

The number of Swedish nationals within this sample was 73 (96%) with 3 (3.9%) not citizens, but, having lived in Sweden for three or more years. Additionally, although the study was specifically designed for a Generation Z and Millennial sample age group, it feels appropriate to show the variation in the age groups. 12 (15.7%) sample members were in the 16 to 20 age group, 46 (60.5%) in 21 to 25, and 18 (23.7%) in 26 to 30. The level of education within the sample was also varied as 14 (18.4%) had received High school education, 31 (40.7%) a Bachelor level and 31 (40.7%) a Master's or higher. The variation in age and education clearly correlates with the sample's occupation status as 59 (77.6%) respondents were unemployed and are most likely students. Additionally, 15 (19.7%) were employed and 2 (2.6%) were self employed.

5.1.2 Study 2: H&M

After the data preparation, the total sample size of study 2 was 78 respondents. The distribution of male and female respondents was slightly unequal. However, this was expected. The males were represented by 31 (39.7%) responses, females were represented by 46 (59.0%) responses, and 1 (1.3%) respondent chose 'Other'. This was shown through the mean statistic of 1.62 and a low standard deviation *(s=.515)*.

Furthermore, in this study, 74 (94.9%) were Swedish nationals and 4 (5.1%) had lived in Sweden for three or more years. Moreover, the constitution of the age group was the following; the 16 to 20 age group consisted of 19 (24.4%), 21 to 25 consisted of 43 (55.1%), 26 to 30 consisted of 14 (17.9%), and lastly the 31 to 35 age group consisted of 2 (2.6%). For the highest level of education completed or currently studying, the majority of the sample answered Bachelor level 36 (46.2%), while 24 (30.8%) answered High school, and 18 (23.1%) answered Master's or higher. Finally, 58 (74.4%) were unemployed and 20 (25.6%) were employed.

5.1.3 Combined Study Demographics

When combining the two studies, some descriptive demographic features are worth highlighting. Within the sample of 154, 88 (57.1%) were women, 65 (42.2%) were male and 1 (0.7%) chose 'Other'. It was understood that there may be a higher response rate from the female population as

Solomon and Rabolt (2004) suggest that women tend to have a higher interest in sustainability and therefore are more likely to answer. However, considering the mean statistic of 1.58 and a standard deviation of (*s=.507)* the difference could be small enough to suggest that there is not necessarily a female bias (Burns & Burns, 2008; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004) Moreover, as stated 43% of Swedes undergo higher education (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2019). This is reflected within the study's combined sample as 66 (43.5%) respondents had or were undergoing a Bachelor level of education and 49 (31.8%) had or were undergoing education at a Master's or higher. Subsequently, it could be suggested that in terms of both gender and level of education, the sample was somewhat representable (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

5.2 Reliability Testing

Almost all scales had a Cronbach's Alpha above the acceptance level (*see Table 5*). However, some adaptations to the scales were needed. The GBA scale consisted of four items with an original alpha of 0.81 (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). However, in this study it originally produced an alpha of 0.693 for study 1, Patagonia, and 0.393 for study 2, H&M. When inspecting the scale, item one had a low correlation and was therefore removed to increase internal reliability (*see Table 5*). Thereafter, the test produced an alpha of 0.738 for study 1 and 0.439 for study 2. For study 1, this is an acceptable level, however, it is not acceptable for study 2. This limitation will be further speculated within *section 6.1 Scales Discussion*.

Furthermore, the GBE scale had an alpha of 0.84 in the original study (Wu et al., 2018). However, the Cronbach's Alpha tested for this study produced an alpha of 0.454 for study 1 and 0.475 for study 2. When inspecting the scale, item three had low correlation with the others and so was removed (*see Table 5*). Cronbach's Alpha was repeated and produced an alpha of 0.727 for study 1 and 0.747 for study 2, both were therefore accepted.

Source	Scale	N of items	Original study's Cronbach's Alpha	Study 1 Cronbach's Alpha	Study 2 Cronbach's Alpha
Huang, Yang & Wang (2014)	GBA	3	0.81	0.738	0.439
Yu-Shan & Chen, (2012)	GBI	5	0.744	0.908	0.891
Wu et al. (2018)	GBE	4	0.84	0.727	0.747
Huang, Yang & Wang (2014)	GBAT	8	0.78 (cognitive items) 0.86 (affective items)	0.746	0.849
Chen & Chang, (2013)	PGW	4	0.901	0.788	0.833
Ganz & Grimes, (2018)	CC	9	?	0.918	0.948

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha Summary

5.3 Hypotheses Testing

In the following section the results of the correlation and regression analysis will be presented for each hypothesis. Showing whether the null hypothesis of H_0= *The independent variable has no effect on the dependent variable* can be rejected.

Independent	Dependent	Spearman's	Pearson's	F	Sig.	R2	Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected
GBA	**CC**	**.240***	**.229***	**4.083**	**.047**	**.052**	**H1a**	**Accepted**
GB1	CC	.117	.111	N/A	N/A	N/A	H2a	Rejected
GBE	CC	.129	.110	N/A	N/A	N/A	H3a	Rejected
GBAT	CC	.076	.110	N/A	N/A	N/A	H4a	Rejected
GBA	**PGW**	**- .274***	**-.279***	**6.43**	**.013**	**.078**	**H1b**	**Accepted**
GB1	**PGW**	**- .547****	**-.483****	**23.105**	**.000**	**.233**	**H2b**	**Accepted**
GBE	**PGW**	**- .429****	**-.406****	**14.986**	**.000**	**.165**	**H3b**	**Accepted**
GBAT	**PGW**	**-.337****	**-.394****	**13.955**	**.000**	**.155**	**H4b**	**Accepted**

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

5.3.1 Study 1: Patagonia

The following section shows the results for the following hypotheses from the Patagonia survey:

H1a) Green brand awareness will positively affect green claim credibility.

H2a): Green brand image will positively affect green claim credibility.

H3a) Green brand experience will positively affect green claim credibility.

H4a) Green brand attitudes will positively affect claim credibility.

5.3.1.1 Correlation: Patagonia

Figure 6 shows the Spearman's correlation matrix for Patagonia. Only H1a, GBA and CC, showed a significantly positive correlation at the .05 level, *(r$_s$ = .240, p < .05)*. The remaining variables and related hypotheses, GBI, GBE, GBAT were all not significant. Subsequently, the null hypotheses for H2a, H3a, H4a cannot be rejected and so were not supported. However, as seen in *figure 6*, although not significant the variables still indicated positive directions. The

results show that GBA is positively related to CC. However, GBI, GBE and GBAT, is not necessarily related to CC.

Patagonia Correlation Matrix

	CC	GBA	GBI	GBE	GBAT
CC	1				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
GBA	.240*	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.			
GBI	.117	.872**	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.316	.000	.		
GBE	.129	. 434**	.565**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.266	.000	.000	.	
GBAT	.076	.189	.080	.111**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.516	.101	.491	.340	.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Figure 6: Patagonia Correlation Matrix

As the concept of GBA is complex and can be both positive and negative, it seemed appropriate to look at the scale items' individual correlations (*see Figure 7*). Both items three (r_s = *.241, p <*
.05) and four (r_s = *.300, p < .05)* resulted in significantly positive correlations. However, item two resulted in an insignificant correlation (r_s = *.115, p > .05)*. Indicating as to why the scale's overall correlation is low in value.

Item 2: I know the brand's related environmental information,

Item 3: The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing

Item 4: The brand has a good reputation

Patagonia GBA Correlation Matrix

	CC	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
CC	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
Item 2	.115	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.322	.		
Item 3	.241*	.789**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.000	.	
Item 4	.300**	. 360**	.303**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.001	.008	.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Figure 7: Patagonia GBA individual items correlation matrix

5.3.1.2 Regression: Patagonia

As stated, only H1a indicated a significant relationship between the variables. Consequently, the remaining hypotheses were tested for regression, however, not included in the analysis, as the hypotheses were rejected. Subsequently, the regressions for H2a, H3a, H4a are shown in *Appendix B*. However, as the correlation for H1a was statistically significant, the two variables GBA and CC underwent regression analysis to test the hypothesis. A significant regression equation was found with $F(1,74)=4.083$, $p <.05$. The parameters are all significant, with $\beta_s=.229$, $t(74)=2.021$, $p <.05$. However, the R^2 is .052, showing that 5.2% of the variance in CC was due to GBA. Although the regression was statistically significant at the .05 level, the variance percentage was weak. The result suggests that when GBA increases, it will slightly increase the chance of CC. The results also indicate that even though the GBI, GBE, GBAT are high, it does not necessarily mean that CC will occur.

5.3.2 Study 2: H&M

The following section shows the results for the following hypotheses from the H&M survey:

H1b) Green brand awareness will negatively affect perceived greenwashing

H2b): Green brand image will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

H3b) Green brand experience will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

H4b) Green brand attitudes will negatively affect perceived greenwashing.

5.3.2.1 Correlation: H&M

Figure 8 shows the Spearman's correlation matrix for H&M. The correlations for GBI, GBE and GBAT are significant at the .01 confidence level. However, GBA is significant at the .05 level. As predicted, the independent variables; GBA, GBI, GBE and GBAT, are negatively correlated with the dependent variable PGW. The strongest relationship is GBI and PGW, which showed a significantly negative correlation at the .01 level *(r_s = -.547, p < .01)*. The second strongest relationship is GBE and PGW, which showed a significantly negative correlation at the .01 level *(r_s = -.429, p < .01)*.

H&M Correlation Matrix

	PGW	GBA	GBI	GBE	GBAT
PGW	1				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
GBA	-.274*	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.			
GBI	-.547**	.629**	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.		
GBE	-.429**	.544**	.636**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
GBAT	-.337**	.573**	.650**	.532**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.000	.000	.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**, Correltaion is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Figure 8: H&M Correlation Matrix

The lowest value correlation was GBA. However, as it is a complex concept it, again, seemed appropriate to look at the scale items' individual correlations (*see Figure 9*). Only item three *(r_s = -.280, p < .05)* and four *(r_s = -.480, p < .05)* resulted in significantly negative correlations.

However, item two $(r_s = .034, p > .05)$ actually resulted in an insignificantly positive correlation indicating as to why the scale's overall correlation is low in value.

Item 2: I know the brand's related environmental information

Item 3: The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing

Item 4: The brand has a good reputation

H&M GBA Correlation Matrix

	PGW	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
PGW	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
Item 2	.034	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.786	.		
Item 3	-.280*	.320**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.004	.	
Item 4	-.480**	. 086	.370**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.454	.001	.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Figure 9: H&M GBA Individual Items Correlation Matrix

5.3.2.2 Regression: H&M

All regression models were significant for H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b.

5.3.2.2.1 H1b: GBA and PGW

A significant regression equation was found with $F(1,76)= 6.43$, $p <.05$. The parameters are all significant, with β_s=-.279, $t(76)$=-2.536, $p <.05$. However, the R^2 is .078, showing that 7.8% of the variance in PGW was due to GBA. Although the regression was statistically significant at the .05 level, the variance percentage was weak. The result indicates that when the GBA is low, it will somewhat increase the risk of PGW.

5.3.2.2.2 H2b: GBI and PGW

A significant regression equation was found with $F(1,76)= 23.105$, $p <.01$. The parameters are all significant, with $\beta_s=-.483$, $t(76)=-4.807$, $p <.01$. The R^2 is .233, showing that 23.3% of the variance in PGW was due to GBI. Although the regression was statistically significant at the .01 level, the variance percentage was somewhat weak. The result indicates that when the GBI is low, it will somewhat increase the risk of PGW.

5.3.2.2.3 H3b: GBE and PGW

A significant regression equation was found with $F(1,76)= 14.986$, $p <.01$. The parameters are all significant, with $\beta_s=-.406$, $t(76)=-3.871$, $p <.01$. However, the R^2 is .165, showing that 16.5% of the variance in PGW was due to GBE. Although the regression was statistically significant at the .01 level, the variance percentage was weak. The result indicates that when the GBE is low, it will somewhat increase the risk of PGW.

5.3.2.2.4 H4b: GBAT and PGW

A significant regression equation was found with $F(1,76)= 13.955$, $p <.01$. The parameters are all significant, with $\beta_s=-.394$, $t(76)=-3.736$, $p <.01$. However, the R^2 is .155, showing that 15.5% of the variance in PGW was due to GBAT. Although the regression was statistically significant at the .01 level, the variance percentage was weak. The result indicates that when the GBAT is low, it will somewhat increase the risk of PGW.

5.4 H&M Further Testing

Once having tested both survey samples for the hypotheses, the H&M data was also tested for H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a. This was not done to be included within this study's analysis, however, to see whether it made indications towards future research. All a) hypotheses tested for H&M showed significantly positive correlations and regressions which are shown in *Appendix C*. Again, these results are not intended to be included in this study's analysis as the H&M was used to test for *H1b, H2b, H3b, H4b*. However, they will be discussed later as a point of interest in future research.

5.5 Summary of Results

5.5.1 Study 1: Patagonia and CC

Study 1 found that the only correlation and regression that was statistically significant was for H1a, the relationship between GBA and CC. However, it was a fairly weak positive relationship.

Moreover, the regression was weak as only 5.2% of the variance in CC was due to GBA. The findings could not support H2a, H3a and H4a.

5.5.2 Study 2: H&M and PGW

Study 2, found that all correlations and regressions were statistically significant. The correlation analysis indicated weaker negative relationships between GBA and PGW, whereas the other facets indicated stronger negative relationships. Moreover, the regression analysis showed that all regression models supported H1b, H2b, H3b, and H4b. However, the R^2 was somewhat low for all, indicating weaker effects. GBI had the largest β_s and R^2, indicating that GBI was the strongest predictor for PGW out of all four regression models.

6.0 Technical Discussion

In this section the technical aspects of the results that warrant discussion will be evaluated.

6.1 Scales Discussion

Away from the hypotheses there are certain results that warrant discussion. As stated in section *5.2 Reliability Testing* there were two scales that caused concern. The green brand awareness scale from Huang, Yang and Wang (2014) generated an alpha of 0.81. However, within this study it generated a 0.693 for study 1, Patagonia, and 0.393 for study 2, H&M. After removing item one for both scales, study 2's alpha still remained under reliability acceptance at 0.439 *(see section 5.2 Reliability Testing, Table 5)*. However, study 1 became acceptable. The reason for choosing pre-tested scales was to avoid low internal reliability (Burns & Burns, 2008). Yet, in this case, the shortcomings were only discovered once data collection had ended. Subsequently, it feels appropriate to discuss why this scale had potentially failed within this context.

Within section *4.3.5 Measures* scale adaptations were explained. For green brand awareness the main adaptation made to Huang, Yang and Wang's (2014) scale was to item three '*The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing'* which originally focused on cars not clothing. This change of industry could be a potential reason for the scale's poor reliability. As although the remaining items were general in nature, it could be suggested that the fashion industry is not known for its *'environmentally-friendliness'* as much as cars (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014; Perdsen, Gwozdz, & Hvass, 2016). This idea of poor industry association could also be linked to item two *'I know the brand's related environmental information'* (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). When purchasing a car, which is a higher involvement product, more information on both the product and the brand is required before purchase (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). However, fashion is lower involvement (Perdsen, Gwozdz, & Hvass, 2016). Therefore, less information is required, and purchase intention can stem from automatic reactions such as assessment of design or price.

This idea of involvement could also explain the difference in both study 1, and study 2's final Cronbach's alphas. If we consider Patagonia to be in a higher price category, with more specialised products, it is more likely that consumers want to understand the brand more before purchase (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). However, H&M is considered a fast fashion brand with lower prices, potentially meaning less of a pre-purchase information process (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). Therefore, respondents may be less likely to understand or be aware of any in depth brand related information. On the other hand, H&M is a controversial company with many supporters as well as many opposers (Silver, 2018). Hence, it is possible that this mixture

of opinions has caused variances within the answers, meaning the scale is ultimately questionable in its internal reliability (Burns & Burns, 2008). Other potential reasons could be due to the respondents performing the survey in their second or third language meaning there was less clarity when reading the questions (*see section 8.3 Limitations*). Ofcourse, this is all speculation. There could be several other reasons as to why this scale performed poorly within this context. However, more researcher discretion was needed in this particular scale choice. With hindsight a scale that was related to clothing or a lower involvement product would have been more applicable to this study and would likely give higher Cronbach's alphas. Nevertheless, as it was only study 2's alpha that remained low and there were reasonable speculations as to why this occurred, green brand awareness was still used for the main discussion.

Secondly, the green brand experience scale from Wu et al. (2018), also primarily generated poor alphas. The Cronbach's alpha from Wu et al's. (2018) original study was 0.84 with all five items. However, within this study it produced alphas of 0.454 for study 1 and 0.475 for study 2 (*see section 5.2 Reliability Testing*). Then by removing item three both scales became acceptable (*see Table 5*). Originally this five item scale focused on branded products, however, for the purpose of the study the questions were adapted to just focus on the brand (Wu et al., 2018). These adaptations from branded products to brands, could be a reason as to why the reliability was low in this context. However, Wu et al. (2018) state that, in comparison to its traditional counterpart brand experience, the concept of green brand experience is not well developed within academia. Inferring that, unlike Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) well established and tested brand experience scale, scales from green brand experience are still in their infancy. Evidence of this was seen when searching the literature. As Wu et al.'s (2018) scale was the only one that could be found, that related brand experience and sustainability. Consequently, more research within the field may be needed to develop a scale that can be used in different contexts, like Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) brand experience scale.

Another consideration for the alphas would be the abstractness of green brand experience. To look at item three, the one which was removed, it states *'This brand is an environmentally emotional brand'* (Wu et al., 2018). It is understood that, like brand experience, green brand experience is a subjective concept based on sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses (Wu et al., 2018). All of which are difficult to measure through quantitative research. Subsequently, this could imply that these items are not clear as to their meaning as the measurement of an experience is so abstract. Therefore, respondents may have struggled to interpret what it means to be an *'environmentally emotional brand'* within the environment of a survey. Again, in this study's context, this uncertain interpretation could have been heightened by language limitations. Nevertheless, once item three was removed both studies alphas reached an acceptable level. Yet, this result could indicate a distinct need for further item and scale generation within the field of green brand experience.

6.2 The Claim

Another non hypothesis related factor for discussion is the chosen claim. It was understood that peers reviewing this study may interpret the results to stem from the claim being fictitious. In that respondents may have questioned whether the claim had genuinely come from either brand and that had affected their responses. In other words, scepticism over the claims' origin may have influenced the cause and effect. If this was the case, this study could be accused of publication bias (Munafò, Nosek, Bishop, Button, Chambers, Percie du Sert, Simonsohn, Wagenmakers, Ware, & Ioannidis, 2017). Subsequently, the perceived greenwashing would not be due to the poor green brand knowledge, but rather respondents questioning the claims' origin. However, before, the claims were revealed to be fictitious an open comments question was optional for respondents to share any thoughts. Here the comments indicated that the respondents did believe that the claim stemmed from both H&M and Patagonia, for example:

'I don't feel like I associate [H&M] with sustainability at all. (...) The fact that they say that they're "sustainable" and use recycled cotton I don't believe at all because of their cheap price. I don't think it's possible to do both (...)'
[this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

'My views on Patagonia are generally positive, but they've had a few scandals which makes me question whether their claims are 100% honest. I don't think they are deliberately out to deceive as it's not always possible to be completely in control of the supply chain. However, I think they need to be more transparent rather than make bold sweeping statements about 'how good they are'

More examples of respondents' trust in the claims' origin can be seen in *Appendix D*.

Furthermore, there may be critique as to the claim being too vague to be seen as credible in any circumstance, again suggesting a publication bias (Munafò et al., 2017). As previously mentioned, the claim used in the study was taken from H&M's sustainability report; *'95% of cotton used by H&M Group is recycled or other sustainably sourced.'* (H&M Group, 2018, p. 8) Thus, it was not a completely fictitious claim and had grounding in actual marketing campaigns. In addition, as the percentage was very high, it was modified, and the figure was lowered (75%) to reduce the risk of the claim *ironically* seeming unbelievable. To check this statistically, as mentioned in section *5.4 H&M Further Testing*, the H&M data was tested for claim credibility as well. This showed significantly positive correlations and regressions between the independent variables and claim credibility. Indicating that the claim was seen as credible *if* the respondents

thought H&M had a high or positive green brand knowledge. Additionally, the comments reinforce the idea that the claim was formulated in a way that was perceived as credible:

'I think it is good that H&M try to be more green. However, given the nature of the business that is fast fashion it is a hard task to take on! With that said I think they are in the forefront compared to their competitors and love they are trying. A for effort, but I would like for H&M to be more transparent on the information tags, so me as a customer can get a better picture. I know they have there green collection "conscious" with a green tag, but If all have an print of the environmental footprint I think it would be better.'

'I followed [Patagonia's] Instagram account, the way of posting content is interesting, not cloth related usually, mostly to convey a healthy, outdoor and environmental lifestyle. I think that's also make me think that they are trustworthy.'

Again, more comments that prove this can be seen in *Appendix D*.

7.0 Main Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine if a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge had an effect on their perception of a brand's green claim. Namely, whether it was perceived as credible or greenwashing. As predicted, the different facets of green brand knowledge did affect the respondents' perception of the green claim. Brand knowledge is defined as the cumulation of thoughts, feelings, images and associations that evokes how a consumer perceives a brand (Keller, 2006). Resulting in descriptive and evaluative brand information that creates personal meaning, which is then stored in the consumer's memory (Keller, 2003; Keller, 2006). However, green brand knowledge relates specifically to the green brand node in the consumer's memory that focuses on green commitments and their environmental concerns (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). This is then expressed through environmental associations (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014).

A favourable green brand knowledge would imply the consumers perceives the brand to have positive environmental associations (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). However, an unfavourable green brand knowledge would mean negative environmental associations (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). As insinuated within the literature, a favourable green brand knowledge should lead to increased credibility and an unfavourable green brand knowledge should likely lead to distrust towards the claim. Although this study did find some cause and effect, there was no unequivocal benefit to having a favourable green brand knowledge, like the literature had suggested. As favourable green brand knowledge was not necessarily related to claim credibility. However, all facets within green brand knowledge were found to somewhat predict perceived greenwashing. Potential reasons for these findings will be discussed in the following section.

7.1 Study 1: Patagonia

The findings for study 1 were all insignificant except for green brand awareness. Suggesting that green brand awareness has a low positive effect on credibility.

7.1.1 Green Brand Awareness and Claim Credibility

Despite its low value, green brand awareness was the only facet that showed a significantly positive effect on claim credibility. This relationship is complex considering the other insignificant relationships and the speculations behind them, as outlined in *section 7.1.2 Green brand image, experience and attitudes, and claim credibility*. In summary, they suggested a lack of familiarity and green brand knowledge with Patagonia, which was only understood post data collection. Therefore, although this positive relationship between green brand awareness and claim credibility was originally predicted, the lack of brand familiarity now makes the

relationship slightly unexpected. To understand why there was cause and effect, the individual correlations within the green brand awareness scale were looked at in relation to claim credibility.

Within the green brand awareness scale item three '*The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing',* and item four *'The brand has a good reputation',* were the questions that correlated with claim credibility (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Considering that green brand awareness is how aware consumers are of a brand being specifically green, it is possible that reputational factors play a bigger role (Brunk, 2012; Keller, 2003; Zubair Tariq, 2014). Therefore, it could be assumed that despite the lack of green brand knowledge, respondents still associated Patagonia as an '*environmentally-friendly brand'* with a *'good reputation'* and it was those factors specifically that had some effect as to whether the respondents believed the claim (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). However, item two '*I know the brand's related environmental information',* was insignificant (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). This lower value for understanding Patagonia's sustainability information, helps support the idea that there was a lack of green brand knowledge for Patagonia.

However, as mentioned previously, a higher brand awareness is positive in the sense of recalling and recognising the brand (Keller, 2006). However, for brand awareness to be effective, positive associations are a prerequisite (Alexandra & Cerchias, 2018). Yet, green brand awareness differs, as it indicates the consumer's ability to recall a brand's sustainability efforts, and if the consumer recognises the brand as sustainable (Zubair Tariq, 2014). However, from the findings it can be suggested that a brand can fulfil one of the two components of green brand awareness: recalling and recognising, and still be seen as credible. As the study has indicated, Swedish Millennials and Generation Z may be less familiar with Patagonia. Therefore, they may not be able to *recall* the brand, or its information, as sustainable, automatically (Keller, 2006). However, as Patagonia has been consistently praised for their contribution to sustainability, it is likely to have built them a strong enough global reputation, meaning they have credibility, legitimacy and can be *recognised* as a green brand (Leighton, 2019; Lim, 2016; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Implying that although respondents may not be able to recall the brand, they may recognise Patagonia as green when the brand is presented to them (Keller, 2006; Zubair Tariq, 2014). Subsequently, this recognition of being green works in their favour by giving both the brand and the claim credibility.

Nevertheless, as has been made clear, the value of the effect that green brand awareness had on claim credibility was low, meaning it is difficult to say anything with complete certainty. Yet, considering the literature's support, this result could be an indication of needed further research into legitimacy, reputation and claim credibility as related variables.

7.1.2 Green Brand Image, Experience and Attitudes, and Claim Credibility

As stated, the results for the variables green brand image, experience and attitudes all came back as insignificant in relation to claim credibility. Consequently, it is not possible from this study's results to suggest that either the individual facets or the accumulative green brand knowledge has an effect on the perception of claim credibility. However, for the purpose of the discussion, speculations as to why the results were insignificant will be evaluated.

7.1.2.1 Brand Familiarity

One consideration is the level of brand familiarity. Brand familiarity differs from awareness in that familiarity suggests enough interaction with the brand to create personal and meaningful associations (Alexandra & Cerchias, 2018). Whereas awareness can involve being aware, however, without interactions or personal feelings towards the brand (Keller, 2006). Although H1a was accepted, and green brand awareness had a very slight effect on claim credibility, for the majority it was clear that respondents were not as familiar with Patagonia as with H&M. This is a legitimate speculation if you consider that H&M is a Swedish brand that is readily available in most cities in Sweden (H&M, n.d.). Whereas Patagonia is an American brand and much more limited in its availability in Sweden (Patagonia, n.d.). Therefore, despite Patagonia being a global well-known brand, it is likely that the sample did not have as strong a green brand knowledge towards Patagonia as they had with H&M (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). There is proof of this within the final comments:

'Had no idea about the environmental Abiturs the bran[d] contributes with. Will look up tho'

'I know about the actual brand and I have seen the clothes and bags but I don't really know what they stand for from an environmental perspective. I have never owned an item from them. '
[this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

Under this assumption, the respondents were unlikely to have any substantial lasting associations regarding the brand (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Additionally, potentially due to their lack of past experiences or interactions, they may have not developed a specific attitude towards the brand (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014; Wu et al., 2018). Subsequently, when asked about their opinions on Patagonia's green brand image, experience and attitudes, their answers may have been based on what little awareness they had. This lack of green brand knowledge then relates to an insignificant claim credibility score, as a consumer's response to stimuli is based on their overall impression of the brand (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). Therefore, if the consumer does not have a strong or distinct overall impression, it could be likely that the interpretation would be stunted, leading to less significant results. With hindsight another Swedish brand with positive green associations should have been chosen and would likely reap more acceptable results.

7.1.2.2. Difficulty in Achieving Credibility

Another consideration is the possible difficulty in achieving credibility findings. Within the green branding literature, there is evidence that scepticism is easier to achieve than credibility. Özsoy and Avcilar's (2016) study aimed to determine the relationship and impact between consumers' environmental concern and advert believability. Their results for this hypothesis also came back as insignificant. However, they were able to accept the hypothesis that environmental concern impacted consumer scepticism towards advertisements (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). This could indicate that consumers are more likely to accept scepticism than claim credibility, potentially indicating as to why there was such a difference in study 1 and 2. This perspective could also be assisted by the generation sample. The research regarding Swedish Millennials and Generation Z has shown that not only are they incredibly concerned about the climate crisis, but they are dissatisfied by the contribution businesses are making (Jung, 2019; WWF, 2017, 2018). This could cause an increased propensity to scepticism, leading to hyper-criticality over green claims made by companies. Nevertheless, it is difficult to suggest that this can be definitively pinpointed as the cause of the insignificant results, the preceding factors must be considered.

7.1.2.3 Considerations from the Literature

Although the implications of these findings may seem little, the previous literature did suggest that there could be a cause and effect relationship between green brand knowledge and claim credibility. Considering Chen's (2009) suggestion that green brand image is the consumer's perception of a brand's environmental commitment and concerns. It could be suggested that this would have an affect on how consumers then perceive their marketing techniques. Moreover, Mark and Kamins (1988; cited in Özoy & Avcilar, 2016) has already indicated that there is a relationship between green brand experience and advertisement perception. With the idea that a positive experience can make it easier for consumers to accept or support an advertisement, even if it is deceptive. Furthermore, the literature has shown that general brand attitudes have a significant influence on a brand's perceived image, attractiveness and the consumers subsequent purchase intention (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001; Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). As purchase intention can be largely influenced and caused by advertisements, it could be implied that the consumer's attitude would influence the perception of the green claim as a part of the purchase process. Concludingly, although the results of this study cannot support these statements in the context of green claims, this study could be replicated under different circumstances. Either with a more familiar brand or in a different sample context and lead to more significant results. Therefore, further research is needed to see whether green brand knowledge does have an effect on claim credibility.

7.2 Study 2: H&M

The findings of study 2 indicated that all facets had a weak yet significantly negative effect on perceived greenwashing. The strongest predictor being green brand image and the weakest being green brand awareness.

7.2.1 Green Brand Awareness and Perceived Greenwashing

The green brand awareness facet did have an effect on the perceived greenwashing of the claim. However, it indicated the weakest effect of the four facets. The weakness of this result was somewhat expected due to the complexity of traditional brand awareness as stated in the literature review. As previously mentioned, Keller (2006) denotes that a higher brand awareness is positive in the sense of recalling and recognising the brand. However, for brand awareness to be effective, positive associations are a prerequisite (Alexandra & Cerchias, 2018). Yet, green brand awareness differs, as it indicates the consumer's ability to recall a brand's sustainability efforts, and if the consumer recognises the brand as sustainable (Zubair Tariq, 2014). Subsequently, a low green brand awareness indicates that the consumer does not recognise the brand as sustainable, and thus would increase perceived greenwashing.

7.2.1.1 H&M Reputational Considerations

H&M is a high awareness brand (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). However, as seen in both the media (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018) and the final comments (*see Appendix D*), it can be suggested that H&M is not perceived as a green brand. Again, to look at the individual correlations within the green brand awareness scale, in relation to perceived greenwashing, the item '*I know the brand's related environmental information*', had an insignificant yet *positive* relationship with perceived greenwashing (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Indicating, in the case of H&M, that a higher knowledge of the brand's environmental information is somewhat unfavourable, as it points in the direction of perceived greenwashing. When considering this result, before analysis it was not expected that the item would come back with a positive direction. However, now considering the brand's history and their controversial reputation it makes sense that this direction would occur (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018).

This is again shown through the individual item correlations in the green brand awareness scale. Item four '*The brand has a good reputation*' had the strongest negative relationship with perceived greenwashing (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Indicating that if a brand's reputation decreases, perceived greenwashing is likely to increase. As previously mentioned, the reputation is not based on the current situation, but a summation of past behaviours (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Consequently, companies with misbehaviours in the past, are likely to have a bad

reputation (Brunk, 2012). As a result, this will negatively affect the perception of the green claim. Subsequently, the green claim is more likely to be judged or affected by the company's past behaviour than what the claim is actually stating.

Furthermore, Özsoy and Avcilar (2016) argue that consumers tend to take global reputation into consideration when evaluating the believability of an advert. Thus, it is likely that the credibility of a green claim is affected if the brand has a global reputation. They also found in their study, that adverts from globally well-known brands had low scores in scepticism and high scores in believability (Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). However, H&M is a globally well-known brand (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). Yet respondents perceived the claim as greenwashing and thus it could be assumed to have scored high in scepticism and low in believability, if this was tested. Subsequently, even though the brand is globally well-known, other factors, such as a negative reputation, are likely to affect the scepticism and believability. If this study is replicated it could be beneficial to have reputation and scepticism as mediating variables.

7.2.2 Green Brand Image and Perceived Greenwashing

Previously, it has been established that greenwashing negatively influences the green brand image (Chen et al., 2020). However, whether green brand image affects perceived greenwashing is not as discussed. In this study, green brand image was the strongest predictor of perceived greenwashing. This entails that a negative green brand image may somewhat increase the perceived greenwashing of the green claim. This result was expected as it was likely that the green claim was considered incongruent with H&M's green brand image (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019, Sjödin & Törn, 2006). Considering H&M's past accusations of greenwashing, it could be likely that some of the respondents did not consider the brand to have a positive green brand image (Bain, 2020). This is supported by Brunk and de Boer (2020) who argue that perceptions can be formed by negative brand information. As negative information, such as accusations of greenwashing, is likely to undermine the green brand image (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Chen et al., 2020).

Keller (2006) explains that brand image is the consumer's perceptions and preferences towards the brand. However, green brand image differs as it is defined as the consumer's perceptions of the brand's environmental commitments and concern (Chen, 2009). As previously mentioned, Arbouw, Ballantine and Ozanne (2019) argue that if an already established image is incoherent with the brand's communication, it leads to unfavourable associations. Furthermore, incorporating brand values, such as sustainability, into an already established brand image, may cause damage as these might be inconsistent with the consumer's already existing beliefs and associations (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Thus, when H&M, or another controversial brand, releases a claim that aims to place them in a sustainable light, it causes incongruence and scepticism (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). This also aligns with Li, Li and Sun (2019)

when they suggest that many attempts at green branding become obsolete due to poor alignment in strategies. This is supported in the final comments, where it is evident that some respondent did not associate H&M with sustainability:

'H&M has destroyed so much around the world. Fast fashion and mass production when it is at its worst! There is nothing genuine left! Trashbrand and trashproducts who destroy humans, animals and nature inside out.'
[this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

'I have never encountered H&M and environment being named in the same sentence before.'

As a result, the green claim contradicted H&M's already established green brand image. Hence, it was easier for the respondents to perceive the green claim as greenwashing. It could therefore be suggested that a brand with a negative image, like H&M, should be wary when using green claims as it may be perceived as greenwashing. This may further damage the green brand image, rather than enhance it.

However, again the cause and effect, as seen from the data, are not high enough to make these conclusions with complete certainty. Even though the green brand image was the strongest facet, it was still somewhat weak. This may be dependent on the fact that consumers perceive H&M differently. Sjödin and Törn (2006) argue that the image may differ among consumers, as they may have varying associations and attitudes towards the brand. Thus, the result may depend on the fact that the majority of the respondents thought H&M had a negative green brand image, however, some thought H&M had a positive image. This is also supported in the final comments:

'I think it is good that H&M try to be more green. However, given the nature of the business that is fast fashion it is a hard task to take on! With that said I think they are in the forefront compared to their competitors and love they are trying (...) I would like for H&M to be more transparent (...) I know they have there green collection "conscious" with a green tag, but If all have an print of the environmental footprint I think it would be better.'

7.2.3 Green Brand Experience and Perceived Greenwashing

Green brand experience is still in its infancy within sustainable branding literature, meaning there is little discussion as to its effects on brands' marketing activities (Wu et al., 2019). However, the findings indicate that an unfavourable green brand experience is a predictor of perceived greenwashing, yet weak. Green brand experience and traditional brand experience both involve subjective sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses post interaction with a brand (Andreini et al., 2018; Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). However, while traditional brand experience can form from any related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009),

green brand experience forms from specifically green stimuli (Wu et al., 2018). Within this study, green brand experience was the second strongest predictor of perceived greenwashing.

7.2.3.1 Green Brand Experience and Consumer Relationships

The following sections of green brand experience will discuss the results in a broader context. Despite green brand experience's lack of development, this relationship was expected as Hirschman (1982; cited in Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008) states that past brand experiences have a significant influence on both the cognitive and affective stages of a consumer's response to stimuli. Past experiences help create associations through imagery and time-specific emotions, meaning they become a determining factor as to whether they support or argue against new information (Hastak & Olsen, 1989; Park, Stoel & Lennon, 2008). Therefore, if a consumer has previously had negative green brand experiences with H&M, these time-specific associations may affect their willingness to trust the brand in future actions. Furthermore, Andreini et al.'s (2018) conceptual model indicated that brand experiences can activate meaningful consumer relationships with brands, themselves, peers and society. Creating these meaningful trusting relationships is said to be one of the key drivers in gaining green brand equity (Akturan, 2018; Li, Li & Sun, 2019). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that those brands who do not create these relationships through consumer experiences, struggle in gaining green brand equity and are more likely to be perceived as not sustainable (Akturan, 2018; Andreini et al., 2018; Li, Li & Sun, 2019).

7.2.3.2 Green Brand Experiences and Social Concerns

As previously mentioned, Swedish Millennials and Generation Z believe that what they buy reflects who they are in relation to sustainability (Jung, 2019). Hence, green brands and green products become a way to express their concern, involvement or standpoint on climate change (WWF, 2018). Therefore, it is likely that these age groups evaluate brands based on whether they felt that they engaged in environmentally positive actions when they used that brand (Mourad & Ahmed, 2012; Wu et al., 2018). This is supported by Andreni et al. (2018) in that brand experiences can help resolve social concerns. Therefore, if a respondent has had a previously negative green brand experience with H&M, either in the form of a purchase or media criticism, they are unlikely to think that this brand can help alleviate future social concerns. Furthermore, H&M may be seen as unlikely to provide an avenue to which they can confirm their identity as an environmentally concerned consumer. Consequently, they retain this negative association with the brand and this helps determine their acceptance of the claim. Under Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2009) logic, if a consumer stores feelings, cognitions and behaviours of doing something environmentally negative through a brand, their future associations may be damaged.

7.2.3.3 Environmentally Concerned Consumers

The result also suggests that consumer concern increases the evaluation of green brand experience and subsequently, advertising. As environmentally concerned consumers, such as Swedish Millennials and Generation Z, are more likely to question a claim if they have stored a negative green brand experience. This contradicts Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer, (2018) when they suggest that environmental concern is not necessarily an advantage in detecting misleading claims. As it could be implied that consumers with higher environmental concern place more importance on consumption as a way to communicate identity and engagement in environmental care (Fuentes, 2015; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). Fuentes (2015) argues that companies take advantage of this by reformulating sustainability issues to align with their targeted consumers' lifestyles (Fuentes, 2015). Hence, companies can exploit the consumers' high environmental concern in their desire to build their sustainable identity (Fuentes, 2015). However, if the already established green brand experience contradicts this reformulation, it is less likely that consumers will believe the company can help them achieve a green self identity (Andreini et al., 2018; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). Indicating that as green brand experience literature develops, a more in-depth understanding of the highly concerned consumers' ability to interpret green communications will be gained. Potentially contradicting what previously has been believed by authors such as Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018).

7.2.3.4 Measuring Green Brand Experience

Nevertheless, the effect size for green brand experience as a predictor of perceived greenwashing was still low in value. Therefore, these conclusions have to be considered tentatively. However, there could be speculations made as to why the effect was not stronger. As discussed in section *6.1 Scales Discussion,* green brand experience is a fairly new concept, meaning measurements are not as established as the traditional brand experience counterpart (Wu et al., 2018). Had there been more well-established measurements, potentially with better clarity, respondents may have had more concrete interpretations of the concept. Hence, the results would better reflect the literature. Furthermore, green brand experience is an abstract and subjective notion, involving sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioural responses (Wu et al., 2018). Therefore, it may be difficult to express within the rigidity of survey questions. Hence, the data collected through the scale may not reflect the respondents' comprehensive understanding of their green brand experience with either brand. Consequently, to further understand this cause and effect, qualitative research may have been appropriate as respondents have the freedom to discuss their opinions and experiences more openly. Although time restrictions meant that a mixed method approach to confirm this was not possible, it could be a key indicator for further research. The final comments confirm the idea of the complexity in respondents interpreting green brand experience:

'As a customer it can be hard to take your time and actually find out if the company is trustworthy of if they're misleading (...) the first ad or information you get is important to set the tone for what you'll think about the company going forward. That if you get a good impression in the beginning (...) you might take your time and look further and realize it's actually good. On the other hand if the first situation with the brand was bad (...)You wont buy anything from it (...)'

7.2.4 Green Brand Attitudes and Perceived Greenwashing

Ajzen (2008) suggests that attitudes are the sum of all of the consumer's evaluative beliefs, which are defined by a set of evaluative attributes. The formation of green brand attitudes is similar, except the evaluative attributes are environmentally based. The findings indicate that unfavourable green brand attitudes are a predictor of perceived greenwashing, yet weak. These results were expected. If the consumer feels like the company is not doing enough or its practices are damaging, the consumer is likely to develop negative green brand attitudes (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). This may be heightened considering that Swedish Millennials and Generation Z are open in their beliefs that companies need to contribute more towards an environmentally friendly society (Jung, 2019). Considering H&M's history and reputation (Bain, 2020), it may be that some respondents have developed negative green brand attitudes. Therefore, when the respondents received the claim from H&M, they may have been less likely to support it, due to their green brand attitudes.

7.2.4.1 Green Brand Attitude and Social Concerns

Ajzen (2008) argues that attitudes are rarely formed from unbiased judgements, but prejudice, self-serving attributes and social judgements. Subsequently, it could be suggested that green brand attitudes are not solely formed from the consumer themselves, but society and other external factors also play a role (Ajzen, 2008). When asking respondents from the Millennial and Generation Z groups it was expected that the effect of green brand attitudes would have been stronger. This is due to the fact that Swedish Millennials and Generation Z advocate that what you buy reflects who you are in relation to climate change (Jung, 2019). Causing a personal expectation for these groups to purchase more sustainable options (Jung, 2019). Therefore, it was expected of them to have a more concrete opinion on H&M's green claim, which would result in a higher cause and effect. However, the weak result could stem from the fact that attitudes and beliefs are subjective (Ajzen, 2008). Hence, the respondents may have had differing evaluative attributes (Ajzen, 2008).

7.2.4.2 Forming of Green Brand Attitudes

Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz (2005) imply that consumers can develop attitudes purely through exposure to advertisements and, in many cases, can be developed through a single exposure. This

would suggest that one advertising campaign made in the past, can be at fault for creating current negative green brand attitudes. As discussed, H&M has been accused multiple times of greenwashing (Silver, 2018). Therefore, it is possible to assume that the respondents may have either interpreted H&M's advertising as greenwashing themselves, or seen the accusations in the media. If this assumption is true, this may have created lingering negative green brand attitudes. This is supported by Brunk and de Boer (2020) who argue that one piece of negative information about a brand, such as the revelation of greenwashing, can leave strong unfavourable associations. Therefore, when being presented with the stimulus in the study, these negative associations or attitudes may have been expressed in negative thoughts and emotions. This supports Hastak and Olson (1989) study, as when a consumer is exposed to brand-related information they create spontaneous thoughts. Additionally, emotions occur leading to an affective response (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). These thoughts and feelings then go on to either provide support to the information or form counterarguments. In the context of this study, it is possible to suggest that due to past issues with H&M, the respondents formed negative thoughts and feelings. Which subsequently led to counterarguments against the claim. Although this study cannot confirm the thoughts or feelings leading to the respondents' attitudes towards H&M, there are final comments that support this idea of negativity:

'H&M at it again with their usual fu**ery. Good prices, bad quality, probably engaged in tons of shady backroom deals. Luckily, [I] leave my moral compass at home when [I] go shopping.'

'Some answers, including mine, may still be affected by the sweatshop incidents and might not be related to current marketing strategy.'

'H&M have been known to burn unsold clothes. I don't know if they still do it, but because of that and other suspicious activities, I've stopped buying clothes from them. They're probably trying to change now, but it's going to take a while for me to trust them in this area.'

This contradicts previous green brand attitude literature when they state that green communications are likely to have a positive effect on the consumer's attitudes towards the brand (Leonidou et al., 2011). As it assumes all claims will be considered credible. This contradiction may stem from the neglection of considering the consumer's pre-existing attitudes towards the brand. Implying that brand attitudes should not only be considered an outcome. However, forming favourable attitudes should be viewed as a prerequisite to releasing the green claim. Following the logic of Swelden et al. (2010), Hastak and Olson (1989) and Jokšaitė, Banytė and Virvilaitė (2007), once these attitudes are formed they are resilient and arduous to change. There is an indication of this within the comments seen above. Yet, as this was not tested, this idea of rigidity cannot be supported or rejected. Nevertheless, it could be a point for further research. If this study was replicated over periods of time, it may give an indication as to whether green brand attitudes are as resilient as the literature suggests.

7.3 Main Contributions

In the following section, the main contributions of this study will be addressed. It will begin with a discussion into green brand knowledge as an accumulative concept and how the overall findings of this study have answered the research question. Secondly, green brand awareness and green brand image will be reviewed. Green brand awareness, although weak as a predictor, was the only facet to have an effect within both studies. Furthermore, the findings addressed indicated some contradictions or talking points from previous literature. Therefore, it could contribute to the green brand knowledge field. Finally, green brand image was the strongest predictor within the study and should therefore be discussed further for contributive points.

7.3.1 Green Brand Knowledge

Whereas the previous literature regarding green communications has viewed green brand knowledge as the dependent variable, the aim of this study was to prove that green brand knowledge has an effect on the perception of a green claim. Whether it was credible or perceived as greenwashing. When looking at the results of the individual facets; green brand awareness, image, experience and attitudes, together, it can give some indication as to the accumulative effect of the green brand knowledge. What this study has shown is that it is possible to suggest that green brand knowledge can cause some negative effect on a claim being perceived as greenwashing. The results indicate that if green brand knowledge decreases, or worsens, perceived greenwashing increases.

When looking back into the previous literature this possibility is well supported. To look at study 2 in particular, H&M is considered a controversial brand within a controversial industry; fast fashion (Billinton, 2019; Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016; Silver, 2018). An industry regularly in the spotlight for its environmental damage (Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). Therefore, it is more likely that consumers will receive negative stimuli from both the media and society towards the industry (Hvass & Pedersen, 2019; Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). Under the basis of brand knowledge, the information from this stimuli is then stored within the consumer's memory and is expressed in a more negative perception (Keller, 2003). Brunk and de Boer (2020) increase the importance of stimuli in their discussion of negative bias. In that negative brand information is more powerful cognitively than positive information. Consequently, there is reason to believe that a brand, such as H&M, that has received so much negative attention, is likely to have a more negative form of green brand knowledge (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018). This may only increase when discussing Millennials and Generation Z specifically, as their environmental concern and want for more sustainable practices is more prevalent than other generations (Jung, 2019; WWF, 2017, 2018).

Then how does this relate to new stimuli or green claims? Again, this study showed that each facet had significantly negative relationships towards perceived greenwashing. Insinuating that the more green brand knowledge is reduced, the higher the perception of greenwashing. To look at the research that most resembled this study, in that they looked at facets affecting claim credibility, they can give some indication as to how a negative green brand knowledge can cause this perception. Musgrove, Choi and Cox's (2018) study was one of the few studies that had claim credibility as a dependent variable. They indicated that corporate credibility can be a defining association in a consumer's interpretation of green marketing. Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) state that once corporate credibility is achieved, it confirms a brand's reputation and environmental legitimacy, which formulates an external perception or association. If not, the actions made by a company are unlikely to be perceived as desirable and reduce both the source credibility, claim integrity and increase scepticism (Brunk, 2012). Although within this study, source or corporate credibility was not analysed as a mediating variable, it could be speculated that a lower or more negative green brand knowledge could have been expressed through scepticism. Consequently, reducing the given claim's integrity, resulting in perceived greenwashing (Musgrove, Choi & Cox, 2018; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014).

In summary, this study has demonstrated that green brand knowledge can affect the perception of a green claim in regards to perceived greenwashing. However, from the results of this study, it cannot be supported that green brand knowledge has an effect on perceived claim credibility. Yet, it is possible to say that if this study was replicated in a different context with different sample characteristics, it may have brought more significant results. Therefore, further research with green brand knowledge as the independent and claim credibility as the dependent variable is needed.

7.3.2 Green Brand Awareness

One of the main contributions from this study stems from the findings within green brand awareness. Within study 1, green brand awareness was the only predictor of claim credibility. However, in study 2, it was the weakest predictor of perceived greenwashing within the facets. Yet, within both studies, the correlation analysis showed that there are significant relationships between the variables, both in the directions that were predicted. In other words, if green brand awareness increases, perceived greenwashing will decrease. Similarly, if green brand awareness increases, claim credibility will increase. Subsequently, green brand awareness was the only facet where both hypotheses indicated that their role in green brand knowledge does affect the perception of the green claim. Still, the value of effect for both studies was weak. Therefore, it is problematic to suggest that green brand awareness has a definite effect on the perception of a green claim.

Even so, the compelling nature of these results does not only stem from its consistency across the dependent variables. Yet, these results indicate that there may be missing links in the green brand awareness literature. In that green brand awareness cannot simply be achieved by green marketing, as suggested by Zubair Tariq (2014) and Ishaq and Di Maria (2020). However, the original brand awareness has to be considered first. Taking into account traditional brand awareness, Belz and Schmidt-Riediger (2010) argue that a company with a high brand awareness is at a higher risk of being accused of misconduct, as these companies are being watched more closely. Suggesting that a high brand awareness can be both positive and negative. However, green brand awareness is an indication of how conscious a consumer is that a brand is specifically green (Zubair Tariq, 2014). This definition would suggest that a high green brand awareness is explicitly positive. Yet, the study's results insinuate that green brand awareness is a more complex phenomenon. As brand awareness and green brand awareness are not separate entities. Implying that a higher green brand awareness carries similar risks to its traditional counterpart.

This is apparent in study 2. H&M is a high awareness brand (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). However, as seen in both the media (Billinton, 2019; Silver, 2018) and the final comments *(see Appendix D),* it can be suggested that H&M is not perceived as a green brand. Again, to look at the individual correlations within the green brand awareness scale, in relation to perceived greenwashing, the item '*I know the brand's related environmental information*', had an insignificant yet *positive* relationship with perceived greenwashing (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Indicating that higher knowledge of the brand's environmental information is somewhat unfavourable for controversial brands, such as H&M.

Consequently, a broader implication could be that companies with an already high brand awareness, that have had misconducts or questionable credibility in the past, will in fact find it much harder to achieve a favourable green brand awareness (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Therefore, when they do release green claims the consumer's green brand knowledge may rely on previous negative information to which they are aware of. This is especially important when considering Brunk and de Boer's (2020) support of negative bias within brand perception. As consumers are more likely to be sceptical and perceive it as greenwashing. This is especially important when considering Swedish Millennials and Generation Z who are already sceptical over companies' processes towards climate change (Jung, 2019). This contradicts Zubair Tariq (2014) and Ishaq and Di Maria (2020) when they state that the way to create green brand awareness is through providing information regarding the company's sustainability efforts**.** The company's original credibility has to be a key consideration first, otherwise the consumers may see the environmental information as a marketing strategy rather than an actual attempt to be sustainable (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010).

Nevertheless, the green brand awareness findings do not only contradict the idea of providing information, but they highlight the importance of certain awareness components. Within study 2,

item four of the green brand awareness scale '*The brand has a good reputation',* had the strongest negative relationship with perceived greenwashing (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). Indicating that if a brand's reputation decreases, perceived greenwashing is likely to increase. As previously mentioned, the reputation is not based on the current situation, but a summation of past behaviours (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Consequently, companies with misbehaviours in the past, are likely to have a bad reputation. As a result, this will negatively affect the perception of the green claim. Hence, the green claim is more likely to be judged or affected by the company's past behaviour, than what the claim is actually stating.

The importance of reputation is also apparent if we consider the misgivings of study 1. To work under the assumption that the respondents of the Patagonia survey had less green brand knowledge than that of the H&M respondents, the reason as to why there was an effect could stem from legitimacy and reputation (Brunk, 2012; Lim, 2016; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Özsoy & Avcilar, 2016). Considering that green brand awareness is an indication of how aware consumers are of a brand being specifically green, it is possible that reputational factors play a bigger role (Brunk, 2012; Keller, 2003; Zubair Tariq, 2014). Patagonia has been consistently praised for its contribution to sustainability within its field (Leighton, 2019). Causing them to build a strong global reputation as a green brand. Not only meaning they have credibility but also legitimacy in their actions (Lim, 2016; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Therefore, it could be assumed that despite the lack of green brand knowledge, respondents still recognised Patagonia as an '*environmentally-friendly brand'* with a '*good reputation'* and it was those factors specifically that had some effect as to whether the respondents believed the claim (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014).

This theory is supported when using the logic of both Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) and Özsoy and Avcilar (2016). Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) state that when brands have the combination of environmental legitimacy and a positive reputation, it acts like a signal which can alleviate any concerns a consumer has about a claim. Giving it integrity and making it easier to accept. Additionally, Özsoy and Avcilar (2016) state that global reputation is usually a key consideration when evaluating the believability of an advert. If a brand has built a trusting, sympathetic, global and powerful reputation, it positions them to be more believable within their marketing. Consequently, it is possible from these results to suggest that reputation, legitimacy and green brand awareness are not separate entities. Either reputation and legitimacy are prerequisites to green brand awareness or they are interwoven where one cannot survive without the other when releasing green claims.

This study has shown that green brand awareness can have an effect on the perception of a green claim, negatively for perceived greenwashing and positively for claim credibility. However, it has also shown that green brand awareness is more complex than the previous literature suggests. To put it simply, green brand awareness cannot only be achieved by providing environmental

information, like Zubair Tariq (2014) and Ishaq and Di Maria (2020) suggest. On the contrary, if a brand suffers from an unfavourable brand awareness, providing further information can be damaging and lead to higher levels of distrust. However, if a brand has a strong reputation and environmental legitimacy, that can counteract a lack of familiarity with the brand (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Making it easier for consumers to perceive communications as credible. This shows that by having green brand awareness as the independent variable, a more holistic understanding of it as a concept can be achieved. In brief, green brand awareness and traditional brand awareness should not be viewed as separate entities. Furthermore, legitimacy and reputation should be seen as prerequisites. Implying that companies should be wary of presenting green claims before that aspect of the consumer's green brand knowledge is favourable, especially when trying to appeal to groups like Swedish Millennials and Generation Z.

7.3.3 Green Brand Image

Another main contribution from this study was the finding that green brand image is the strongest predictor of perceived greenwashing. From the results, it suggests that the consumer's pre-existing green brand image had an effect on their perception of the green claim. Implying that companies have to be aware of the incongruence that may exist between the company's green brand image and the green claim (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019; Sjödin & Törn, 2006). A potential cause of this problem is rooted in the belief that the company can control the image of the brand (Tan & Trang, 2019).

In a broader context, this result shows some contradictions within the brand image literature that needs addressing. Tan and Trang (2019) argue that a brand image is the result of a company's effort to create a positive consumer perception. From this viewpoint, it could be suggested that the company has the power to create the brand image they want and that the company retains control of how the brand is perceived. However, the image that the company wants the brand to have, might be harder to establish in the consumers' mind, than Tan and Trang (2019) suggest. With the corresponding rise of conscious consumers and Millennial and Generation Z's influence on business, consumers are carrying more responsibility on themselves in making environmentally friendly purchases (Jung, 2019; Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; WWF, 2017, 2018). Additionally, these groups are placing more pressure on brands that they feel are not contributing or deceiving (Barnes, 2019; Cheng, 2019; Petro, 2020). Therefore, it could be said that, more than ever, consumers are more inclined to make their own conclusions on what a brand is and what it stands for. In other words, they are less likely to automatically agree with the brand. However, they require a more comprehensive understanding, when creating their own image of the brand. This is supported by Sjödin and Törn (2006) who argue that the image may differ among consumers, as they may have different associations and attitudes towards the brand. Therefore, the results of this study support Keller's (2006) understanding of brand image, in that

it is in the mind of the consumer. Consequently, the company may not always be able to control the consumer's perception of the brand, and thus, its image. This is supported by Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) who imply that the difficulty of achieving a strong brand image depends on the fact that it is a result of the consumer's emotions and reasoning and that brand image stems from the consumer's perception of reality and not the *brand's* reality.

Jones (2019) argues that companies use green advertising to display their sustainability efforts. With the aim to create a green brand image (Leonidou et al., 2011). However, from the results of this study, this seems to be easier said than done. It is understood that companies are increasing their use of green claims within their marketing (Leonidou et al., 2011). However, for already controversial companies, such as H&M, it carries a risk. As, if their claims are not congruent with their pre-existing green brand image, consumers may be more likely to see it as a strategy to be perceived as a sustainable brand (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019; Jones, 2019). The implication from the result is that claiming to be sustainable without a coherent green brand image might not have the desired effect, as consumers will base their evaluation on their reality, over the company's reality of its image (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Consequently, more importance should be placed on gaining a deeper understanding into how consumers view the brand's image, otherwise efforts may become redundant.

In summary, this study has shown that green brand image can have a negative effect on the perceived greenwashing of a claim. Similarly, the findings have confirmed the idea of brand image being within the company's control as antiquated (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Tan & Trang; 2019). Namely, as the concern of Millennials and Generation Z increases, so does their unwillingness to take green brand image at face value (Jung, 2019). Resulting in consumers becoming increasingly critical and curious over whether a company is truly who they present themselves to be. Furthermore, companies should be aware of the risk of using green claims that are incongruent with the green brand image (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019; Sjödin & Törn, 2006). Therefore, it is essential that companies are aware and put effort into understanding how the brand is perceived by consumers. In conclusion, companies should not use green claims that are incongruent with the established green brand image (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019; Sjödin & Törn, 2006). Yet, they should consider the green brand image as a key catalyst as to whether their claim will be successful or not.

8.0 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to discover if a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge had an effect on their perception of a brand's green claim. Specifically, whether they perceived it as credible or greenwashing, focusing on Swedish Millennials and Generation Z. In answering the research question, the findings from this study suggests that a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge does indeed affect their perception of a green claim. However, not to the extent that was anticipated. The findings could not support the idea that green brand knowledge has a positive effect on claim credibility. As, out of the four facets, only green brand awareness showed an effect. However, it did show green brand knowledge to have a negative effect on perceived greenwashing. Implying that if green brand knowledge decreases, the risk of perceived greenwashing increases. Most interestingly, green brand awareness was the only facet within both studies to show some effect, both within the directions predicted. This indicated that green brand awareness as a facet is not exclusively positive. However, it is complex, as factors such as legitimacy and reputation have a strong influence over its success (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Additionally, green brand image was the strongest predictor for perceived greenwashing. This helped confirm the idea that brand image does not necessarily exist within the company's control, yet is created by the consumer and social factors (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Hence, consumers may have a green brand image that differs from the company's own perception of the brand. Therefore, there is a risk that when releasing green claims, as the message may be incongruent with the consumer's image of the brand, leading to further scepticism (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). In conclusion, by taking the green brand knowledge as the dependent variable, it has been shown to be an affecting factor in the perception of a claim. Therefore, the phenomenon of green brand knowledge and its effect, should be a consideration in both green marketing and its literature.

8.1 Theoretical Implications

As shown in section *1.2 Problem Formulation* the majority of studies concerning green brand knowledge consider the facets as the dependent variable and the green claim as the independent (Akuturan, 2018; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Leonidou et al., 2011; Marder, Dodd & Leonard, 2012). This left a gap in the literature. Although it was understood how a credible or greenwashing claim can affect the overall opinion of the brand, there was little discussion in how these pre-existing opinions affected the perception of a green claim. Therefore, this study aimed to change the order of the variables to see whether a consumer's pre-existing green brand knowledge had an effect on the perception of a green claim.

This study has established that a consumer's green brand knowledge can have an effect on a claim being perceived as greenwashing, however, not on whether it is seen as credible. Subsequently, this study's theoretical implication is its highlighting of the shortcomings in sustainable branding literature. In that many studies have neglected consumers' pre-existing green brand knowledge and how that as a variable may affect other conclusions within sustainable branding. For example, as seen within section *7.3.2 Green Brand Awareness*, the idea that a favourable awareness can simply be created through providing information on the companies' sustainability efforts, has been shown to be inaccurate (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020; Leonidou et al., 2011; Zubair Tariq, 2014). As this study has implied that there are apparent prerequisites that must be considered: the original brand awareness, legitimacy and reputation (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Without those factors in place there is likely to be higher levels of distrust in future communications. Furthermore, in section *7.3.3 Green Brand Image*, the similar idea that communications can act as a catalyst towards achieving a green brand image, which can then cause higher levels of credibility, is also not as simple as first thought (Leonidou et al., 2011). As, if there is an incongruence between the communication and the brand's pre-existing image, this is likely to make the consumer more sceptical (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Resulting in a higher chance of their claims being perceived as greenwashing. In brief, this study has shown that by changing the order of the variables a more holistic understanding of green brand knowledge and how it affects claim perception can be seen. Showing its complexities and potential problems if it is not considered beforehand.

Nevertheless, as stated throughout the discussion, the cause and effect between the green brand knowledge facets and perceived greenwashing was weak in value. As a result, it is difficult to say anything with any certainty. Furthermore, this study centred around two brands within the fashion industry and two specific age groups, Swedish Millennials and Generation Z. Therefore, it could be said that these results are limited to that specific industry and group. Yet, this study can be replicated by researchers that have greater resources and time, that could lead to more significant and generalisable results.

8.2 Managerial Implications

Companies are increasingly concerned with how their brand is perceived by consumers (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). Yet, as more companies try to be perceived as sustainable the amount of green claims increases, causing higher levels of scepticism in the claim's credibility (Szabo & Webster, 2020). Furthermore, the pressure on branding becomes even more intense with the rise of Millennials and Generation Z. As their environmental concern has meant that they require brands that are contributing to the cause (Jung, 2019). Therefore, having a positive green brand knowledge has become a key point of interest within marketing (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014). However, the majority of studies focus upon the green brand knowledge facets as a result of

green communications, disregarding the facets' potential effect on green claim perception (Akuturan, 2018; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Leonidou et al., 2011; Marder, Dodd & Leonard, 2012). This study has shown that an unfavourable green brand knowledge can increase the risk of a claim being perceived as greenwashing. This result should be seen as a major implication for marketing managers. As, if a consumer has a pre-existing unfavourable green brand knowledge, simply releasing green claims may not reap the benefits predicted. In that the message within the claim may be misinterpreted and refuted (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Failing to make the wanted improvements in their brand image or sustainable associations. The risk of this is seen by Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014), as many organisations do invest greatly into making and communicating virtuous green products and initiatives. Yet, if green brand knowledge is not taken into consideration, the investment value may be lost. Chen (2009) suggests that the real difficulty in establishing green equity is incorporating sustainability within the overall corporate vision and strategies. However, the findings infer that the difficulty may be even greater than Chen (2009) has stated. As it is not only incorporating sustainability within the overall corporate vision and strategies, but also to convince the consumer of said vision and strategies.

Subsequently, the study's findings show that marketers need to work on facets such as green brand awareness, -image, -experiences and -attitudes, before releasing any substantial green claims. Under the logic, this study suggests, by improving green brand awareness, a brand should in turn improve their legitimacy and reputation (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). Secondly, if the green brand image is improved before releasing green claims, the chance of there being incongruence is reduced (Arbouw, Ballantine & Ozanne, 2019). Thirdly, creating consumer experiences that do not help alleviate social concerns, may leave that impression (Wu et al., 2018). Consequently, consumers will be unlikely to think they can help in the future. Finally, if a brand has been controversial in the past it may create negative green brand attitudes (Brunk & de Boer, 2020). In this case, when a consumer is presented with new brand related stimuli they may be likely to respond with a counterargument, leading to scepticism (Hastak & Olson, 1989). As to how companies can improve their green brand knowledge would need further research, as it was not tested for within this study. However, it implies that a new, potentially more subtle, way of promoting sustainability is needed for controversial or unfavourable brands. One that avoids immediate spotlight and criticism. Although it is difficult to suggest a method that could tackle this problem for marketers, if done, green brand knowledge could be slowly improved, reducing the risk of their initiatives becoming obsolete.

8.3 Limitations

When conducting this study, limitations associated with the method were recognised. One of them being that one Swedish brand and one non-Swedish brand was chosen. Therefore, the

respondents could be more familiar with H&M than Patagonia, which could affect their answers. This problem did occur. However, the respondents only answered one of the surveys and did not compare the two brands to each other. Additionally, after the demographic section, consumers were required to state whether they were familiar with the brand or not (*see Appendix A)*. Therefore, only those who were aware of Patagonia were included in the study. However, with hindsight two Swedish brands may have been a more appropriate choice.

Moreover, due to time and cost limitations, the sample size was small, which may limit the chances of generalising the data from the sample to the population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, anonymity and the data collection method could mean that respondents were not who they said they were. This is a consistent risk in survey research especially when social media is used as a form of distribution (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, when distributing the survey instructions and eligibility criteria were given as to lower this risk.

Furthermore, it is understood that Generation Z are born from 1997 and onwards (Bresman & Rao, 2017). Subsequently, a limitation could be seen in that a large portion of the group is under the age of 16 and were not represented. However, the age group was limited to those 16 and above as there are ethical concerns in using the 15 and under population within research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, it felt more appropriate to not include that portion of Generation Z. However, as shown, the Generation Z population is an integral point of interest within sustainable branding research, as they are so involved with the subject both through their concern and their discernment in green products (Barnes, 2019; Cheng, 2019; Petro, 2020). Consequently, it remained important to have the 16 to 22 years old responses within the study.

Moreover, unfortunately only 2 respondents were from the 31 to 35 age category, hence, that specific age group within Millennials was underrepresented. Although it was expected that this age group may have been lesser than others, such a low number was not expected. This was most likely due to the use of convenience sampling meaning the respondents in majority came from peer groups and therefore, fit the age group of the researchers (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As stated, due to the ongoing pandemic, the sampling options were limited. However, attempts were made to gauge more varied respondents through using Facebook groups specifically for second hand clothing. This does affect the representativeness of the sample. Yet, this study can be replicated in circumstances where there is more time, options and resources could be allocated. Resulting in a more representative sample population.

Another limitation is that the survey was in English, however, the majority of the respondents were Swedish, subsequently creating a language barrier. Therefore, complicated words or phrases were avoided at all costs. Furthermore, in performing the pre-tests, any questions that caused concern or confusion were addressed and modified where possible. Another method to combat

this, was giving brief explanations to clarify the meaning of words, underneath the questions that were highlighted as complex. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that researchers should avoid questions that include negatives. However, they also state that it is not always possible (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One of the questions in the survey from the Green Brand Experience scale included a negative formulated statement; *'I do not have a strong environmental affection for this brand'* (Wu et al., 2018). A reason for changing the question would be that the question had a positive or negative emotion that made a significant difference to its interpretation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). However, in this case the question was general enough in that placing it in a positive format would not affect its interpretation. Furthermore, there was concern in changing the scales in a way that would affect the reliability (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, it remained in a negative format.

Finally, as sustainability is a complicated subject due to the pressure to comply with accepted social norms, it is possible that respondents' answers do not reflect their actual behaviour or thoughts (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). This phenomenon can be connected to the social desirability bias, which means that the respondents answer what they perceive as socially desirable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Subsequently, the respondents may have felt obligated to answer the survey how they think they should answer. To minimise this tendency, it was made sure in the beginning of the survey the participants knew they were anonymous. This may not have eradicated this risk entirely, however, it is likely that it had decreased.

8.4 Areas for Further Research

As stated, this study has focused specifically on Swedish Millennials and Generation Z. This group was chosen due to their environmental concern, influence on brands and involvement within the climate crisis (Jung, 2019; WWF, 2017, 2018). However, to see whether the same effects occur for other generational groups, that may be considered to be less concerned, may also be illuminating. Replicating this study with other age groups may give a more holistic view of green brand knowledge, only adding to the discussion. Moreover, this study used two brands within the fashion industry. This industry was chosen not only due to its prevalence within the climate topic, but also because of the relationships the brands build with consumers (BoF, 2019; Joy et al., 2015; Perdsen, Gwozdz & Hvass, 2016). Consequently, this study can again be replicated, yet, focus on brands within different industries. For example, cars or technology. Repeating the study with industries that have different levels of involvement, may reap different results and help understand the topic further (Akturan, 2018).

Regarding areas of further research, as discovered within the study, how to change or enhance green brand knowledge has not been established and should be further investigated. Considering that green brand knowledge has somewhat an effect on perception of a claim, further

understanding of how green brand knowledge can be improved may be beneficial to both theory and business.

Furthermore, as stated in both *6.1 Scales Discussion* and *7.2.3 Green Brand Experience and Perceived Greenwashing*, green brand experience needs further research. This topic is still in its infancy and needs better measures to quantify the complexity of the subject. Moreover, as shown in *7.2.4.2 Forming of Green Brand Attitudes*, although the study did not test for attitude rigidity, the final comments indicated that green brand attitudes are difficult to change like other research suggests (Hastak & Olson, 1989; Jokšaitė, Banytė & Virvilaitė, 2007; Swelden et al., 2010). However, the permanency of both attitudes and green brand attitudes is still a debate within academia. Therefore, this study suggests that further research is needed into the topic. Potentially, through replication of this study over periods of time.

Finally, this study has failed to show a concrete relationship between green brand knowledge and claim credibility. However, as seen in section *7.1.2.3 Considerations from the Literature*, there are concepts from the literature that still support that the relationship is there. Although the reasons for this lack of findings is most likely due to methodological limitations, this study can be replicated. Subsequently, if study 1 was replicated in more applicable contexts, it is possible to suggest that the results would be more significant. Therefore, it is believed that further research into the relationship between green brand knowledge and claim credibility is needed.

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Appendix A

Patagonia Survey

0% completed

Sustainable Branding Questionnaire

This is a survey for the MSc International Marketing and Brand Management thesis project at Lund University. This survey focuses on claims made within sustainable branding. As sustainability is considered a sensitive topic you will be kept anonymous minus a few necessary demographic details. Moreover, we will not ask you any questions about your lifestyle in regards to sustainability. Therefore, we ask you for honesty in your answers. This survey should take no longer than 10 minutes. **Thank you for your participation, Linda Strålman and Lydia Parry.**

Next

B.A. lydia parry, Lund University – 2020

10% completed

Demographic Information

1. Are you a Swedish national?
Please select one answer

○ Yes
○ No

2. If you just answered NO, for how long have you lived in Sweden?
Please select one

○ 1-2 years
○ 3-4 years
○ 4-5 years
○ 5+ years

3. What is your age?
Please select one

- ○ 16-20
- ○ 21-25
- ○ 26-30
- ○ 31-35
- ○ 36-40
- ○ 41-45
- ○ 46-50
- ○ 50+
- ○ Would rather not say

4. What is your gender?
Please select one

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Other
- ○ Would rather not say

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed (or are currently studying)?
Please select one

- ○ Middle school
- ○ High school
- ○ Bachelor level
- ○ Master level or higher
- ○ Would rather not say

6. What is your employment status?
You can select multiple answers for this question

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Would rather not say

Next

The Brand: Patagonia

The following questions will ask for your opinions on the outdoor gear and clothing brand Patagonia.

7. Are you familiar with the brand Patagonia?
Please select one

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Next

Patagonia: Brand Awareness

8. I have heard of the brand
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

9. I know the brands related environmental information
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

10. The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

11. The brand has a good reputation
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

40% completed

Patagonia: Brand Image

12. The brand is regarded as the best benchmark of environmental commitments
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

13. The brand is professional about its environmental reputation
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

14. The brand is successful in its environmental performance
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

15. The brand is well established about environmental concern

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

16. The brand is trustworthy about its environmental promises

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

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50% completed

Patagonia: Brand Experience

17. This brand induces environmental feelings and sentiments

(Sentiment meaning a view or opinion that is expressed)

(Induce meaning bring about or gives rise to)

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

18. I do not have a strong environmental affection for this brand

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

19. This brand is an environmentally emotional brand

For example: I feel emotions of contribution when using this brand.

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

20. I engage in environmental actions and behaviors when I use this brand

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

21. Using this brand results in environmental experiences.

For example: I take environmental action when using products from this brand.

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

60% completed

Patagonia: Brand Attitude

22. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
Bad   Good

23. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
Unattractive   Attractive

24. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
Negative   Positive

25. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
Not Likeable   Likeable

26. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
Not Recommendable   Recommenable

Next

70% completed

Patagonia: Brand Attitude continued

27. I think the function of the brand is more reliable than that of other clothing brands
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

28. I think the brand can represent my socioeconomic status
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

29. I think the function of the brand can fit my needs
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

30. I think the price of the brand is satisfactory for me

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

31. I like the brand's outlook

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

32. My friends would have a positive opinion when they discovered I purchased this brand

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

33. The function of the brand is trustworthy

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

34. Wearing the brands clothes makes me feel relaxed and happy

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

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80% completed

The Claim

Below is a claim from Patagonia. In the following section you will be answering questions regarding your opinion on the credibility of this claim.

"75% of cotton used by Patagonia is recycled or sustainably sourced."

35. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Unbelievable　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Believable

36. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Untrustworthy　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Trustworthy

37. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Not
Convincing　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Convincing

38. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Not Credible　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Credible

39. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Unreasonable　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Reasonable

40. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Dishonest　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Honest

41. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Questionable　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Unquestionable

42. This advertising claim is...
(Inconclusive meaning it doesn't lead to a conclusion or a resolution)
Please select one point on the scale

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○
Inconclusive　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Conclusive

43. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

    ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Non Authentic   Authentic

44. The brand deceives through words in its environmental features
Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

45. The brand deceives me by means of green claims that are unclear
Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

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46. The brand exaggerates or overstates its green functionality

Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

47. The brand hides important information, making the green claim sound better than it is

Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

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90% completed

Final Thoughts

This open text box gives you the opportunity to make any further comments or expand upon your answers given within the survey. This is completely optional. However, if you do chose to answer then your comment may be used within the analysis but will be done so with complete anonymity.

48. Final Thoughts

You can respond in either English or Swedish

Next

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

We would like to thank you very much for helping us.

The claims presented in this survey were fictitious and were made for the purpose of the study. The claims have no relation to the brands the study focuses on. For the benefit and accuracy of future results we ask you to not disclose this information to others who also wish to complete this questionnaire. If you have any further questions you can contact the project leaders on either of the following email addresses: ly2436pa-s@student.lu.se nek15lst@student.lu.se

Your answers were transmitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

H&M Survey

0% completed

Sustainable Branding Questionnaire

This is a survey for the MSc International Marketing and Brand Management thesis project at Lund University. This survey focuses on claims made within sustainable branding. As sustainability is considered a sensitive topic you will be kept anonymous minus a few necessary demographic details. Moreover, we will not ask you any questions about your lifestyle in regards to sustainability. Therefore, we ask you for honesty in your answers. This survey should take no longer than 10 minutes. **Thank you for your participation, Linda Strålman and Lydia Parry.**

Next

10% completed

Demographic Information

1. Are you a Swedish national?
Please select one answer

○ Yes

○ No

2. If you just answered NO, for how long have you lived in Sweden?
Please select one

○ 1-2 years

○ 3-4 years

○ 4-5 years

○ 5+ years

3. What is your age?
Please select one

○ 16-20

○ 21-25

○ 26-30

○ 31-35

○ 36-40

○ 41-45

○ 46-50

○ 50+

○ Would rather not say

4. What is your gender?
Please select one

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other

○ Would rather not say

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed (or are currently studying)?
Please select one

- ○ Middle school
- ○ High school
- ○ Bachelor level
- ○ Master level or higher
- ○ Would rather not say

6. What is your employment status?
You can select multiple answers for this question

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Would rather not say

Next

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20% completed

The Brand: H&M

The following questions will ask for your opinions on the Swedish fashion brand H&M.

7. Are you familiar with the brand H&M?
Please select one

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Next

H&M: Brand Awareness

8. I have heard of the brand
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

9. I know the brands related environmental information
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

10. The brand is the first to come to mind when talking about environmentally-friendly clothing
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

11. The brand has a good reputation

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

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40% completed

H&M: Brand Image

12. The brand is regarded as the best benchmark of environmental commitments

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

13. The brand is professional about its environmental reputation

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

14. The brand is successful in its environmental performance

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

15. The brand is well established about environmental concern

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

16. The brand is trustworthy about its environmental promises

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

50% completed

H&M: Brand Experience

17. This brand induces environmental feelings and sentiments

(Sentiment meaning a view or opinion that is expressed)

(Induce meaning bring about or gives rise to)

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

18. I do not have a strong environmental affection for this brand

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

19. This brand is an environmentally emotional brand

For example: I feel emotions of contribution when using this brand.

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

20. I engage in environmental actions and behaviors when I use this brand

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

21. Using this brand results in environmental experiences.

For example: I take environmental action when using products from this brand.

Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Next

60% completed

H&M: Brand Attitudes

22. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Bad   Good

23. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Unattractive   Attractive

24. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Negative   Positive

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25. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Not Likeable   Likeable

26. My attitude towards this brand is...
Please select one point on the scale

   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Not
Recommendable   Recommenable

Next

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70% completed

H&M: Brand Attitudes continued

27. I think the function of the brand is more reliable than that of other clothing brands
Please select one

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Somewhat agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

28. I think the brand can represent my socioeconomic status
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

29. I think the function of the brand can fit my needs
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

30. I think the price of the brand is satisfactory for me
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

31. I like the brand's outlook
Please select one

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

32. My friends would have a positive opinion when they discovered I purchased this brand

Please select one

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

33. The function of the brand is trustworthy

Please select one

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

34. Wearing the brands clothes makes me feel relaxed and happy

Please select one

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Next

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The Claim

Below is a claim from H&M. In the following section you will be answering questions regarding your opinion on the credibility of this claim.

"75% of cotton used by
H&M Group is recycled
or sustainably
sourced."

35. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Unbelievable   Believable

36. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Untrustworthy   Trustworthy

37. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Not
Convincing   Convincing

38. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Not Credible   Credible

39. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unreasonable						Reasonable

40. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dishonest						Honest

41. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Questionable						Unquestionable

42. This advertising claim is...
(Inconclusive meaning it doesn't lead to a conclusion or a resolution)
Please select one point on the scale

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inconclusive						Conclusive

43. This advertising claim is...
Please select one point on the scale

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Non Authentic						Authentic

44. The brand deceives through words in its environmental features
Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

45. The brand deceives me by means of green claims that are unclear
Please Select One

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

46. The brand exaggerates or overstates its green functionality
Please Select One

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

47. The brand hides important information, making the green claim sound better than it is
Please Select One

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Next

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90% completed

Final Thoughts

This open text box gives you the opportunity to make any further comments or expand upon your answers given within the survey. This is completely optional. However, if you do chose to answer then your comment may be used within the analysis but will be done so with complete anonymity.

48. Final Thoughts
You can respond in either English or Swedish

Next

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

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Your answers were transmitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

B.A. lydia parry, Lund University – 2020

Appendix B

Patagonia Regression

GBI and CC: $F(1,74)= .920, p >.05.$ $\beta_S=-.111, t(74)=.959\ p >05.$ R^2 is .012

GBE and CC: $F(1,74)= .899, p >.05.$ $\beta_S=-.110, t(74)=.948\ p >05.$ R^2 is .012

GBAT and CC: $F(1,74)= .899, p >.05. \beta_S=-.110, t(74)=.948\ p >05.$ R^2 is .012

Appendix C

H&M Further Testing

The following will show the results for the following hypotheses as answered in the H&M survey. Although these results are not included within the hypothesis analysis and discussion they do give reasons as to further research and study credibility and so were included in the appendix.

H1a) Green brand awareness will positively affect green claim credibility.

H2a): Green brand image will positively affect green claim credibility.

H3a) Green brand experience will positively affect green claim credibility.

H4a) Green brand attitudes will positively affect claim credibility.

Spearman's Correlation Testing

H1a GBA and CC: *(r = .379, p < .01)*

H2a GBI and CC: *(r = .572, p < .01)*

H3a GBE and CC: *(r = .398, p < .01)*

H4a GBAT and CC: *(r = .523, p < .01)*

Regression Testing

H1a GBA and CC: *F(1,76)=10.514, p <.01 R2 of .122 β_S=.349, t(76)=3.243 p <.01*

H2a GBI and CC: *F(1,76)=60.399 ,p <.01 R2 of .443 β_S=.665, t(76)=7.772, p <.01*

H3a GBE and CC: *F(1,76)=19.978, p <.01 R2 is .208 β_S=.456, t(76)=4.470, p <.01*

H4a GBAT and CC: *F(1,76)=34.381, p <.01 R2 of .311 β_S=.558, t(76)=5.863 p <.01*

Had H&M been used as the vehicle to test for Ha) all hypotheses would have been accepted.

H&M CC Correlation Matrix

	CC	GBA	GBI	GBE	GBAT
CC	1				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
GBA	.379**	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.			
GBI	.572**	.629**	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.		
GBE	.398**	.544**	.638**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
GBAT	.523**	.573**	.650**	.532**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Figure 10: H&M Further Testing Correlation Matrix

Appendix D

Survey: Final comments

Study 1: Patagonia

As a customer it can be hard to take your time and actually find out if the company is trustworthy of if they're misleading. I guess that the first ad or information you get is important to set the tone for what you'll think about the company going forward. That if you get a good impression in the beginning of getting to know the brand you might take your time and look further and realize it's actually good. On the other hand if the first situation with the brand was bad, for example an ad that seemed too good to be true maybe you just DONT believe it and thats the end of it. You wont buy anything from it because the ad was too good to be true.

I personally like the idea of the brand and they intentions are good especially with what they are promoting. BUT I do not think that I trust the brand, they are just taking this stance because of profit, nevertheless it doesn't have to be bad, they still do more than others. The thing that they promote environmental frendliness is still something and might but pressure to other companies to do the same!

Eventhough a brand claims to be sustainable or is doing visable sustainbility actions you never know if they are truly sustainable in all aspects why it is important to be critical as a consumer

My views on Patagonia are generally positive, but they've had a few scandals which makes me question whether their claims are 100% honest. I don't think they are deliberately out to deceive as it's not always possible to be completely in control of the supply chain. However, I think they need to be more transparent rather than make bold sweeping statements about 'how good they are'.

I don't know much about the brand's environmental ethics and promises but most companies today tend to twist the truth regarding environmentally friendly initiatives. As such I feel that if a brand was true to its environmental call, it would promote in detail on how it goes about it, be transparent, organise events/fundraisers and let the user trace every product. I believe the brand is more of a luxury brand by nature but as an outdoor clothing brand, it also promotes a greener lifestyle, with many of its buyers probably being more environmentally aware than the average individual.

I followed their Instagram account, the way of posting content is interesting, not cloth related usually, mostly to convey a healthy, outdoor and environmental lifestyle. I think that's also make me think that they are trustworthy.

I love patagonia, they have great functional clothes but I had no idea or interest regarding the companys environmental position

I don't know the brand

Don't own anything from them

I don't know much of the brand so it's difficult to answer questions

Had no idea about the environmental Abiturs the bran contributes with. Will look up tho

I know about the actual brand and I have seen the clothes and bags but I don't really know what they stand for from an environmental perspective. I have never owned an item from them. [this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

I don't know much about the brand's environmental ethics and promises but most companies today tend to twist the truth regarding environmentally friendly initiatives (...) I believe the brand is more of a luxury brand by nature but as an outdoor clothing brand, it also promotes a greener lifestyle, with many of its buyers probably being more environmentally aware than the average individual.

Study 2: H&M

H&M at it again with their usual fu**ery. Good prices, bad quality, probably engaged in tons of shady backroom deals. Luckily, i leave my moral compass at home when i go shopping :)

Fast fashion=environmental disaster

Like the company because of the price, but the price makes it not reliable when it comes to environmentally friendly

I don't feel like I associate them with sustainability at all. (...) The fact that they say that they're "sustainable" and use recycled cotton I don't believe at all because of their cheap price. I don't think it's possible to do both (...) With that said, I don't buy clothes there, but I understand those who do buy there. It's cheap and nice looking clothes (...) [this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

Some answers, including mine, may still be affected by the sweatshop incidents and might not be related to current marketing strategy

H&M have been known to burn unsold clothes. I don't know if they still do it, but because of that and other suspicious activities, I've stopped buying clothes from them. They're probably trying to change now, but it's going to take a while for me to trust them in this area.

When noted that I related environmental actions when purchasing H&M it's from a state of negative actions. I am very aware that when I purchase this brand, it's a conscious decision to choose price and convenience over a more sustainable and ethical option

I think it is good that H&M try to be more green. However, given the nature of the business that is fast fashion it is a hard task to take on! With that said I think they are in the forefront compared to their competitors and love they are trying (…) I would like for H&M to be more transparent (...) I know they have there green collection "conscious" with a green tag, but If all have an print of the environmental footprint I think it would be better.

Since there have been scandals linked to HM regarding human rights issues in the past which they lied about it feels they could lie about anything.

I have never encountered H&M and environment being named in the same sentence before.

Personally, the low quality of the clothes is very problematic, resulting in a short lifecycle which means the clothes have to be thrown away relatively fast since the materials are torn or destroyed. [this comment has been translated from Swedish to English

H&M has destroyed so much around the world. Fast fashion and mass production when it is at its worst! There is nothing genuine left! Trashbrand and trashproducts who destroy humans, animals and nature inside out. [this comment has been translated from Swedish to English]

H&m have a long way to go before i will ever feel comfortable purchising from them