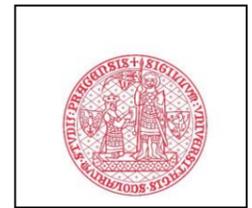


"IS GREEN IN FASHION?" ANALYSING THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION OF FASHION BRANDS AND THE ATTITUDES OF GENERATION Z CONSUMERS TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY"

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Introduction

In the recent societal calling for climate change actions, the problems have often been visualized by plastic waste in oceans, and companies like Starbucks have been lynched for using plastic straws. Eventually, this public backlash led to changes in the directive of the European Union, banning single-use plastics (Politico, 2018). However, when we look at the biggest contributors to environmental pollution, we cannot disregard the fashion industry, which ranks among the most polluting industries in the world.

It is not only the fashion brands talking about the environment, but the stakeholders who also play an important role in the dialogue between fashion brands and their consumers. Recently, more consumers demand "brands with purpose", which communicate their social responsibility and includes societal, political or environmental issues (Montgomery, 2019). The role of public relations in the fashion industry is evolving and it is trying to enhance consumer-citizen behavior and social change by promoting the ideas of environmentally conscious behavior (Halff and Gregogy, 2015; Edwards, 2017).

Results

Fast fashion: McDonald's for everyone

Fast fashion brands are the most widely consumed brands among Gen Z respondents in our data set. They are not perceived as inherently un-ecological or environmentally unfriendly companies. For example, one respondent stated he "cares for the quality, not the brand", shopping mainly in Zara or Patagonia, putting both brands on the same level. Fast fashion companies are "producing fashion affordable for everyone – something like McDonald's. It might not be the best, but it tastes good".

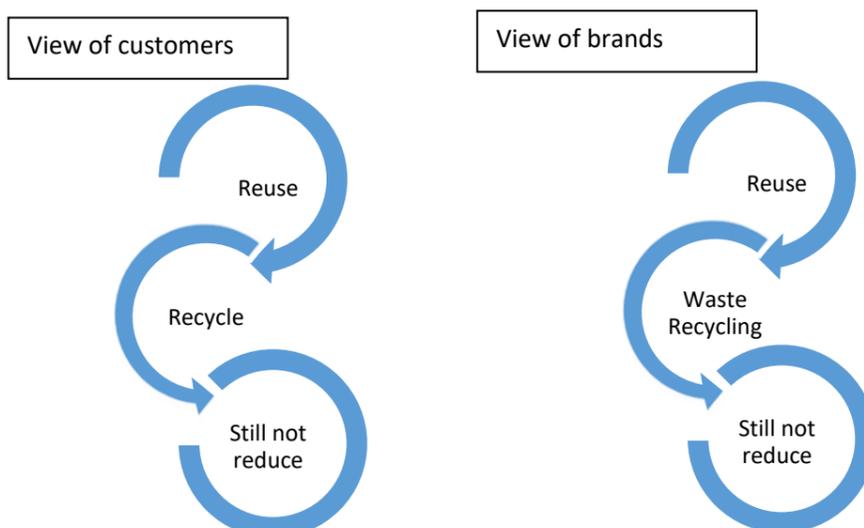
No environmental backlash towards online shops

Generally, young people are the most open to online shopping. In our dataset, online shopping has been perceived as a regular form of shopping behavior, although some respondents stated that they "don't like it". It is worth noting that when it comes to online shopping, respondents did not mention any environmental concerns. Whereas in most European shops consumers have to pay for a plastic bag to reduce environmental harm, online shops, which use a lot of packaging and have a disputable carbon footprint, were not criticized at all.

Conclusion

There is a clear calling from Gen Z consumers towards fashion brands to take a more environmentally friendly stand. However, they do so also by using severely misleading and greenwashing statements. Both the brands and the consumers refuse to take responsible action; consumers want fashionable goods at low prices and corporations want to increase their profits and growth.

One of the key problems that has been identified is the definition of overconsumption, which is absent in the corporate communications and public relations of the fashion brands. Logically, buying less is in clear contradiction with the aims and goals of the fashion corporations. However, without tackling this issue, brand communication might be perceived as misleading and "greenwashing" the consumers.



Research

Our aim is to explore the attitudes towards fashion consumption with regard to environmental issues among Generation Z consumers – the younger generation, whose behavioral patterns will strongly influence environmental development around the globe in the future.

RQ1: How are environmental issues defined from the perspectives of fashion brand (for part 1)

RQ2: How are environmental issues defined from the perspectives of young consumers? (for part 2)