

# **Consumers' view on the credibility of green marketing**

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**ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY – FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,  
BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS - ABSTRACT FOR MASTER’S THESIS**

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Abstract:  <p>Sustainability is an issue gaining more and more relevance. This development and consumer awareness on sustainability issues has forced companies to adapt their marketing strategies. Green Marketing is a part of sustainability marketing and it refers to how companies market their businesses’ relation to the natural environment. Green Marketing is however no straightforward task and due to the prevalence of greenwashing, consumers are skeptical towards green marketing claims of companies. Consumers are increasingly concerned for the environment; however, their concern does not always translate into action. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to shed light on how consumers view different types of green marketing and how companies can conduct their green marketing strategies in a credible way.</p> <p>This thesis studies how young adult consumers see their green consumption habits and how they perceive companies’ green marketing through images on social media. The study is conducted through two focus group discussions with individuals born between 1991-1998. One of the discussions was held face-to-face and one via Zoom, due to the restrictions involved during COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews included some questions on the individuals’ own views on their green consumption, as well as a portion where they were shown a portfolio of three different companies marketing images on social media. The three different companies had focused on different types of green marketing and the aim was to find how the participants responded to the different types of images. The discussions were recorded and transcribed and afterwards the material was coded and divided into themes.</p> <p>Through examining the analysis and results of this study, several conclusions were drawn. The central conclusions on how young adult consumers view their own green consumer behavior were that they were finding it difficult to deal with all the information they were</p>	

exposed to about sustainability and that they were skeptical towards the marketing materials they were shown. Companies might benefit from displaying both emotionally appealing images, however also including some relevant information on their sustainability practices. To enhance their message and avoid consumer skepticism companies should avoid marketing messages that seem out of context for their products, which creates confusion, or give too much information on one aspect while omitting another.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Green Consumer Behavior, Greenwashing

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## **1. Introduction**

At the beginning of the new century, The United Nations established the Millennium development goals. These goals were meant to tackle the issues that had arisen before the new millennium. These issues included rapid population growth, poverty, health challenges in developing nations, urbanization, damage to ecosystems, resource depletion, food and water supply depletion, as well as climate change (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p.12). By the 21st century, humans had exceeded the earth's sustainable productive footprint by 20% (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 12). Due to the increasing information for consumers about the environmental stress of our consumption habits, companies are forced to include green initiatives into their communication strategies. Sustainability is becoming a necessary part of a company's strategy and something that needs to be included in the brand communication (Conrad & Thompson, 2016).

In addition, consumers are exposed to a wide variety of images each day; a large part of these visual images is from companies visually marketing themselves. This visual communication is comprised by both text and images, which works to enhance or diminish the intended visual brand communication (Wedel & Pieters, 2007). We react to images by experiencing them objectively through emotions, mood and intuition (Branthwaite, 2002). Especially Instagram, which is focused on image sharing, is becoming an important way of reaching young adults (Chen, 2018). Thus, focusing on green marketing through social media is a good way for companies to reach consumers. Sustainability is something that is social. On social media consumers have a chance to self-select into lifestyle groups. This makes it easier for companies to target their messages to the right groups (Minton et al., 2012).

The challenge for sustainability marketers is often how to find the balance between satisfying consumer needs, whilst simultaneously considering environmental and social responsibilities. Generally, consumers are still unwilling to compromise when it comes to cost, product performance and convenience (Belz & Peattie, 2012). The Millennial generation in particular frequently express their desires to support sustainable brands and while some product categories of sustainable products have

had enormous sales growth, this is however not the case for all product categories. Consumers say they want more eco-friendly products, but do not always act accordingly. This intention-action gap between what consumers say they want and how they behave, is a puzzle for marketers (White, et al., 2019). Another issue in Green Marketing and Green Consumer Behavior is that consumers are increasingly more skeptical towards green marketing due to the popularity of greenwashing (Chen & Chang, 2013).

All these issues lead to the question of how companies make their green marketing strategies credible, and attractive to the young adult consumers? This is the central theme of this thesis that will be explored further.

## **1.2 Background and Problem discussion**

Sustainability was defined by the UN in the Brundtland report in 1987 as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 10). Sustainability is changing the way of how marketing is being conducted. Companies making sustainability a core part of the business are more likely to be the ones driving innovation and sustaining loyalty. Integrated sustainability efforts have shown to create positive impacts on businesses (White, et al., 2019). Sustainability is often divided into three parts: social, environmental and economic. This thesis will focus on environmental aspects of marketing, commonly referred to as green marketing (Belz & Peattie, 2012).

Further complicating green marketing for companies is the fact that consumers are increasingly skeptical about green marketing claims due to the popularity of greenwashing (Musgrove, et al., 2018). Greenwashing is when companies mislead consumers into thinking the company is more environmentally friendly than it is. Greenwashing can appear as lies, vague claims or omitting information (Carlson, et al., 1993). In green marketing, it is common to appeal to emotions through using nature imagery in marketing materials (Hartmann, et al., 2005), however this is also a common form of greenwashing (Parguel, et al., 2015). This brings the question of whether green consumers trust emotional marketing strategies, or are they more

interested in facts and figures in a company's communication? And does the consumers' prior knowledge and their level of environmental concern, influence perceived credibility?

The age group in this study are young adults, between 22-30 years old. This age group falls mostly into Generation Y or the later end of Generation Y and the beginning of Generation Z. Generation Y is a generation that is often viewed as a challenge for marketers because they are not as influenced by traditional media as previous generations have been (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Millennials are defined as people born in the 1980's to late 1990's (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The differences in purchasing behavior of millennials and those of previous generations is due to a shift in values. The Millennial generation is often more tolerant and trustful and interested in social and environmental causes. Millennials prefer the marketing to be quick, honest and direct, as well as preferably delivered through word-of-mouth (Valentine & Powers, 2013). This development puts pressure on companies to address the problems and communicate their sustainability practices externally. Companies are forced to reflect on sustainability; however, the current state of the topic can be very confusing. There are different perspectives about sustainability and different can have different views on how sustainability should be communicated in the proper way (Conrad & Thompson, 2016).

### **1.3 Purpose of the study and Research questions**

The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of green marketing on green consumer behavior and its influence on consumer perceptions of credibility. The review of previous research will focus on what green marketing is in general today, green marketing strategies and green consumer behavior. The purpose of the empirical part of the study is to uncover what type of green consumer behavior young adults have, how they perceive the different types of green marketing from companies and what type of green marketing is most credible to young adults.

- What is green marketing and how does it influence green consumer behavior?



- What type of green consumer behavior is common among young adults, and how do they respond different types of green marketing?
- How should companies shape their green marketing in a credible way to appeal to young adult consumers?

#### **1.4 Focus and Delimitation**

This study will focus on theory involving green marketing and green consumer behavior. Green marketing refers to the environmental aspect of sustainability and how companies communicate their efforts to protect and preserve the environment. The study will not focus on the other parts usually referred to in sustainability, that is social and economic issues. To keep the theory in line with the purpose of the study, the focus will be on green marketing, credibility of green marketing, green consumer behavior in relation to green marketing.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

In line with the purpose of this study, the empirical part will focus on collecting consumer attitudes to their own green consumer behavior and their reactions to different types of green marketing. The theoretical part for this study is collected from books, articles and papers. The method for the empirical part of this study is a qualitative study using focus group interviews with photo-eliciting. The empirical part includes a portfolio, with visual examples of green marketing materials. This portfolio is shown to the interviewees during the interviews. The other part of the interview consists of questions about the consumers own green values and knowledge. The interview material is analyzed using thematic analysis and summarized for the study, before comparing it to the previous research on the subject. The methodology will be further discussed in chapter 3.

## **1.6 Key Concepts**

### **Green Marketing**

Green Marketing is a part of Sustainability Marketing that aims to sell the products of a company by emphasizing environmental benefits of the company or product (Cambridge Dictionary). According to Peattie and Belz (2010, p. 31) green marketing focuses more on solving ecological problems rather than consumer problems.

### **Green Consumer Behavior**

Consumption based on Environmental values and concerns, based on reducing environmental impact both before and after consumption (Jansson, et al., 2010).

### **Greenwashing**

Greenwashing is when a company is making consumers believe that they are doing more for the environment, than they are (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

Greenwashing can be misleading consumers through omitting information, making vague claims or lying about environmental friendliness (Carlson, et al., 1993).

## **2. Theory**

This chapter will introduce the relevant research related to the topics outlined in the purpose of this study. Since green marketing is one of the parts of sustainability marketing, sustainability marketing will be introduced first and then green marketing will be discussed specifically. The main methods in green marketing will be presented as well as the main issue attached to green marketing which is greenwashing. Green consumer behavior is the other main part of the theory, and it will present green consumer behavior and common issues connected to it like the attitude.

### **2.1 Green marketing**

Green marketing, or environmental marketing is a part of sustainability marketing. Sustainability is a subject that is gaining more and more relevance through the impacts of climate change as well as the consequences of depleting the earth's resources (Conrad & Thompson, 2016). Traditionally, marketing is focused on the concepts of needs and wants (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p.122). Sustainability marketing is described as managing marketing to meet customer needs and wants, while still considering social and environmental factors, as well as meeting corporate goals. Sustainability marketing is also described as building and maintaining sustainable relationships, with both customers and the social and natural environments. In contrast to traditional marketing, which is often driven by short-term and is sales-oriented, sustainability marketing is often long-term and relationship-oriented. Sustainability marketing is largely about companies understanding social and environmental problems on a macro level, as well as the social and environmental impacts of their products on a micro level (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 29). There have been several different definitions of Green Marketing since research has started on the subject. The subject has evolved ever since the first definition 1976 (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017). Hennion & Kinnear defined Green Marketing as:

[...]concerned with all marketing activities that have served to help cause environmental problems and that may serve to provide a remedy for environmental problems.” (Peattie, 2001).

According to Peattie and Belz (2010, p. 31), in green marketing, as well as sustainability marketing overall, rather than the consumers, the ecological and social problems from business activities, should be the starting point of marketing. A more holistic approach to consumers would be beneficial, consumer behavior is a whole process, going far beyond just the point of purchase. The traditional marketing mix should also be evolved for sustainability, focusing more on customer cost, customer solutions, customer convenience and customer communication, instead of simply product, place price and promotion. Finally, the authors, Peattie and Belz (2010), suggest that sustainability marketing should be a transformational form for the business environment. Instead of thinking only of consumer wants and needs, there should be a focus on transforming the market into one that is more sustainable overall (Peattie and Belz, 2010). Green advertising is one aspect of green marketing. According to Banerjee, et al. (1995) green advertising can be defined in one of three ways. The advertising implicitly or explicitly shows the relationship between the company offering and the environment, promotes a lifestyle that matches green values through either highlighting or not highlighting their offering or by presenting their company as environmentally responsible.

Due to the pressure of rising sustainability issues, companies must develop their processes and comply with different environmental pressures to enhance competitive advantage, improve brand image, expand to new markets and enhance the product value through green attributes (Chen, 2009). Not only is sustainability marketing something that is beneficial for the natural world, but sustainability is also a current megatrend in business, therefore importance is placed on businesses to implement it into their strategy. Integrating sustainability into the branding of a company can create competitive advantage. Implementing social or environmental sustainability practices and then communicating them to customers, can have a positive impact on the brand image (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014). Brand image refers to the association's consumers have connected to the brand. The associations included in the brand image can include attributes that are both related and non-related to the product attributes. The brand attributes that make up these associations can be functional, experiential or symbolic, as well as all the brand attributes combined (Keller, 1993). A successful marketing strategy creates positive brand attributes for the brand (Keller, 1993). Research suggests that brand image is connected to

decision-making, and a positive brand image is important for evoking trust in customers (Chen, 2009). Having a sustainable brand can therefore make the brand more appealing to sustainably minded customers. Making sustainability an integral part of the brand can be achieved through different types of strategies. Marketing sustainability might include displaying it in advertisements, product packaging and other external communication material (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014).

Green brand image, green satisfaction and green trust are all factors that can improve green brand equity (Chen, 2009). Green brand image, as explained before regarding brand image, is the attributes that make up the associations of a brand, in this case the green associations of the brand. Green satisfaction is described as a pleasing level of fulfilment when satisfying the customer's environmental desires, sustainable expectations and green needs through consumption (Chen, 2009). Green trust is defined as the customer being willing to depend on a brand, based on their expectations on brand credibility, benevolence and ability of the environmental performance (Chen, 2009).

Because of the complicated nature of green consumer behavior, it is important to choose the right green marketing strategy. It would be beneficial for companies to make sure their target segment is green consumers. After establishing the target segment, the company should choose the "shade of green" that they themselves want to represent (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004). The different shades of green according to Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) are Lean green, defensive green, shaded green and extreme green. *Lean green* companies try their best at being good corporate citizens and complying with regulations. They do not, however, put much emphasis on publicizing their green efforts to avoid being held to higher standards than what they are willing to do. *Defensive greens* view the green market segments as important, but usually use green marketing as a precaution or response to competitor or crisis. They do not consistently advertise their green initiatives and are unable to use their greenness as a useful differentiation in the market. *Shaded greens* can differentiate themselves through their green initiatives and use resources to implement more environmentally practices long-term. Shaded greens usually use the green product attributes as a secondary factor, alongside other product attributes. *Extreme green* companies have business models centering their operations around environmental

issues. Environmental practices are integrated to all parts of the business and product life cycles. Companies should carefully evaluate in which of these segments they should place themselves in. If the company can implement a greener image in a credible way, it could be beneficial for them to do so.

According to Carlson, et al. (1993) five types of environmental claims exist in green marketing. These are: product orientation, process orientation, image orientation, environmental fact, and different combinations of these claims. Product orientation highlights the environmentally friendly attributes the product has. Process orientation focuses on how the manufacturing or disposal method of the product is environmentally friendly. Image orientation focuses on what the company is known for or wants to be known for in terms of environmental friendliness. Environmental fact states a claim about the environment or its condition. The last claim is a combination of the before mentioned aspects (Carlson, et al., 1993). Research suggests that brands offering tangible products are more likely to succeed when focusing on environmental sustainability activities rather than social sustainability. According to Hanson et al. (2018), consumers find that brands that align their sustainability efforts with the same category that they are offering. This means goods should reflect environmental initiatives and services should reflect social initiatives. Ecolabels are another tool for green marketing, it gives technical information on the products. Increasing greener ways of production and marketing is not enough. There needs to be increased focus on consumer groups outside of those who are already green consumers (Rex & Baumann, 2007).

### **2.2.1 Emotional vs. functional green marketing**

Two different types of branding strategies that are frequently mentioned in previous literature are cognitive and emotionally appealing branding strategies (Hartmann, et al., 2005). These two different dimensions of appealing to customers are through emotional or functional brand or product attributes. Emotional branding can relate to creating brand associations that give a feeling of well-being through satisfaction for environmentally conscious customers acting in an environmentally friendly way. For these customers it is also often important that they can exhibit their consciousness to

others. Another emotional factor concerns the nature-related benefits, these can be of importance to customers who feel emotionally close to nature, that the brand can emulate the feelings usually connected to feelings experienced in nature. Functional branding within sustainability is more information based and aims to inform the customer of brand or product related attributes. The product or brand attributes should be more environmentally sound than the ones of conventional products. These attributes can relate to the production processes, product use, as well as product elimination (Hartmann, et al., 2005; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009). Emotional experiences are important when using green marketing. Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2008) found that environmentally concerned consumers' attitudes are more affected by functional benefits of the products. The nonconcerned however, experienced more emotional benefits from their choices. The authors argue that it might be helpful to divide the two groups: environmentally concerned and nonconcerned for the environment, when planning a persuasion strategy for consumers. Since concerned consumers respond more to utilitarian, or functional benefits, they should be given more information on the green product features. For nonconcerned consumers the feelings of well-being could be brought on by emotional images and positive emotional experiences. Both for the environmentally concerned and non-concerned their attitudes towards the products were positively affected by the emotional benefit they gained from experiencing feelings of virtual nature through the company's marketing (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2008).

Matthes, et al. (2014) researched the differences in brand attitudes in emotional, functional and a combination of both. They found that emotional appeals and a combination of emotional and functional were important when creating brand attitudes. Combining the environmental appeals to both functional and emotional, was most beneficial for both consumers with high- and low environmental concern. This study gave evidence for emotional ads being more powerful than functional ones in green advertising. Having nature images in ads may automatically give consumers a feeling of nature, which leads to positive attitudes towards the brand.

### **2.2.2 Credibility vs. greenwashing**

Greenwashing is a risk connected to green marketing. Greenwashing is misleading of customers through deceptive environmental claims. Greenwashing can appear as vague claims about the environment, claims that make an environmental statement but omit another, a lie about environmental friendliness, or a combination of all these statements (Carlson, et al., 1993). Greenwashing can have negative effects on how consumers relate to the brands environmental or product claims (Szabo & Webster, 2020). Greenwashing can lead to skepticism among consumers and mistrust in green marketing claims (Musgrove, et al., 2018).

All organizations, regardless of size, are competing in a global environment, where consumers have access to large quantities of information and companies must find new ways to communicate with consumers. Strong brands develop through consistently providing positive experiences for consumers. The positive feelings can be created through the brand's communication, product, and staff behavior (Abimbola & Vallaster, 2007). However, there are also negative aspects that relate to brands in consumer minds (Keller, 2020). Brand signals should be credible to convey the intended message. To achieve this the external communication about the brand messages and the product claims should be truthful (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Companies should avoid greenwashing if they want to enhance green trust (Chen & Chang, 2013). Parguel, et al. (2015) divide Greenwashing into executional greenwashing and claim greenwashing. Executional greenwashing refers to when nature imagery can trigger ecological associations through nature associations, which can be misleading. The nature-evoking elements of this type of advertising might be unintentionally by the brand or advertiser. Having executional elements in advertising can make the consumers think the brand is more ecological than it really is, which in turn can impact brand attitude. Adding environmental information to the nature images has shown a positive impact in attitude towards a brand, but only for consumers with a higher knowledge in environmental issues. This might act as a counterbalance for greenwashing (Parguel, et al., 2015).

According to Musgrove, et al. (2018) when consumers are exposed to more substantive green claims, they are less likely to be as skeptical, and the claims



support an overall increased interest in the brand. One study by Albayrak, et al. (2013) on environmental Concern showed the differences in effectiveness of environmental claims. People with low environmental Concern had more distrust in environmental verbal claims, than people with high environmental concern. However, the consumer behavior of people with high environmental concern is less if they experience skepticism. To avoid skepticism for consumers, companies should present some evidence for their environmental claims (Albayrak, et al., 2013). According to Szabo and Webster (2020) environmental beliefs are not connected with the amount of perceived greenwashing for consumers.

Consumers with high or low environmental concern also respond differently to more covert forms of green marketing, or even greenwashing (Parguel, et al., 2015). Green consumers are generally seen as more skeptical towards green ads, however, this is not always the case (Matthes & Wonneberger, 2014). Matthes and Wonneberger (2014) found that green consumers place more trust in green ads than the non-green consumers. This was found to be due to the value of the information in the ads. Even if the green consumers were emotionally affected by the ads, they did not use their feelings as an indication of trustworthiness. Based on these findings the authors concluded that green consumers judge the credibility of an ad based on the trustworthiness of the information presented, rather than the feelings the ads might induce. If the information in the ad seems misleading or biased, the consumers will not place value in the information, and this leads to skepticism towards the ad (Matthes & Wonneberger, 2014). Perceived consumer effectiveness is also a factor that contributes to the level of skepticism. If consumers believe their actions influence the environment, they are more likely to have positive views of green advertisements (Matthes & Wonneberger, 2014).

One of the main challenges for companies is to differentiate themselves in the market with their green attributes and build green trust with consumers and avoid being connected to greenwashing. The main elements that should be avoided in a green marketing setting are greenwash, green consumer confusion and green perceived risk. Greenwashing adds to consumer confusion on green issues as well as green perceived risk connected to the company and its products. The sources of these elements should be identified and avoided to avoid the negative consequences on

green trust for the company (Chen & Chang, 2013). *Green consumer confusion* refers to “consumer failure to develop a correct interpretation of environmental features of a product or service during the information processing procedure” (Chen & Chang, 2013; Turnbull et al., 2000). *Consumer confusion* can arise from several situations. When advertisements, communications or products are like one another, and do not have distinguishing attributes that tell them apart, this is called similarity confusion. Similarity confusion can lead to consumers not wanting to decide or delaying it. Another factor for consumer confusion is overload confusion. Overload confusion occurs when the amount of consumer information is far larger than what the consumers cognitive abilities can process which can lead to delayed decision making. Ambiguity confusion is another type of consumer confusion. Ambiguity confusion can arise from marketing claims that are conflicting or not in line with the consumers previous knowledge of products (Walsh, et al., 2007). *Green perceived risk* means “The expectation of negative environmental consequences associated with purchase behavior” (Chen & Chang, 2012; Peter & Ryan, 1976). Due to the popularity of Greenwashing it is a challenge for companies to differentiate themselves with green marketing. By avoiding the elements of green wash, green consumer confusion and green perceived risk, companies can enhance customers’ green trust (Chen & Chang, 2013).

### **2.3 Green consumer behavior**

This part of the theory will address the different types of Green Consumer Behavior and how it relates to Green Marketing. The issue of the attitude-behavior-gap and the reasons behind it will also be presented. Green Consumer Behavior can often be unpredictable. The following part will outline the main findings and research relating green consumer behavior and consumers' response to green marketing.

Building a strong environmental reputation is beneficial for a company wanting to reach the environmentally conscious consumer. Consumers that have a level of environmental consciousness are interested in the specific information on the companies or products they are purchasing. They are interested in the information the company is externally displaying on environmental benefits on packaging, product labels and advertising. (Smith & Brower, 2012). In addition, superior design in sustainable products increase the likelihood to be chosen by the customer.

Customers who believe their purchasing decisions can influence sustainability, are more likely to make sustainably favorable decisions (Magnier & Schoormans 2015). In relation to the effectiveness of Green Marketing and Green Consumer Behavior there are often a few different topics highlighted in previous research. Relevant terms when speaking of green consumer behavior include, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Environmental Knowledge (EK), Environmental Concern (EC) and Environmentally Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB). According to a study by Heo and Muralidharan (2019), knowledge of different environmental issues has an influence on the purchasing decisions of Millennials. Knowledge of environmental matters was also found to be connected to Environmental Concern, meaning the more knowledge the Millennial consumers had about the environment the more it affected their Environmental concern. The study did however find that having EK did not directly relate to the PCE for consumers. To enhance PCE the study suggested to include messages of how the consumer is helping the environment through purchasing the product. Companies can also increase PCE through encouraging feelings of pride or guilt. Pride and guilt can be important tools for self-regulating and ability to make personal decisions that support long-term goals in individuals (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). A key component for determining ECCB was mainly EC. Without EC the other factors did not predict environmental

purchasing behavior. This supports ideas of having marketing messages both giving information about environmental issues, as well as appealing to emotions that would heighten feelings of EC for consumers (Heo and Muralidharan, 2019).

Environmental concern being a deciding factor in green consumer behavior, several studies examine the difference of consumers with high environmental concern and low environmental concern. Studies have found differences in how these two groups perceive and react to green marketing strategies. For companies with environmentally friendly products, highly environmentally conscious consumers are an important target consumer group. However, this is also a group that is more difficult to reach and are often more sensitive towards how the information is presented. Therefore companies should have a clear idea of who their target group is, and which type of environmental product benefits they want to highlight to avoid skepticism. For HEC consumers the information should be specific, e.g., a product description. For LEC consumers the information can be more peripheral and not as specific (Grebmer & Diefenbach, 2020). Grebmer and Diefenbach (2020) found that HEC were more interested in the verbal information of the product and more skeptical about the pictorial environmental information. However, when used in combination with one another the pictorial and verbal cues did not add to skepticism among HEC consumers. Therefore a combined approach could prove beneficial if wanting to reach both consumer groups.

Environmental marketing claims have shown to be more effective on consumers having a history in purchasing green products opposed to those who have not purchased green items in the past. Consumers might be less price sensitive when they value environmental claims, however, claims should not be too vague (Stall-Meadows & Davey, 2013). Gaining social acceptance is another factor in green consumption patterns. According to Aagerup and Nilsson (2016) a way of making customers more eager to choose green consumption behavior, is to make the consumption settings more conspicuous. They argue that green consumption is a form of self-enhancement and would likely increase, if it would be made clearer for everyone who the individuals participating in the green consumption behavior are. However, some research suggests that Ethical consumption is something of a self-standard for people and consumers will chose products that highlight self-

accountability. This means consumers are not likely to choose to consume in ways that fall short of their own standards when self-accountability is elevated (Peloza et al., 2013).

### **2.3.1 Purchasing process**

Young, et al. (2009), have created a model for green consumer product purchasing. According to this model, the green consumer purchase begins with the consumers' own values and knowledge of issues relevant to the purchase, as well as knowledge from previous purchases. The second step of the process concerns the green criteria the consumers choose for that individual purchase. This step involves collecting information about the product and manufacturer. The information can be collected in different ways, e.g., through internet research or by asking friends and family. Information should be available through advertising since consumers usually prefer the information to be easily accessible and not having to search for it actively (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). The third step in this model concerns the barriers and facilitators for the purchase. According to the investigation for this model, the primary green criterion for the consumer is difficult to discard, but the secondary green criteria may be discarded if the barrier is strong. The barriers for purchase can be a contributing factor to the so-called attitude-behavior gap since the barriers affect the purchasing process (Young, et al., 2009). Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2011) found that common barriers were price and quality. Since individuals often have their preconceived ideas of what they see as value and how much they can afford, it influences their purchasing behaviors. Some are willing, however, to spend more on products from sustainably transparent companies. After the purchase has been made (step 4) the final step is the feedback loop from the purchase which then influences the next purchase. All the purchase's consumers make adds to their knowledge and attitudes of green consumption and influence the next purchasing experience.



Figure 1. Green Consumer Purchasing Model Young, et al. (2009, p.28).

The article by Young, et al. (2009), continues to give recommendations for key factors in helping green consumers choose more ethically. These factors include consumers' green values being strong enough, purchase experience and research for decision making, knowledge of environmental issues and the availability and affordability of the green products. They emphasize the meaning of knowledge for green consumers. Green consumers require time for research and knowledge to make favorable green purchasing decisions. Sometimes this knowledge acquiring time is a barrier for green consumption (Young, et al., 2009).

### 2.3.2 Attitude- behavior-gap

Environmental concern is not always a deciding factor for environmentally friendly behavior (Finisterra do Paço, et al., 2009). An issue that comes up frequently in research of Green Consumption is the attitude-behavior-gap. The attitude-behavior-gap refers to the difference in purchase attitude and actual behavior within responsible consumers (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015).

There are a few different reasons suggested for the attitude-behavior-gap and how consumers cope with the difference in their values, beliefs and actions. Juvan and Dolnicar (2014) suggest a few different behavioral theories as explanations for the attitude- behavior-gap; theory of planned behavior, attribution theory, value-belief-norm theory of environmentalism and cognitive dissonance theory. In their study

they found evidence to suggest that all of these can be factors in the attitude-behavior-gap in environmental sustainability behavior.

*The theory of planned behavior* (Ajzen, 1991), states that human social behavior can be predicted through attitudes toward the behavior, beliefs or subjective norms about the behavior and the level of perceived control of the behavior. The foundation for all these factors can be found in an individual's beliefs of the behavior. All these factors can be interesting in attempting to understand or change behavior

*Attribution theory* is how people explain the cause of certain behaviors. Attribution is usually divided into internal or external causes of the behavior. The internal attributions are usually traits or preferences that are unique to that person (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977). External attributions can be situational attributions that are not related to the person themselves, but rather external factors (Heider, 1985; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). For the attitude-behavior-gap attribution theory can be useful since it could explain that people do not see that they are the cause for environmental problems, and do not therefore think that a behavioral change could be a solution (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014).

*Value-belief norm theory of environmentalism* says that a person's values and beliefs about different aspects of the environment, as well as their personal norms of their actions, affect pro-environmental behavior (Stern, 2000). According to Stern (2000) there are several different factors affecting pro-environmental behavior, so it may not be useful to have a general theory for environmental behaviors. Since different environmental behaviors all have different causes, they should be evaluated individually.

In *Cognitive dissonance theory* a person's values and beliefs conflict with actions. This causes psychological discomfort for the individual. When a dissonance appears, there arises a need to eliminate that dissonance. This might be achieved through changing either a behavior or our feelings about something. It can however be difficult to change these factors depending on the situation (Festinger, 1957).

There are also other suggestions that could be the cause of the attitude-behavior-gap. People with concern for the environment might be negatively influenced by their

perceptions of green consumers, green consumption behavior, green products and green communications. Some consumers feel that being green is too difficult due to external factors. Others might feel that green stigma is connected to green consumers or green consumption. There are also consumers that think that their actions will not have an impact, so they do not act according to their green concerns (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). Johnstone and Tan (2015) have divided the different reasons into three groups: “it’s too hard to be green”, “green stigma” and “green reservations”. The strongest one of the factors contributing to the non-green behavior is It’s too hard to be green, consumers have stated that being green can require a time, effort and money. Consumers have also mentioned that factors that might stand in the way for green consumption behavior can be living in the right place, having enough knowledge, having enough self-discipline and being ready to make sacrifices. There are even some that said that they are not ready to be green, and only those who are ready can behave greenly. Evidence of an us vs. them mentality can be found, this discourages consumers with positive green attitudes from consuming in a green way. They believe that only those who are fully committed can be green. There are some consumers that believe that others are not making it easy for them to be green. Consumers can place the blame on people they live with, governments or marketers. These external reasons consumers use can be used as justification to continue the non-green behavior, which might make it even more difficult to implement (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). The second issue that came up for Johnstone and Tan (2015), green stigma. Some consumers find that green consumers think that they are better than everyone else and do not want to be associated with those kinds of people. Consumers might distance themselves from green consumers to avoid a negative impact on their self-esteem or self-concept. Consumers also do not like feeling pressured to any behavior or “preached to” which could lead to guilt. If the appeal to guilt is too straightforward the customers might have a strong negative reaction towards the company or product. Even if the company is ethically positioned, evoking feelings of guilt too explicitly can backfire. However, if the guilt signals are subtle, and are coupled with triggering feelings of self-accountability the consumer response can be positive (Pelozo et al., 2013). Inducing feelings of guilt can also influence credibility. When consumers regard a guilt appeal as manipulative or not credible, they are less likely to feel guilty. The way the consumer regards the ad’s credibility and motive impacts the way they feel about the message the



company is trying to convey to the consumer. When consumers feel that an ad is credible, they are more likely to have a positive connotation to the advertisement and the company responsible. Advertisers need to manage to get their intended message across, without appearing too manipulative (Cotte, et al., 2005).

The third aspect found by Johnstone and Tan (2015) was green reservations. According to their study, some consumers did not behave in a green way because they could not see the exact benefits of using green products. Therefore, it might be difficult to motivate consumers to engage in green consumption if there are no clear benefits or harm done for people or the environment. The lack of immediate impact enables consumers to ignore the long-term consequences of their decisions. All these external factors are important when trying to evaluate consumers' willingness to be greener. Some of the barriers mentioned can be created by marketers, there should be more effort put into making green seem easy and attainable for everyone. Important steps to enhance the green consumption behaviors are to avoid consumer confusion and cynicism (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

Terlau and Hirsch (2015), suggest some measures to close the attitude-behavior-gap. Raising awareness of the responsibility of consumers and the impact of their choices. Nudging cues can be added, to make consumers act in a certain way. The quality attributes of the products should be communicated, and how they relate to environmental and social issues. They argue that there should also be more transparency in the form of certificates and labels (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015).

### **3 Method**

The following chapter will present the method and reasons behind choosing this method for the study. The research design, data collection and analysis method will all be presented. There will also be a discussion on limitations of this type of method, followed by the reliability and validity of the study.

#### **3.1 Research design**

For this study, a qualitative research approach has been chosen. Qualitative research is suitable for this study since green consumer behavior is a complex subject that is not entirely comprehensible through numbers only. Qualitative research generally relies more on words than on numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A qualitative interview method is chosen to gather more in-depth information from the interview participants. This thesis uses a focus group interview with both questions to encourage discussion and photo-eliciting to gain reactions from the participants. The photo-eliciting gives the participants tangible examples of the type of green marketing that is being researched. The data is analyzed through a thematic analysis, identifying different themes and patterns in the focus group discussions. The methods and reasons behind choosing these specific methods will be discussed in the following chapters.

#### **3.2 Data collection method**

Interviews are one of the most popular ways to collect data within the social sciences. It can also be one of the most difficult data to collect since it is not always easy to gain authentic reactions from the interviewees. Interviewing is also something that requires time investment. There are three main types of interviews, these are unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews (Guthrie, 2010). For the purpose of the study, a semi-structured focus group interview method is chosen. This method is chosen to gain a more in depth understanding of the thoughts

and behaviors of consumers and to gain an understanding of a specific social phenomenon.

A focus group is a form of interview, where there are several people discussing a chosen topic. The focus group usually involves six to ten members and a moderator, but the size of the group should be determined depending on the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 513). Taking a consumer point of view, the interviews will aim to find out what methods of green marketing they value from companies. Since sustainability is something that is an issue that is affecting young people's behaviors and thoughts, the focus group interviews give participants the opportunity to discuss their views more in depth. There is a structure and questions prepared for the discussions, however, there is also room for the discussions to evolve on their own.

### **3.2.1 Focus group method**

In line with the purpose of this study, a semi-structured interview as a focus group is a suitable method for data collection. This type of data collection method was chosen since it gives a deeper look into the specific phenomenon than just giving numerical data. This method is also suitable for this study because it can provide a comparison of the different views of the interviewee's thoughts and feelings about the subject (Guthrie, 2010).

The two focus groups for this study consisted of 4-5 people of ages 22-30. The interviewees that were chosen, represent Generation Y, born between 1991 and 1998. The participants have been given numbers to ensure anonymity and they are displayed in the following table.

*Table 1. Focus Group 1*

Participant	Year of birth
P1.1	1994
P1.2	1998
P1.3	1996
P1.4	1998

Table 2. Focus Group 2

Participant	Year of birth
P2.1	1993
P2.2	1996
P2.3	1996
P2.4	1991
P2.5	1996

The Semi-Structured interviews usually follow a general guide, so that the results of the interviews are easier to compare to one another. The questions are generally closed but include follow-up questions. This is because the questions are posed in a way that they are directly comparable with other interviews but are flexible enough to allow for a natural flow in the interview. Cross-checking the views of the different respondents is possible with this method since they are asked the same questions. As a result, both quantitative and qualitative data can be collected (Guthrie, 2010).

When conducting interviews, the objective of the interview should be clear, the interview should be tried and practiced, the questions should be relevant and in clear language (Guthrie, 2010). The interviews will follow an interview guide, however, still leave room for elaboration and follow-up questions. A common element in an interview is to have a pre-trial of the interview guide (Guthrie, G, 2010). The pre-trial is done before the actual interviews, to ensure that the interview structure and that the questions are clear. Therefore an interview guide was made, and it was tested in the pilot interview. A pilot interview was conducted with two fellow students via Zoom. The pilot interview consisted of the questions and showing of the portfolio and at the end they had some feedback that helped to make the interview guide more cohesive. Some of images that were initially chosen for the portfolio were changed, because they created some confusion during the pilot interview.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic at the time of writing this thesis, one of the interviews, focus group 1 (FG1), was in person, and the second focus group 2 (FG2) was done via videocall on Zoom. There was some consideration to the suitability of personalities when choosing the groups to encourage a more rich and balanced conversation in the group. The aim was to have a different ages and genders

represented in both groups, however, due to the limited number of participants and the scheduling conflicts a complete balance was not achieved. This led to the groups being mostly made up of the people that were free to participate at the same times and if they were able to participate via Zoom or in person.

### **3.2.2 Portfolio and Photo-eliciting**

The focus group discussions for this study use a mixture of questions and photo-eliciting. During the interview's photos are shown as examples of companies communicating their environmental sustainability efforts. This is done to provoke reactions and associations to the photos. The photos are gathered from different types of marketing material from the company and shown to the respondents with related questions. Photo-elicitation can be used when the interviewer wants the respondent to reflect, explain and comment on the meaning of the objects in the photos (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 230). Photographs can also help interviewees feel more at ease and help them describe their opinions in more detail (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 487). Using the photos is suitable for this study since it gives a clear example of the different visual marketing materials of the different companies.

The interview images were gathered into a portfolio of images from relevant marketing materials. The materials were gathered from Finnish food companies' marketing material from Instagram. All the companies have communicated sustainability as one of their main company values. As stated in the theoretical framework, there are often two different strategies in green marketing or branding, emotional or functional, or even a combination of both (Hartmann, et al., 2005; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibañez, 2009). The images were chosen to reflect these two different thematic aspects, not to reflect one company's Instagram visual communication. Four images for each of the three themes were chosen to represent a certain element of sustainability marketing. All the company Instagram contained other images, mostly of the food products with packaging or with the end use of the products, like recipes on how to use the product. These were left out of the portfolio because they represent a whole separate topic on food marketing, sustainable food

marketing and food packaging, which are all relevant topics in marketing, however not something there are resources for to be dealt with in this thesis.

Four images from one company were shown at the same time for the respondents to get a sense of the theme of the advertisement. The first images from Gold & Green Foods represented an informational, functional and information sharing type of sustainability marketing. There were two images comparing water consumption of meat products and their own pulled oat products, one picture of a shopping basket with groceries and a planet with the phrase “for us it matters” and an image where they state that the packaging is made from recycled bottles. This corresponds to the definitions by Hartmann, et al., (2005) of functional green branding. They are giving information based on production processes, product use or product elimination and giving information on brand attributes that are more sustainable than their counterparts.

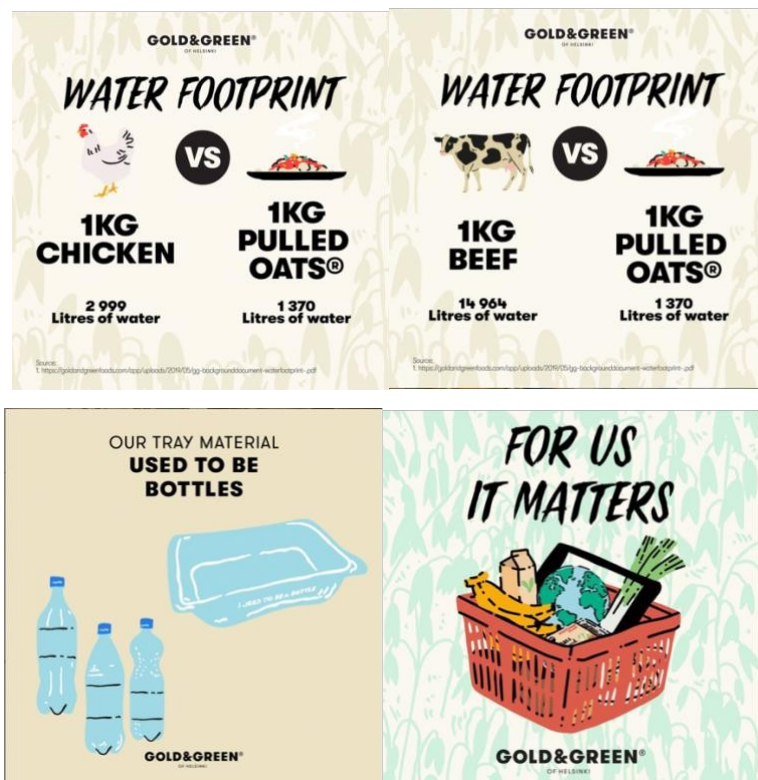


Figure 2: : Gold and Green, Instagram (2021).



*Figure 3. Beanit, Instagram (2020-2021).*

The second batch of images were from the company Beanit, these are more representative of the emotional side of sustainability marketing. However, it could also be seen as somewhat functional since it indirectly gave information on where the ingredients for the product are grown. Beanit showed where their raw material comes from the fields.



Figure 4. Foodin, Instagram (2020-2021)

The images from Foodin are representative of emotional nature-imagery in marketing. Giving feelings of closeness to nature and wanting to give a feeling of well-being can be seen in these pictures, as described by Hartmann, et al. (2005).

### 3.2.3 Transcribing

All interviews are transcribed to ensure all the exact information from the interviews. The transcribing process also gives a closer look at what was said, outside of the interview moment. Transcribing is also a way to start the analysis and begin to find the different themes and important topics (Lindstedt, 2019). The transcribing process was started directly after each interview to keep the conversation fresh in mind to prepare for the analysis. The transcriptions were aimed to reflect what was said, however, some small filler words or repetitions were not included if they did not affect the meaning of what was said.



### 3.3 Analysis of data

Because of the richness of the data from qualitative research, there could be some difficulty choosing the mode of analysis. Two common modes of analysis when analyzing qualitative data are *Grounded theory* and *Thematic analysis* (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 579). In grounded theory the data is coded through identifying different concepts. Since coding qualitative data is not as straightforward as quantitative data, the coding is more fluid (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 586). For the data analysis a thematic analysis approach was chosen. This is beneficial for seeing the different themes emerging in the interviews and if those correspond to the theoretical research done for the study. Using the thematic analysis, the first step after transcribing both interviews was to identify the different categories of the material. Different emerging topics in the interview transcripts as well as the interview and research questions were highlighted in different colors to try to connect all the data with similarities and the relation to each other. After this the different highlighted sections were gathered to find different themes. When searching for the themes in the data it is suggested to look for e.g., repetitions, metaphors and analogies, similarities or differences and materials related to the theory gathered for the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 599- 601). Main themes in the interviews were identified and categorized. Consideration was also made for whether the main themes were matching the themes in the theoretical framework and purpose of the thesis. After the different themes were identified, they were divided into suitable sections and summarized into the next chapter of this thesis.

... ~~... ..~~ do you think of these as images.

K: I think the second one is quite vague, what does that mean "for us it matters" at least the first one tells how they are being sustainable but the second one is just look here's some vegetables, it matters to us, like I don't know what's mattering to them. I think it's good that at the bottom they are comparing choices so there's some information in that.

V: I don't really like the ads where you compare the meat and vegetables, I think everyone already knows that it's much better for nature to eat pulled oats than chicken or beef. So it I think it makes the Finnish middle aged men angry when they see those ads and they feel threatened about reading (this). I think those kinds of ads are a bit old school already.

Anni Lehtinen  
Credibility

Anni Lehtinen  
Giving information is positive

Anni Lehtinen  
Comparing – not always positive

### **3.4 Limitations of chosen method**

The semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews specifically come with a set of challenges. As with all interviews an interviewer bias is possible. The interviews are prone to the influence of the interviewer. Therefore, the importance is placed on letting the interviewees do most of the talking and let them express their views and thoughts freely, without interfering (Guthrie, 2010). Focus group interviews are more difficult to control by the moderator, compared to one-on-one interviews. If the group members are incompatible or one speaker takes all the attention (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 526-527). In this case neither of the interviews faced this problem and everyone spoke about the questions approximately an equal amount. Since the second focus group met via the video call platform Zoom, it was more difficult to create a conversational interview. Likely because when speaking online, there needs to be one person at a time speaking and some difficulty could arise when participants consider when they should speak up and when to listen.

It should be noted that when conducting this type of research on consumer reactions to different marketing materials, a quantitative method can also be used. For this study however, it was deemed more suitable to use a qualitative method, to give more in depth information. An important aspect in the theoretical framework concerning green consumer behavior, is the attitude-behavior-gap. The gap in intention versus action makes it difficult to determine consumer behavior on numbers alone. For this thesis a more in depth look at consumers thoughts and feelings relating to their consumption and the portfolio was desired.

### **3.5 Trustworthiness and authenticity**

In quantitative research the concepts of validity and reliability are commonly used to evaluate the study, however in qualitative studies these are not always the best measures to evaluate the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363). Trustworthiness and authenticity are alternative criteria suggested to evaluate qualitative studies. Trustworthiness is further made up of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363- 365). Credibility can be achieved through respondent

validation, where the research subjects get the opportunity to confirm the findings from the empirical study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363-365). To ensure credibility in this study the interviews were both recorded through two devices as a backup measure. The recordings were then transcribed, and transcriptions made available to the participants of the study. Transferability is enhanced through giving a thorough description of the group that is studied, this ensures that the information is available to determine transferability to other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363-365). In this study the group of young adults were described through age and nationality. Gender and occupation were also considered however, in the end, not deemed relevant for the findings of this study. The study also included asking the participants of their attitudes and beliefs relating to sustainable consumption. Another component of trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability can be enhanced through keeping track of all the phases of the research process and having them accessible and reviewed by peers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363-365). In this study different stages of the research were documented and reviewed through seminars with peers, giving comments on the research so far. The comments were considered and were utilized when moving forward with the thesis. Confirmability is an aspect of trustworthiness that describes that the researcher has stayed as objective as possible when conducting the study. Complete objectivity is impossible in qualitative studies; however the aim should be to not let personal opinions or values influence the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363-365). In this study, the researcher has aimed to not let personal values affect the research process. Seminars with input from peers and reviewing the transcripts carefully to ensure that personal bias does not affect the results of the study were the main tools used to ensure confirmability.

Authenticity is another related concept when evaluating qualitative studies. This deals with giving participants a clear understanding of their situation and what the research is about in an authentic way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 363-365). Again, it is important that the participants of the study have access to the material from their participation to avoid exploitation or unfairness (Amin, et al., 2020). As stated earlier the transcripts were made available to participants and the research subject was explained to them and the participants were encouraged to ask questions or express their concerns.

This part has discussed the ways in which the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity were achieved. In the concluding chapter of this thesis there will be a discussion on limitations of this study and evaluations.

## **4 Analysis**

The analysis will introduce the findings from the empirical part of the study, the focus group discussions. The purpose of this chapter is to present the different patterns and themes arising from the focus group discussions. The following headlines are the main themes identified and analyzed from the basis of the interviews relating to the research questions and theoretical framework. At the end of this chapter the findings are shortly summarized to support the following chapter that will introduce the results of this thesis.

The first focus group interview consisting of 4 participants ages 22-27, all female, will be referred to as FG1. The second interview consisting of three females and two males ages 25-30 will be referred to as FG2. The discussions have been analyzed both at a group and individual level, to help with comparing the views of the participants and what the group collectively discusses about the different topics. As mentioned in the theory chapter of this thesis, the way consumers relate to green issues also affect the way they see or relate to advertisements they see. Thus, the first part of the findings is a base for the second part where the participants are shown green marketing images.

### **4.1 Environmental knowledge and concern**

To gain an overall understanding of the participants' level of environmental knowledge and concern the groups were asked background questions relating to their green consumer behavior. During this first part of the focus group discussion the participants were asked to discuss different aspects of their beliefs, values, knowledge and attitudes. Some main themes were identified in these conversations and are analyzed in this first part of the analysis.

The main themes for this part were identified as Environmental Concern and knowledge, Credibility and Barriers and Facilitators for purchases. These parts give insight to the purchasing attitudes of young millennial consumers.

When asked about environmental concern, all the participants in both focus groups said that they were concerned for the environment. Participants of FG1 emphasized that they believed environmental concern is an issue affecting their generation and a much-discussed topic among their peers. In FG2 all the participants agreed that they were worried about the environment and specifically the rate of consumption in the world at this moment.

Regarding green behaviors and values the group discussions centered around topics such as, trying to avoid buying unnecessary items, limiting meat consumption, favoring domestic food, recycling and choosing quality materials. Both groups also agreed that their green behaviors were influenced by their environment, but that the pressure to act green was more personal and internal rather than external or influenced by other people. In FG2 one of the participants stated that they felt a bit helpless and like they should be doing more than they are, but that the pressure to act comes internally from them wanting to uphold a standard of environmentally friendly behavior.

Although group members in both groups expressed that they had concern for the environment, comparing the two focus groups, there were some differences in the group discussions. FG1 seemed overall more inclined to search for information and make decisions based on sustainability than in FG2. At the same time, it seemed as FG1 felt that even if they were trying to behave environmentally, they felt like they were not doing enough and should be doing more. In comparison, FG2 overall also felt they could be doing more for the environment, however, in this group, the feeling led them to feel more discouraged than motivated.

One participant in FG2 said they thought they were consuming in line with what they deemed to be environmentally friendly, but that they still wanted to travel and booking a plane ticket felt like they were negating the other things they were doing for the environment. Their personal CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be high due to the plane emissions, which felt like all their hard work in other areas did not feel worth it.

Knowledge about environmental issues is another factor that influences attitudes. When asked about their knowledge relating to environmental issues 2/4 participants in FG1 said that their current studies included sustainability, so they get part of their information through their studies. The participants in both groups mentioned they get information through news, documentaries, podcasts, school, websites, friends and

other people they hang out with. In FG1 Instagram influencers were also mentioned as one source of information.

One of the participants in FG1 said that the information can sometimes come from so many different sources that you are not necessarily aware of what is influencing you. Another participant in FG1 also mentioned that after seeing information about a topic they themselves strived to find more information and prove the credibility of that information.

If I just watch a documentary, I get more interested in the subject and google more and want to know more. - P1.3

Concerning the knowledge and information the participants themselves engage in, the participants in FG2 seemed to agree on that there is almost too much information to be found, leading to confusion about what the best way to act is and to a kind of information fatigue even before starting to find out the information.

I know that if I am interested in something I could find it easily from the internet or somewhere else but, I will not always look for it. - P2.2

It's sort of overwhelming to find out all the information about how environmentally damaging most of the products are. So, I guess a lot of people, me included do not really want to go looking for the information because then you feel guilty. - P2.3

I feel like the amount of information is very wide and it's sometimes hard to figure out what is right and what is wrong. Also, it feels a little bit meaningless to read all this information and then you must figure out what is really good consumer behavior on your half. Too much information makes it hard, but the information is available, social media, documentaries, conversations with friends and education. - P2.4

[...] It's hard to know which one (information) is true and which ones are not. It is quite overwhelming to try to figure it all out. -

P2.1

When asked about whether the participants do research on a company before buying their product, FG1 shared that they usually do some research if they are considering making a purchase from a new company. If the company is known to them, they usually have more trust that they know about the company's level of sustainability. In FG2 the group members agreed that they do not do much research before buying a product, for some it depended on what type of products they were buying, and some said they would possibly refrain from purchasing something if they had heard something negative about the company's sustainability.

[...] I do not do that much research on the product before I go and buy it. It depends on the product, but if I know the brand is doing bad things, harmful things for nature I probably will not buy stuff. So, I have a common sense that drives me to these buying decisions.

[...] - P2.4

In both focus groups, one of the main barriers for making green purchases were price and availability. Price was an issue that was brought up in both focus groups several times. In FG1 3/4 of the participants were full-time students and expressed that that price was a barrier when purchasing green products. Even in the second focus group, where most of the group were working steady jobs 4/5, they said that price was one of the main criteria they had when making purchases. Availability was also one of the more important criteria for 2/5 of FG2.

Well, I am a student so the price is a big deal for me, so if the ecological version of the product is much more expensive than the not ecological, then I will buy the not ecological. But maybe in the future when I have more money, I will consume more ecological products also. - P1.4



It's because I am a student, I usually try to buy the cheapest one.  
Then again, it's also ecological. Depends on the product and the price and [...] - P1.3

Even if price was one of the more important factors for group members in FG1, there was however one group member that expressed that they usually try to plan and budget for more sustainable choices, and that they were also willing to wait for products longer. The same person also expressed that if the price of something is higher, they would like to know more of what the company is doing for the environment. However, most members of FG2 agreed that the final purchasing decision was usually made up by many different factors. It was not so much just one specific quality that would make them buy something but usually an alignment of several factors.

[...] I think it depends on how much the other ones [factors] weigh opposite the environmental factor. It's not about just one thing being better. - P2.3

## **4.2 Credibility**

Credibility came forth as quite a prominent common theme during the focus group discussions. It was clear that both groups were struggling with the information concerning green practices of companies. The sources of information, the amount of information and the overall credibility of the claims were mentioned several times even if not directly asked. There seemed to be a degree of skepticism from participants in both groups, and a kind of confusion over what can be deemed as trustworthy information. The participants seemed to believe that companies only advertised sustainability issues to make themselves look better. There was an overall skepticism for green marketing, and the groups discussed how the companies only highlight what they are doing for the environment, but then other parts could be hidden and not communicated to the public.

It's hard to know which information is true, and which is not. It's really hard to separate the information from each other. - P1.4

I mean it's not really reliable. Because it's usually marketing, if it's from the company that they are advertising that they are very environmental, you can pretty much lie when you advertise, so I do not think it's the most reliable. But I do not know again where you would get the reliable information on these companies because there are so many different sources so it's hard to say. - P2.3

In FG1, where the participants said they usually did research before buying products, they said that even if they read the company webpage and their sustainability section, they rarely trust it. There was a belief of companies being able to write what they wanted and could just be greenwashing on their website. They also expressed getting to the bottom of if a company is sustainable or not requires work. In both focus groups there was a brief mention of third-party certificates. FG1 agreed they usually trusted certificates and that that made information more credible. In FG2 however one of the participants said they were trying to understand all the different certificates. This indicates that maybe certificates, although trustworthy also add to the information confusion. One member in FG1 said that the credibility was also affected by where an item is sold. One of the participants mentioned they usually trust the products from Ruohonjuuri. Ruohonjuuri is a Finnish wellness retailer focusing on sustainable products (Ruohonjuuri.fi, 2021). By shopping at Ruohonjuuri the brand selection is already done for the customer in terms of sustainability.

### **4.3 Green marketing perceptions**

In the second part of the focus group discussions, the participants were presented with the digital portfolio of Instagram marketing images. The groups were asked what they thought about the images, how it affected the view of the company, their perception of sustainability and credibility of the company and overall to compare the three different companies and their marketing. In this part we look at how the consumers reflect over what type of sustainability the brands are trying to convey to them through their social media.

The first images (figure 2) that were more functionally focused gained mixed reactions relating to credibility. FG1 agreed that the claims in the images seemed credible and in line with previous information they have on this type of pulled oat products. One of the participants noticed that the information of the image had a source which made it more credible for her, and the other group members agreed. In FG1 one of the participants said that she thought the positive reaction of the group might be due to them already thinking sustainably, she eluded that if someone who is not already in sustainable consumption habits, might not see the ads in such a positive light. In FG1 all the participants had expressed that they were vegetarian or at least mostly ate a vegetarian diet, they agreed that the comparison of meat and vegetarian products made them feel better about their choices. In FG2 they also discussed this issue of the ads being suitable for consumers that are already environmentally conscious, but that they might not receive a positive response from consumers who do not already implement sustainability criteria to their purchases. One participant of FG2 said that she does not think this type of advertising would have an impact on someone choosing between chicken and pulled oats, and as for herself she said it would not matter since she would have chosen the oats anyway.

I do not really like the ads where you compare the meat and vegetables, I think everyone already knows that it's much better for nature to eat pulled oats than chicken or beef. So I think it makes the Finnish middle-aged men angry when they see those ads and they feel threatened about reading (this). I think those kinds of ads are a bit old school already. - P2.1

I think it's different if you are green from the start or thinking ecologically or sustainably from the start. Then I think this will get to you in a good way. But if you are on the beef side. Then I think you are not that into these kinds of things. - P1.1

As in FG1 one participant in FG2 also said that this might make them feel better over their own choices since they were choosing vegetarian products over meat anyways. Despite some similarities, the overall response for these images in FG2

was a little different, and a bit more critical compared to FG1. Participants 2/5 in FG2 said the image with the statement “for us it matters” was too vague and they were not sure what they wanted to point out with the statement. Another point that was brought up in FG2 was that the advertisement had only compared the amount of water used to manufacture the products. Some members of FG2 thought that there should be more numbers concerning other aspects, since water usage is only one of the aspects in sustainable production. Overall, the group discussed that only having information on one aspect of sustainability in their advertisements, is not that credible since they feel the company might be hiding or omitting some other information.

In the second set of images (figure 3), participants in both focus groups recognized Finnish landscapes in the images. For some participants, the images gave them a connection to what the product represents and where the manufacturing takes place. In both groups, there was one member mentioning that pesticides were an issue recalled after seeing the images, something they would have wished to learn more about. The issue seemed to be brought up by the images since they depicted the agricultural side of the company.

I think it's good because in these pictures you can quite clearly see it is (from) Finnish landscapes. So, you know it's locally produced.

- P1.1

I do not know how much this helps my view of the company. Because how do I know they do not use pesticides in the fields or these kinds of factors. It does not really say anything about the company's values. - P1.4

I do not really think that these pictures give you any information about the sustainability. Well, you can only see that that it's not coming from any animals this food so you can not see how much they are using pesticides, for example, so you do not really know how it's made you just see the product there. - P2.2

Having the images highlighting the growing and harvesting process specifically, seems to seem to trigger more questions about the sustainability of these processes. Overall, FG1 seemed to deem the ad as credible and kind of “nice to know” that the product was locally produced and where the product is from but that it was lacking specific information. In FG1, one of the participants said they believed it was the company’s actual fields in the photos, but she would have still preferred more information, like in the first set of images.

In FG2, the group was more divided in their reactions. For FG2 some of the participants 3/5 the images made them think of nature, of home and of summer, but they did not think it made a huge impact on how sustainable the company is. One of these participants would have wished for more information, e.g., in the description or caption of the photo when it was posted. There were however, 3/5 of the participants in FG2 that felt that the advertisements were good since they could show people who were more unfamiliar with how the crops were grown and in what kind of environment. They thought this could give good information on how the product is made.

For the images that contained more emotional cues (figure 4), instead of information, the responses were quite similar in both focus groups. One participant in FG1 said it did not really impact their view on the company since they were so used to seeing images such as these. Another participant said she found it to be credible since she knew the influencer promoting the products. In FG1 one of the members also pointed out that any company would be able to do this kind of marketing where they place items in nature to project a sustainable image, regardless of sustainability. She compared the images to the other two companies in the portfolios where the companies clearly had their own perspective and sustainable claims. There were also some in the groups that felt that the products in the images felt a bit misplaced. The bottles and packages were placed in the ocean and in nature, which made it seem like they were littering. In both focus groups there was one member to point out that displaying the Kombucha in the ocean felt a bit misplaced since the product does not originate from Finnish nature. In FG2 the group was overall more skeptical towards the images, while FG1 had a more neutral response.

[...] I am used to seeing these kinds of pictures on almost all the companies use these kinds of, just put the product outside somewhere. - P1.3

I think they try to connect you with the nature with these pictures like the bottom left picture they try to send a message that when you drink our product you feel the same as when you go for a swim in winter or something like that. I don't really see any other point, maybe they try to give you the instant you feel like more connected to nature when you use the products. - P2.1

#### **4.3.1 Comparison of images**

At the end of the interview the groups were asked if they had thoughts on the images after seeing all of them, and how they would compare them to one another. Both groups only gave brief answers when asked to compare the different types of images. In FG1, one of the participants said that they would follow the account of the last company. However, if she was only thinking of sustainability, she would not follow that account, instead she would probably choose the first one, because it contained the most information. She could also consider the second set of pictures if they would include an informative text underneath. One person in FG1 as well as two people in FG2 mentioned that the first and the second in combination might be a good match. In FG2, overall, all the participants said the second set of pictures from Beanit (figure 3) were the ones they liked best. The images were seen as something that awakes interest in the product and manufacturing process. It was said to give a warm feeling and that it was the most pleasing to the eye. One in FG2 said that the third pictures might be good for raising awareness but that for Instagram the second ones would be best. Another participant commented on the third images as it seemed like they were “deep in marketing”.

#### **4.4 Summary of analysis**

Overall, there were similarities within and between the groups. However, there were still some differences to be found in the group discussions and on an individual level.

The differences were slight and of course the group dynamics influenced what topics were discussed and in which way.

Generally, all the members in both groups expressed worry and consciousness of environmental issues. Generally, the daily green habits the participants said they were engaging in were very similar and both groups expressed that they were willing to change behaviors to be more environmentally friendly. However, based on what they said and the way they spoke about matters, it seemed that FG1 were more willing to find information and modify their behavior in green matters than FG2. FG2 expressed a more helpless view for what they could do and stated that they did not often seek more information on green issues and companies since it was overwhelming to deal with at times. There were however similar signs in FG1 even if not at the same level and they were overall more willing to do research. Both groups expressed that they thought they could do more, with just the difference that this seemed more encouraging for participants in FG1 and more discouraging for FG2.

In both groups there was a general skepticism towards companies and what the companies were expressing through their own channels. Certificates were seen as something trustworthy but also another piece of information that could add to being overwhelming when trying to make decisions. When making purchasing decisions, price and availability were seen as the biggest barriers or facilitators to a purchase. However, the participants also spoke about there being several factors that went into a final purchasing decision. Usually, a combination of facilitators could sway the decision, not only one criterion.

When analyzing the results of showing the groups the portfolio, the reactions were also a bit varied between the two groups. There were some differences in how the groups reacted to the different images and how it influenced their view of the company's and products' sustainability. For the first set of images, that contained functionally based claims, mostly comparing conventional meat options to the company's vegetarian products. FG1 seemed overall more positive towards this type of message, compared to FG2. In the first images, credibility was found through prior information in line with the company's claims, the image having a source at the bottom and the claims supporting the lifestyles the participants already had. The

participants that had a more negative view of the images thought the comparison between meat and plant options would not do well with meat-eaters. The comparison also triggered thought of the other factors besides water usage that ties into sustainability, and whether the company was omitting information and using vague claims. The second images which were more about giving a feeling of nature and farming, the same kind of themes were brought up. The participants in FG1 were overall more neutral towards the second images and FG2 displayed mixed reactions, although most did agree it gave them a feel of nature, but that they still did not get a lot of information on sustainability. As for the reactions for the third images, containing mostly only emotional connection to nature through the products being placed in nature, the participants did get a feel of nature. However, participants were not convinced on sustainability of the products and even felt some of the products looked misplaced in the nature scenery.

When the participants were asked to compare all three of the companies' images, the images from Beanit (figure 3) gained the most favorable reactions. In both focus groups there was also discussion of combining the first and the second images, combining informational and emotional content, would be something they preferred.



## **5 Results**

The following chapter will present the results of the study, this includes comparing the relevant literature to the findings from the interviews discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to answer the research questions of this thesis as presented in the first chapter. The research questions will be answered through a discussion of the results which will lead to the concluding chapter for the final conclusions and limitations of this study.

- What is green marketing and how does it influence green consumer behavior?
- What type of green consumer behavior is common among young adults, and how do they respond different types of green marketing?
- How should companies shape their green marketing in a credible way to appeal to young adult consumers?

The two first research questions can be answered through the information in the theoretical part, as well as the focus group interviews of this study. The theoretical framework also contributed into shaping the portfolio of green marketing images that was shown during the interviews. To answer the final research question of how companies can shape their green marketing strategies in a credible way to appeal to young adult consumers, we will first look at the current green marketing strategies and the responses of young adult consumers.

### **5.1 Green consumer behavior in young adults**

Through the focus group interviews we learn that the current green marketing strategies are causing confusion for consumers. The focus groups all agreed that sustainability and green issues are important topics among their peers, and something that is on their minds a lot when making consumption decisions. The first and second research questions are answered by comparing the green consumer behavior themes brought up in the theoretical framework to the focus group study's empirical findings. The green purchasing process, by Young, et al. 2009), is used as

a guideline to highlight the different steps that are commonly included in the green consumption process and how it presents itself in the empirical part of this study.

### 5.1.1 Purchasing process

As presented in the theoretical framework Young, et al. (2009) have suggested a purchasing process for green consumers. The participants of the focus groups were asked about the different parts in the purchasing process. For the purposes of this thesis and based on the replies from the focus groups, for this study, not all the steps in the process are of equal importance. The main themes identified through the interviews are general green values and knowledge, green criteria for purchase and barriers and facilitators of purchases. These three parts will be elaborated further.



Figure 1 Green Consumer Purchasing Model Young, et al. (2009, p.28).

Starting with the purchasing process, the first step is the general green values and knowledge. A key component in Green Consumer Behavior is environmental concern, and environmental concern is connected to environmental knowledge. The more knowledge consumers have the more it affected their environmental concern (Heo & Muralidharan, 2019). Both focus groups in this study mentioned that they obtain their sustainability knowledge from several different sources of information. For them, the information is everywhere around them, and often feels overwhelming. The groups also said that they are concerned for the environment, which supports the research stating that environmental information and environmental concern are

connected. According to Aagerup and Nilsson (2016) gaining social acceptance might be a reason for consumers to try and make more environmentally friendly consumption decisions, however the focus group discussions revealed that this group of individuals held it as more of a self-standard, rather than pressure from their peers. This is more in line with Peloza et al. (2013), stating that consumers will avoid falling short of their own standards and hold themselves accountable.

Participants expressed that there is a lot of information on sustainability and green issues available, even if they do not look for it specifically. Some even studied the subject at university. Some of the respondents were prepared to dedicate the time to do additional research, but the actual processing and determining the information as credible, was described as challenging and can be a barrier for even making the effort to acquire the information at all. Collecting information is a part of the second step of the purchasing process, green criteria for a purchase. Consumers usually prefer the information to be easily accessible to them (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). In FG2 it seemed the participants would rather be presented with information instead of having to actively look for it, whereas FG1 were willing to go through the additional trouble of looking for more information.

However, green consumer behavior could not be discussed without the issue of the attitude-behavior-gap. The attitude-behavior-gap makes it difficult to completely determine the green purchasing process. There are several instances in the focus group interviews supporting the attitude-behavior-gap being an issue for the participants. Environmental concern alone will not always decide the purchasing habits of individuals (Finisterra do Paço, et al. 2009). The attitude-behavior-gap is defined as the difference in purchase attitude and actual purchasing habits (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). The respondents all said they had environmental concerns, but when asked about specific consumption habits, the participants said that they do not always act in line with their' values. When an individual's beliefs and actions are in conflict, this causes psychological discomfort, this leads to a need to eliminate that discomfort, either by changing behavior or changing your feelings about the behavior (Festinger, 1957). In this study, it was found that there are some strategies that were used to eliminate this discomfort of cognitive dissonance. It seems that avoiding looking for information is a way to avoid cognitive dissonance. The

participants did not always seek information about products, which would enable them to deny environmental consequences of their purchasing decisions. Juvan and Dolnicar (2014) also found similar evidence, pointing to value-belief-norm theory, which found that denial of the consequences of either individual or industry level, could help in easing cognitive dissonance. Johnstone and Tan (2015) found that green reservations are a reason for the attitude-behavior-gap, when consumers are not sure of the impact of their actions it is more difficult to act in an environmentally friendly way (Johnstone and Tan, 2015). It seems that it is both the participants finding it difficult to look for information and if they do, to know what the actual impact of their actions are based off that information. There is also evidence of the two other aspects by Johnstone and Tan (2015) it's too hard to be green and green stigma which will be mentioned further in this chapter.

Young et al. (2009) found that green consumers require time to gather information to make green consumption decisions. However, sometimes the required effort for acquiring the information can be a barrier for green consumption. In FG2 especially there was an overall theme of being discouraged by the amount of work it took to try to be green. Johnstone and Tan (2015) called this type of attitude it's too hard to be green, according to them, consumers can feel that being green requires time, effort and money. In FG2 especially participants expressed that being green in all aspects of purchasing behavior was difficult and made them feel a bit discouraged about their ability to be green.

In addition to the more intangible barriers and facilitators of purchases such as: knowledge, attitude and behavior, there are tangible factors to consider. Another important step in the purchasing process are barriers and facilitators of the purchase. The barriers and facilitators can be connected to the attitude-behavior gap since the barriers or facilitators might make or break a purchase intention if strong enough (Young, et al., 2009). Generally, participants expressed that price and availability were important factors that they often placed above sustainability factors. Stall-Meadows and Davey (2013) found that consumers might be less price sensitive if they value environmental claims. In this study, there was only one participant in this study that said they value environmental issues enough to specifically try and plan and budget for more environmentally friendly purchases.

## 5.2 Credibility in green marketing

Green marketing is a part of sustainability marketing, Sustainability marketing is defined as building and maintaining sustainable relationships with customers, social and natural environments (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 29). The natural environment is the 'green' part in sustainability marketing. As stated by Banerjee, et al. (1995), green advertising can be defined in three ways. The advertisements can directly or indirectly show how the company is related to the environment, environmental lifestyles or by presenting themselves as environmentally responsible. All the companies' images that were chosen for the portfolio of the focus groups, were implicitly or explicitly displaying one or several of these strategies in their advertisement images.

As discussed in the theoretical framework there are two different strategies that are prominent when discussing green marketing strategies, cognitive or emotionally appealing green marketing strategies (Hartmann, et al. 2005). The empirical part of this study dealt with the two different strategies. The focus group participants were showed images, either displaying emotional or functional product or brand attributes, or a mixture of both.

Greenwashing is a risk in green marketing (Carlson, et al., 1993) and can have negative effects on how consumers view brands (Musgrove, et al., 2018). To convey the intended brand image, a companies' claims should be credible (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Greenwashing can lead to consumer confusion and green perceived risk (Chen & Chang, 2013). During the focus group interviews there were several instances when participants expressed skepticism and distrust towards companies' claims. Companies should avoid greenwashing if they want to increase green trust (Chen & Chang, 2013). There are some ways companies can avoid losing green trust and conducting credible green marketing, these will be discussed further in the rest of this chapter.

Greenwashing is an issue that is that is prominent in green marketing (Szabo & Webster, 2020), it makes it difficult for companies to gain trust from consumers and to differentiate themselves by their green attributes (Chen & Chang, 2013). When examining in what way green marketing influences green consumer behavior, it might be dependent on several different factors. Predicting consumer behavior based on their response to marketing only is often challenging. As previously discussed,

consumers' environmental concern and knowledge are factors to be considered when shaping a green marketing strategy (Heo & Muralidharan, 2019). There was an overall skepticism for companies claims in both focus group interviews. This is not surprising since greenwashing is a common phenomenon in green marketing. Greenwashing can have negative effects on how credible green marketing claims are for consumers (Szabo & Webster, 2020). Through the analysis of the focus group discussions it is apparent that consumers were struggling to know which information to trust and how to obtain trustworthy information. To gain trust from the consumers, companies should avoid greenwashing by enhancing green trust (Chen & Chang, 2013). In the interviews there were signs of both green confusion and green perceived risk as described by Chen & Chang (2013). One participant especially found it difficult to separate between all the information they were exposed to. This might be due to similarity confusion or overload confusion. This is when either the information from advertisements is too similar or too much information makes it difficult to process. Similarity confusion especially can lead to consumers delaying their decision making (Walsh, et al., 2007). Concerning green perceived risk, where the consumers have expected environmental consequences from certain products or companies (Chen & Chang, 2012; Peter & Ryan, 1976). The participants seemed fearful of companies only communicating the parts of their businesses that were green, but then omitting other important information on the harmful aspects of their business models. Many of the participants also said they would avoid purchasing products from companies they have heard are harming the environment. As stated by Ginsberg and Bloom (2004), there are different shades of green companies can display through their green brand image. It seems that these companies were not entirely successful at displaying their shade of green through their images since the participants seemed unsure of the degree in which the companies were sustainable.

There are also differences in how consumers with low- versus high environmental concern perceive green marketing (Magnier & Schoormans 2015). Highly environmentally conscious consumers might be more difficult to reach and are often more sensitive to the information presented by companies (Grebmer & Diefenbach, 2020). When highlighting the functional elements of the product, the brand aims to give information about the sustainability of the product. These functional attributes can highlight production processes, product use or elimination of the product after

use (Hartmann, et al., 2005). When the focus groups were shown the marketing images relating to the functional product elements of the company, the results were mixed. The participants identifying themselves as vegetarians were overall more positive to the images comparing the sustainable elements of the products to their conventional counterparts. From the focus group interviews it was clear that even if the information was available, credibility was rarely achieved. According to Szabo and Webster (2020), environmental beliefs are not connected to whether consumers perceive ads as greenwashing or not. However, some evidence says that people with lower environmental concern are more likely to be skeptical of environmental claims (Magnier & Schoormans 2015). Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2008) found that consumers that are more concerned about the environment were more responsive to the type of advertising that highlighted the functional elements of the products. In this case, more participants in FG1 showed a bit more overall concern and willingness to place more importance on it than other aspects of a product than the environment, seems to support these findings by Hartmann and Apaolaza- Ibáñez (2008). Some of the members of the group did have prior information that matched what the company was saying in their advertisement, which added to the credibility of the claims. Credibility was further strengthened for some participants because the images also came with a direct link to the source of information and the information was in line with the environmental lifestyle they were already implementing, i.e. not eating meat products.

The functionally focused advertisements also made the focus group participants wonder if the companies were sharing specific information about environmental aspects but maybe omitting other information.

Two of the functionally focused advertisement images that were shown to the participants, were about the water usage of pulled oats compared to chicken and beef. In the focus group interviews there was talk of the type of claims the company made in their advertisements where they compared traditional meat products to their vegetarian alternative. They believed this type of marketing could make some people have a strong negative reaction towards the company or product. This could be because being preached to might bring up some feelings of guilt. There might be some green stigma associated with these types of claims. Evoking feelings of guilt in this way can backfire for the company (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). Green stigma,

along with green reservations and it's too hard to be green are some reasons for the attitude-behavior-gap according to Johnstone and Tan (2015). The participants' that had a more negative view of the images thought the comparing between meat and plant options would not do well with meat-eaters. The comparison also triggered thoughts of the other factors besides water usage that ties into sustainability. Some of the consumers felt that this might be a way for the company to omit other information. The statement "for us it matters" was also too vague according to some in FG2. Omitting information and vague claims are a type of greenwashing (Carlson, et al., 1993), which could explain the skepticism for these claims.

In contrast to the functional or more cognitive type of advertising of the first advertisements (figure 2), the second (figure 3) and third (figure 4) were more in line with the description of emotional green marketing. The emotional marketing often wants to give the consumers a feeling of well-being and emotional closeness to nature (Hartmann, et al., 2005). Looking at the images from Foodin (figure 4), where the brand is displaying their products out in nature, this might be a way to try to bring out nature related emotions for consumers (Hartmann, et al. 2005). Triggering ecological associations through nature imagery, might be seen as misleading, and be seen as greenwashing (Parguel, et al., 2015). However, in this case there were no discussions in the focus groups saying that the advertisements were intentionally trying to mislead consumers. Some of the interviewees did however say that having kombucha, which is not made in Finnish nature, in a picture where it is placed in Finnish nature, seems a bit misplaced there and did not give them an authentic feeling. According to the responses to Foodin's images overall, gave the sense that the nature-imagery did little to enhance the consumers' views on sustainability of the company. Since placing products in nature is something any company could do, regardless of being sustainable or not, the images seemed to fail in differentiating the company or products in the participants' minds. According to Chen and Chang (2013), differentiating themselves in the market through green attributes is an important factor in building green trust and avoiding greenwashing.

The responses to the Beanit ad images (figure 3) were mostly neutral, however a bit more positive in FG2. Even if the Beanit functional claim is not as explicit as in Gold & Green foods' advertisements (figure 2), you can still see how they are giving



information on the production process sustainable attributes. The main impression the participants had was that the product is domestically grown, even if there was no explicit claim to support this impression. The response to Beanit advertisements evoked both feelings of nature and summer as well as, made the consumers think of where the product is from and how it is grown. However, some of the consumers thought that there should be even more information and would have liked to see a caption relating to and explaining the image. Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2008) found that consumers who are more concerned of the environment want to have more information and Parguel, et al. (2015) state that executional greenwashing, where nature-evoking elements give an ecological image of the company, can be counteracted in consumers with higher knowledge in environmental issues, by giving environmental information.

## **6 Conclusions and discussion**

This next chapter will present a closing discussion to this thesis. The conclusions of this study will be presented and discussed based on the previous chapters. The aim of this chapter is to give a conclusion on the purpose and research questions of this study. The concluding chapter will also include a discussion on the theoretical implications, managerial implications and limitations of this study, as well as suggestions for future research.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

This thesis has studied young adult consumers perceptions of green marketing and its' credibility. The green marketing perceptions were studied in relation to the consumers own environmental knowledge and concern. Through examining the results of this study it became apparent that many of the consumers were themselves struggling with how to perceive the environmental information from companies and how to determine its' credibility. The conclusions give a reply to the final research question: How should companies shape their green marketing in a credible way to appeal to young adult consumers?

The increase in awareness of environmental issues has undoubtedly put pressure on companies to act in an environmentally friendly way. However, even more emphasis is placed on how the company communicates this externally. Due to the number of deceptive claims in marketing, it is difficult for companies to convey the truthfulness of their claims. Consumers are becoming increasingly skeptical of companies claims, which in turn can be a barrier for green consumption. In this study it was found that young adult consumers are concerned for the environment, however, finding it difficult to know how to act on that concern. Specifically, when speaking about credibility, it was difficult for individuals to know where to place their trust because of the amount of information. The discussions also indicated that because of the large amount of information available, some participants avoided looking for additional information. This could be due to value-belief-norm theory, where consumers can limit cognitive dissonance through not finding out the environmental

impact of their purchases. This study found, as in previous studies, that one of the important elements of green consumer behavior and green marketing is information. Information is important in both the purchasing process and the attitude-behavior-gap. Consumers need information to be as well rounded as possible and clearly highlight the impact of their purchasing decisions, for them to act in an environmentally friendly way.

As previously stated, the focus groups were shown a digital portfolio of three different types of ad images. One was clearly functional and gave them information, one was clearly trying to give emotional benefits from nature-imagery and one had a bit of both elements. There were several factors contributing to the consumers' views on the credibility of the ads. For the functional ads' credibility was enhanced through the companies giving a source for the information, the information being in line with the consumers previous knowledge and the consumers own lifestyles already supporting the information. However, the more skeptical participants thought that highlighting one part seemed like the company was hiding something else. Omitting information is a form of greenwashing and this was something that the participants in the focus groups seemed skeptical about.

Concerning the emotional marketing images, the group participants mostly did not think that the products placed in nature gave them any information on sustainability at all. However, they did not have a negative response to the ads, just a neutral stance on the images and what they were trying to convey. The groups seemed to understand the company's intentions of giving feelings of closeness to nature and well-being but did not seem affected by the images. It also did little to impact their view on sustainability of the company and did not give the company more credibility on being green, especially compared to the other companies.

According to prior research, a combination of both functional and emotional green marketing strategies, are beneficial when trying to reach consumers with both higher and lower environmental concern. This was also found to be true when examining the results of this thesis. The focus groups were mostly positive towards the ads with both emotional nature-imagery but also seemed to authentically reflect the product origins.

This study indicates that for companies to achieve higher credibility through their green marketing, it would be beneficial to have both information and emotional aspects. In this study it was found that combining both information in the form of functional green marketing and an emotional component could be the most beneficial way to appeal to young adults. This type of marketing clearly gave the participants feelings of well-being, while still giving them context about the product. If there is information of the product this might limit the risk of the attitude-behavior-gap, by giving consumers the opportunity to have information on the impacts of their behavior avoiding green reservations.

## **6.2 Discussion**

This study has focused on how consumers perceive green marketing, and what type of green marketing they deem more credible. Through focus group discussions, the aim was to bring out the thoughts and feelings of the young adults participating in the study. The information gathered is complex and its complexities are reflected in the previous research as well. Previous environmental knowledge, concern, and lifestyles have an impact on how credible consumers find green marketing. However, it seems that young adults themselves do not always know what they perceive as credible, and which companies they perceive as greener than others. It is important for consumers to be aware of their actions, but it is not always easy for them to achieve.

Green brand attributes provide value for green consumers (Chen, 2009), however this study finds that it is not easy to convey these green attributes in a credible way. Previous studies have shown that consumers are skeptical towards both too much information and too little. This study also found that it is difficult to determine how exactly companies can convey their sustainability message in a credible way. Direct functional information gave way to ask more questions and the impression of the company hiding something else. Implicit and subtle messaging was mostly deemed as insufficient information to judge the sustainability of the company. At the same time consumers are unable to process and judge all the information available.

This study has made it clear that sustainability is a tricky thing to master, both for consumers and companies. Consumers are often skeptical of companies attempts of persuasion and companies need to build trust to succeed in their messaging. Perhaps a further implication of this study is that the source of information needs to be reconsidered and companies need to find a third party to relay information on greener practices. Since this study found that consumers are skeptical of both too little information and too much, companies need to find what their middle ground is, and how to communicate that in the best way.

This study mostly confirms previous studies on green consumer behavior and the difficulties of green marketing. When comparing the empirical evidence to the theoretical references the conclusions are not surprising. There is certainly much more to be discovered on green consumer behavior and green marketing and many ways of approaching the subject. If companies can manage to add credibility to their green marketing, maybe consumers can have a clearer view of their impact and in turn make more sustainable consumption choices.

### **6.3 Managerial implications**

Based on the findings of this study some managerial implications are to be considered. Greenwashing can negatively impact how consumers view brands and it should be avoided to gain trust. Green trust is important for green companies to differentiate themselves in the market (Chen & Chang, 2013). To build trust both greenwashing, green consumer confusion and green perceived risk should be avoided (Chen & Chang, 2013). These findings are supported in this study. Companies should avoid creating confusion, omitting information and having their green marketing out of context for the products they are selling. Making the information too complicated or too difficult to access and process might make it easier for consumers to ignore the effects of their consumption habits and therefore add to the attitude-behavior gap. Information should also be versatile, so that the consumers do not perceive that the company is omitting information, or not contain any information at all, which gives no context for consumers. Looking at the results,

it is evident that young adults are skeptical towards green marketing and information from companies in general. Companies can appeal to young adults and credibly convey greener practices. This is no easy or straightforward task, and considerations must be made to what type of consumer group is targeted and to which degree this group is concerned with the environment. As stated by Matthes, et al. (2014) and according to this study, the best way to reach the different levels of environmentally concerned consumers it would be beneficial to have both functional and emotional appeals.

When shaping a green marketing strategy, it is important to know what type of consumer the product is meant for. Prior research has shown that consumers with higher environmental concern are usually more positive and less skeptical towards these types of ads. In this study there was some indication to the consumers who were more concerned being overall more positive towards the functional ad. They also found that their prior knowledge, purchasing habits and that the company gave a source for the information added to the credibility of its claims. However, even if the green marketing is deemed credible, there might still be barriers for consumers to translate attitudes into action. Especially for consumers that express a lower concern for the environment or preparedness to act more environmentally friendly, there are several factors that could come in the way of a greener purchase. This study found evidence of what Johnstone and Tan (2015) called “it’s too hard to be green”. Focus group participants expressed that they felt that being green takes a lot of effort. This might be one barrier that makes it more difficult to turn green purchase intentions into action. Looking at the results, it is evident that young adults are skeptical towards green ads. They both want information, but not all are willing to look for it themselves. Therefore companies should include it in their marketing if they want to stand out through their green attributes. As suggested by Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) it might be beneficial for companies to choose a shade of green, to determine in which category they want to market themselves since it is found in prior studies as well as this study, consumers with higher environmental concern and lower environmental concern might require different strategies.

## 6.4 Limitations

There are multiple limitations to be considered in this thesis. The limitations will be discussed to point out which parts could be enhanced for future research. This study was conducted as a qualitative interview with focus groups. There are several benefits and risks associated with this type of study, as discussed in chapter 3.4. A qualitative method gave the opportunity for discussion and expanding on the participants' thoughts, however, a different type of interview, or even a quantitative method could have been considered. A quantitative study could have given more data, however less depth to the study. Especially the psychological factors relating to the attitude-behavior-gap, might have been difficult to decipher from quantitative data. A clearer delimitation could have enabled a better execution of the interview guide, giving the groups the opportunity to give more precise answers on the different topics.

In this study the method for interviews was a focus group method. This method comes with some limitations. The first limitation being the difficulty to find suitable participants. The focus group participants all met the criteria of age and language that were set as a guideline. They were all also somewhat interested and had prior knowledge in green issues. However, due to the difficulty of finding individuals willing to participate and find the time to participate in the discussions, the participants were quite few. It was also difficult to ensure a more balanced male female ration because of the small number of individuals willing to participate. In addition, since the study only had nine participants the sample is quite small, and it would require further research to find a broader understanding of the findings. At the time of writing this thesis the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing and due to tougher restrictions at the time of the second interview and some of the participants living in another city, one of the interviews was conducted online and one in person. This could contribute to the way the subjects were discussed, and therefore also influence the findings. In the case of the interview conducted via Zoom, it was difficult to create a conversation, instead of individuals replying to questions individually one at a time. Another limitation is that the study's empirical sample is a relatively homogenous group all from similar backgrounds. There was also no definition on how interested in sustainability the group participants should be, or

how their environmental concern could be measured. A lot of the previous research discusses the differences between highly concerned consumers and low concern consumers, even if this literature is mentioned in the theoretical framework, the criterion for these different groups is not examined further in this sample.

The interviews were conducted in English. This was done to both enable an easier process when analyzing the interviews, as well as since the interviewees were a mix of Swedish speaking and Finnish speaking individuals. The Finnish speaking individuals would not have been able to participate in Swedish interviews and this would have made it even more difficult to find all Swedish speaking participants. However, since neither group was able to speak in their native language, this might have influenced the flow and the views expressed in the focus group discussions. As established in the method chapter, it is difficult to be a moderator in interviews. In both interviews there was difficulty creating a flowing discussion. This might have been affected by both the moderator and that the participants were not speaking their native language.

Another limitation, which is often the case in qualitative research, is to aim for objectivity in the analysis. This was of course the goal, but since the interview analysis requires interpretation, it is impossible to conduct the analysis totally independent of personal factors. I tried to remain as true to the participants views as possible, and the aim was of course to stay objective. Due to the delimitations it was however also impossible to consider all the information from the interviews, and some topics were chosen to better match the theoretical framework. It is, however, important to note that my own personal thoughts about the subject could have influenced the findings in this study.

## **6.5 Future research**

Since green consumer behavior is a complex subject there are many different options for further research.

Through this study it was found that young adult consumers have a hard time viewing companies' marketing as credible. There is a lot of conflicting information on sustainability and green issues, from many different sources. This could be



researched further, which sources consumers prefer, do they want companies to give information or do they prefer governments, influencers or research papers perhaps. One aspect brought up when showing the focus groups marketing materials from social media was the issue of source. There were some who expressed there were certain influencers they trusted. One possible future research could be the effects on companies versus influencers credibility on sustainability.

This study could also be further developed or tested on a different focus group and on a larger scale, to gather information representing another sample. The issue of low- versus high environmental concern in consumers is also an interesting issue that could be explored more in depth in a green marketing setting, there is some research on it already but since sustainability is a subject gaining more and more attention, it might be an issue worth expanding on. The purchasing process by Young et al. (2009) could also be applied to this type of study.

## 7 Swedish Summary – Svensk sammanfattning

### Konsumenters uppfattning om trovärdighet av grön marknadsföring

#### Inledning

Hållbarhet har blivit allt viktigare i dagens värld. Befolkningstillväxt, fattigdom, hälsorelaterade problem, urbanisering, skador på ekosystem, överförbrukning av naturresurser och klimatförändring är bara några av problemen som drabbar världen idag. FN har tagit fram olika utvecklingsmål för att åtgärda de olika problemen och för att få både länder och företag att agera innan det är för sent (Belz & Peattie, 2012).

Den uppmärksamhet hållbarhet har fått under senaste åren, har lett till att konsumenter kräver mer och mer av företagen. Företag tvingas integrera hållbarhetsåtgärder i sin verksamhet samt utveckla hur de kommunicerar hållbarhet till konsumenterna.

Grön marknadsföring är en del av hållbarhetsmarknadsföring. Traditionell marknadsföring fokuserar på att uppfylla konsumenternas behov medan hållbarhetsmarknadsföring vill uppfylla dessa behov men också ta hänsyn till sociala och ekologiska faktorer som berör företags verksamhet (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 29). Grön marknadsföring kan förekomma i många olika former, men oftast handlar det om att företaget presenterar hur de är miljömässigt ansvarsfulla. Detta kan göras antingen genom att visa hur de är kopplade till miljön, miljövänlig livsstil eller genom att presentera sig själva som miljömässigt ansvarsfulla (Banerjee, et al., 1995). Gröntvätt är ett problem inom grön marknadsföring (Szabo & Webster, 2020). Problemet syns hos konsumenterna som skepticism mot grön marknadsföring allmänt (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Konsumenterna har olika uppfattningar om tillförlitligheten av grön marknadsföring, och konsumenternas handlingar kan inte alltid förutspås på basen av deras gröna värderingar. Ett stort problem inom grön konsumtion är attityd-och-beteendegapet, där konsumenters attityder till hållbarhet inte är i linje med deras konsumtionsvanor (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Det här arbetet fokuserar på hur unga vuxna ser på grön

konsumtion och hur det påverkar trovärdigheten av grön marknadsföring. Detta kommer undersökas genom att se hur unga vuxna konsumenter ser på sina egna konsumtionsvanor och hur trovärdig de ser företagens gröna marknadsföring.

### **Syfte och forskningsfrågor**

I den här avhandlingen studeras unga konsumenters gröna konsumtion, reaktioner på grön marknadsföring och trovärdigheten hos två vanliga gröna marknadsföringsstrategier. Följande forskningsfrågor ska hjälpa till att leda undersökningen och strukturen av arbetet.

- Vad är grön marknadsföring och hur påverkar den grön konsumtion?
- Vilken typ av grön konsumtion är vanlig bland unga vuxna och hur reagerar de på olika typer av grön marknadsföring?
- Hur kan företag forma sin gröna marknadsföring för att uppnå trovärdighet hos unga vuxna konsumenter?

### **Metod och datainsamling**

Avhandlingens fokus ligger i unga vuxnas konsumtionsvanor, samt hur de ser på en viss typ av grön marknadsföring. För att undersöka detta var det lämpligt att använda en kvalitativ studie med fokusgruppintervjuer. Intervjun innehöll även en portfolio med exempel på olika typer av grön marknadsföring. En fokusgruppintervju ger en djupare insikt i olika fenomen och kan lyfta fram både tankar och känslor från olika människor (Guthrie, 2010). Datainsamlingen för studien gjordes med hjälp av två fokusgruppintervjuer med fyra och fem deltagare, i åldrarna 22–30. Deltagarna uppfyllde kraven – de tillhörde unga vuxna med ett intresse för grön konsumtion och de hade en tillräckligt bra nivå på sin engelska för att delta i diskussionen.

En intervjuguide skapades för att se till att båda intervjuerna hade samma struktur. Innan själva intervjuerna utfördes en pilotintervju med två personer. Detta gjordes

för att testa ifall frågorna var tydliga och följde en logisk ordning. Den första intervjun utfördes som ett möte hos moderatorn, den andra via Zoom. Koronavirusläget i Finland under intervjuprocessen orsakade att intervjutillfällena såg olika ut. Intervjuerna spelades in och transkriberades efter intervjutillfällena.

## **Redogörelse för undersökningen**

Intervjuguiden hade två delar, den första delen bestod av frågor om deltagarnas egna konsumtionsvanor och tankar kring grön konsumtion. Den andra delen bestod av en portfolio av bilder, som var uppdelade i tre olika delar beroende på vilket tema de skulle representera. Bilderna var plockade från Instagram, från tre olika företag. Alla tre teman hade fyra bilder från ett av företagen. Alla bilderna var från finska företag som marknadsförde hållbara livsmedelsprodukter. De första bilderna representerade en funktionell typ av grön marknadsföring där produkternas hållbara egenskaper presenterades i form av fakta om företagets produkter, paketering eller varumärke. Bilderna i nästa del av portfolion tillhörde en mer emotionell typ av grön marknadsföring. Bilderna var från naturen från ställen som såg ut som odlingsmarken för produkterna. På det sättet gav det en emotionell koppling till naturen men också lite information om hur produkterna kommer till. Den tredje gruppen av bilder visade företagets färdigpaketerade produkter ute i naturen. I dessa bilder låg fokus på de emotionella fördelarna företaget ville förmedla via den gröna marknadsföringen, där ingen funktionell information kunde samlas från att enbart se bilderna.

Intervjuerna analyserades genom att med hjälp av den teoretiska referensramen identifiera olika teman i diskussionerna. De teman som identifierades från materialet var: oro för miljöfrågor, trovärdighet och allmänt om reaktionerna till portfolion. Deltagarna i båda fokusgrupperna uttryckte en oro för miljön. I den första fokusgruppen verkade det ändå finnas en något mer positiv attityd till att söka information och anpassa köpbeteendet efter gröna värderingar. I båda fokusgrupperna uttryckte deltagarna att det ibland kändes som att det fanns för mycket information och att det ibland var svårt att veta vad som var trovärdigt. Trots många likheter mellan de två intervjuerna, fanns det också några olikheter. När man jämför hur de olika grupperna reagerade på marknadsföringsbilderna, finns det små

skillnader. I huvudsak var de dock för det mesta positivt inställda till kombinationen av både den emotionella och den funktionella marknadsföringen. Den marknadsföring som var enbart funktionell, ansågs vara lite för hård, eftersom den tydligt uttryckte att om man konsumerar andra produkter än deras, är det dåligt för miljön. Bilderna som fokuserade endast på emotionella aspekter från naturen, ansågs berätta väldigt lite om hållbarheten av produkterna eller företaget.

## **Resultat**

Genom att analysera fokusgruppintervjuerna, är det tydligt att trovärdighet också är ett problem för unga vuxna när de försöker konsumera grönt. Detta kan förklaras med att gröntvätt är vanligt i marknadsföring, vilket ökar skepticism från konsumenterna mot företagen (Chen & Chang, 2013). Det finns dock skillnader i hur konsumenterna ser på grön marknadsföring beroende på tidigare kunskap och deras egna gröna värderingar. Ju mer kunskap konsumenterna har om miljön, desto mer påverkas deras oro för miljön (Heo & Muralidharan, 2019). Inom fokusgrupperna uttrycktes också att en ökad kunskap ledde till en ökad oro för miljön. Det krävs dock ofta mycket tid och energi av konsumenterna när de samlar och bearbetar all information som finns från företagen. Det finns även bevis på att den tid och energi som krävs, är ett hinder för grön konsumtion bland konsumenterna (Young et al., 2009). Utifrån diskussionerna i fokusgrupperna anser de flesta deltagare att det finns så mycket information från så många olika håll att det är svårt att få en uppfattning om vilken information som är trovärdig och relevant inför ett köpbeslut.

En annan svårighet som ofta lyfts fram i litteraturen om grön konsumtion är attityd- och beteendegapet. Attityd- och beteendegapet uppstår när en konsument värderingar och attityder kring konsumtion och deras faktiska konsumtionsbeteende är i konflikt och inte återspeglas i varandra (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Det finns bevis på attityd- och beteendegapet även i fokusgruppintervjuerna. När människor känner att deras tankar och handlingar inte är enhetliga, strävar de efter att avlägsna gapet mellan dessa (Festinger, 1957). I fokusgrupperna kom det fram att deltagarna ibland undvek att samla information som kunde få dem att må dåligt över deras köpbeslut. Genom att inte ha all information behöver de inte tänka på alla gröna faktorerna när

de tar konsumtionsbeslut. Då är det även lätt att bortse från konsekvenserna av sina handlingar, vilket också hänger ihop med VBN-teori eller Value-belief-norm-theory. VBN-teori handlar om att konsumenten är medveten om konsekvenserna av sina handlingar, antingen på industri eller individuell nivå (Stern, 2000). Men ifall konsumenterna inte tar reda på vilka konsekvenserna av deras handlingar är, är det lättare att ignorera dessa och konsumera på ett sätt som inte är lika bra för miljön (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

Svårigheterna som kommer fram när deltagarna beskriver sina egna konsumtionsvanor, återspeglas också när de reagerar på de olika typerna av grön marknadsföring i bildportfolion. Deltagarna i båda grupperna var skeptiska mot den gröna marknadsföringen, dock var fokusgrupp 2 (FG2) något mer skeptisk än fokusgrupp 1 (FG1). En annan skillnad mellan grupperna var också att FG1 verkade något mer bekymrade över miljön, även om FG2 också uttryckte ett bekymmer. Enligt Magnier och Schoormans (2015), är det möjligt att konsumenter som är mindre bekymrade över miljön, är mer sannolikt skeptiska till miljömässiga uttalanden från företag. Enligt Hartmann and Apaolaza- Ibáñez (2008) är det de konsumenterna som har en högre nivå av bekymmer över miljön, som anser att marknadsföring som baserar sig på funktionella påståenden är mer trovärdiga. Det var även i FG1 som deltagarna var mer positivt inställda till de mer tydligt funktionella bilderna. I FG2 var de skeptiska till att den gröna marknadsföringen bara tog upp en aspekt om varför företagets produkt var bättre för miljön, medan de inte alls tog upp andra viktiga aspekter. Det fick deltagarna att känna att företaget kanske lämnade bort viktig information, och bara visade upp den som kunde gynna företagets gröna varumärke. Att lämna bort information är även ett kännetecken för gröntvätt (Carlson, et al., 1993).

Den emotionella marknadsföringsstrategin fick också delad respons från fokusgrupperna. Det verkade som att deltagarna förstod att företaget ville ge dem angenäma känslor kopplade till naturen. Genom att inse vad företaget var ute efter, upplevde deltagarna inte en känsla av att företaget skulle vara grönare än nåt av de andra. Det väcktes även reaktioner på att förpackningarna låg ute i naturen, och flera deltagare sa att de tyckte att det såg ut som att de hade lämnat skräp efter sig i naturen. Att försöka väcka en känsla av naturen genom bilder kan också anses vara gröntvätt (Parguel, et al., 2015), men deltagarna i fokusgrupperna verkade inte direkt

vara skeptiska till att företaget var grönt, men bilderna gav inte riktigt dem någon information om företaget alls. Deltagarna kände att det bara var fina bilder på Instagram i marknadsföringssyfte.

På bilderna där man kunde se att företaget ville förmedla känslor via naturen, men också ge information om hur och var varorna var framställda, var reaktionerna ganska lika i båda fokusgrupperna. Bilderna fick deltagarna att tänka på naturen och sommaren, men även på att råvarorna till produkterna var inhemska. Matthes, et al., (2014) har kommit fram till att en kombination av emotionella och funktionella vädjanden är bra för att nå konsumenter med både lägre och högre nivåer av miljömässig oro. Dock, visade deras undersökning att den emotionella marknadsföringen hade en större positiv inverkan än den funktionella.

Enligt den här studien, är det viktigt för företag som vill uppnå trovärdighet och positiva attityder hos konsumenter att ge information om produkterna, men att också ge emotionella fördelar. Företag måste bygga upp ett grön förtroende genom att undvika både gröntvätt, grön förvirring och uppfattningen av gröna risker (Chen & Chang, 2013). Det visar sig också att det är viktigt att den information som presenteras är tillräckligt mångsidig och inte fokuserar för mycket på en aspekt, så att konsumenterna inte får en känsla av att företaget vill dölja någon annan information. För att förebygga attityd- och beteendegapet hos konsumenter är det viktigt att ge tillförlitlig information, som inte förvirrar eller verkar allt för svårtillgänglig. Det är viktigt att inte bara försöka visa emotionella fördelar för gröna konsumenter, utan också visa information om företagets gröna handlingar.

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Figure 1:

Young, W., Hwang, K., McDonald, S. & Oates, C. J. (2009). Sustainable consumption: Green consumer behaviour when purchasing products. *Sustainable development (Bradford, West Yorkshire, England)*, 18(1), p. 28

Figure 2:

Gold & Green, Goldandgreen\_suomi, Instagram, retrieved on 2021-03-03 from [https://www.instagram.com/goldandgreen\\_suomi/](https://www.instagram.com/goldandgreen_suomi/)

Figure 3:

Beanit, beanitsuomi, Instagram, retrieved on 2021-03-03 from <https://www.instagram.com/beanitsuomi/>

Figure 4:

Foodin, foodin, Instagram, retrieved on 2021-03-03 from <https://www.instagram.com/foodin/>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Focus group interview guide

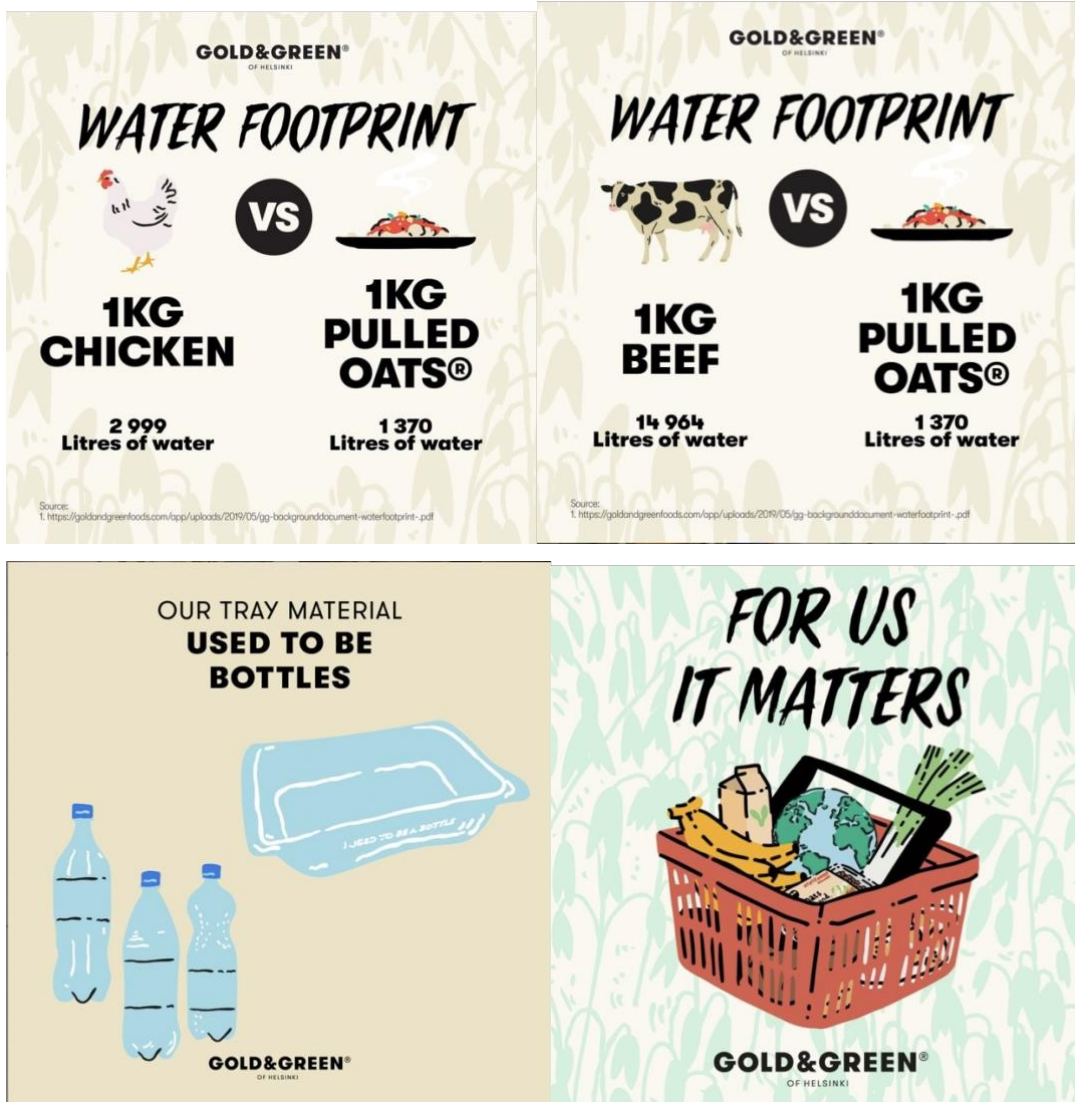
Brief introduction to subject and the conversation:

- Research subject & agenda
- Recording session and why
- Assuring anonymity of participants
- Format of focus group; one speaks at a time, amount of time for interview & everyone's views are important

1. Do you feel that you are concerned for the environment?
2. Do you think you have knowledge in green issues or issues about the environment? (Where do you acquire knowledge?)
3. Do you have any green values? What are they?
4. (Do you get these values from yourself or from others? Do you feel pressure to behave in a certain way?)
5. Do you see yourself as a green consumer? (why/why not)?
6. Do you research the sustainability of a company before you purchase the products?
7. How do you determine the information as credible?

(Extra questions if needed: Does the prior research depend on the product category? Do images on social media or advertisements impact your attitudes about a company, if so, how? Are you skeptical about the information?)

8. In addition to green criteria, which other issues would make you buy/not buy a product? (Price, time for research, design, quality, availability...)
9. Do you feel that your purchasing decisions always reflect your green values?
10. What might influence you in if you buy the product again or not?
11. Do you ever feel guilt after buying/not buying a certain product, why/why not?



**Gold & Green**

1. What do you think of these ad images?
2. Do these images have an effect your green values?
3. How do you feel about the brand and products based on these ads?
4. Is this information sufficient for you to make a decision about a purchase?  
Would you strive for more information?





## Beanit

- What do you think of these ad images?
- Do these images effect your green values?
- How do you feel about the brand and products based on these ads?
- Is this information sufficient for you to make a decision about a purchase?  
Would you strive for more information?



## Foodin

- What do you think of these ad images?
- Do these images have an effect your green values?
- How do you feel about the brand and products based on these ads?
- Is this information sufficient for you to make a decision about a purchase?
- Would you strive for more information?