

“IT’S GONNA BE A GIVEN TO HAVE ORGANIC COTTON IN A DRESS”:

A multimodal analysis of the green marketing of leading fast fashion brands on Twitter

Master’s Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Pikamuotibrändit hyödyntävät markkinoinnissaan laajasti sosiaalista mediaa. Tutkimukseni kohde Twitter, joka tunnetaan nykyisin nimellä X, on yksi käytetyimmistä sosiaalisen median alustoista. H&M ja Zara ovat pikamuotijättejä, joilla on yhteensä miljoonia seuraajia ja joiden markkinointi vaikuttaa merkittävästi kuluttajien ostopäätöksiin.</p> <p>Pikamuotiteollisuudella on haitallisia vaikutuksia ympäristöön ja sosiaalisiin kysymyksiin, kuten ilmaston lämpenemiseen ja huonoihin työoloihin. Tämän tutkielman painopiste on pikamuotibrändien vihreän markkinoinnin käytännöissä ja niiden tavoitteissa näyttäytyä kestävinä toimijoina. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa nostetaan esiin merkityksiä, joita voidaan pitää myyminen edistämistarkoituksessa epäeettisinä, ja pyritään siten myötävaikuttamaan markkinoinnin eettisten käytäntöjen ja ohjeistusten kehittämiseen.</p> <p>Johtavat pikamuotibrändit H&M ja Zara käyttävät twiitatuissa mainosvideoissaan merkitysten luomisen keinoina kielellisiä ja semioottisia resursseja. Semioottisten resurssien, kuten kielen, kuvien ja äänien, avulla nämä brändit pyrkivät vaikuttamaan yleisöön lisätäkseen myyntiä ja esiintyäkseen ympäristöystävällisinä ja sosiaalisesti kestävinä. Analyysi kielenkäytöstä sekä muista semioottisista resursseista perustuu monimodaalisen diskurssianalyysin periaatteisiin.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että H&M ja Zara ovat molemmat sitoutuneet ekologiseen kestävyYTEEN Twitter-markkinoinnissaan ja hyödyntävät semioottisia keinoja ympäristövastuunsa korostamiseksi. Ympäristöystävälliset tuotemallistot ovat yleisin teema näiden brändien vihreäksi markkinoinniksi tulkittavissa Twitter-videoissa. Muita teemoja ovat tuotteissa käytettyjen luonnollisten ja kestävien materiaalien korostaminen, vanhojen tai käytettyjen tekstiilien kierrätykseen kannustaminen sekä kestävään kehitykseen ja ympäristönsuojeluun liittyviin kampanjoihin osallistumisesta viestiminen.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a relatively new form of communication, which has attracted a great deal of research interest. The original and fundamental purpose of social media is to share user-generated content and engage in interaction that would be otherwise improbable (Knoll 2016). However, marketers have also entered various social media platforms in order to reach wider audiences and influence them in a new way (Chu, Chen, and Sung 2016). Recent research suggests that marketing and advertising in social media can be more effective compared to conventional promotional channels such as television advertising (Voorveld and van Noort 2014).

In consideration of marketing, social media is an important channel for the dialogue occurring between brands and consumers. Consumer-brand communication is crucial for companies when establishing and maintaining a strong brand identity in order to encourage repeated purchases (Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch 2011). Furthermore, Grönroos (1994) notes that in order to meet their economic goals and make profit, brands must first attract the customer and then proceed to build the relationship. Relationship marketing, a marketing term used by Grönroos (1994), is developed through communication between companies and customers.

In accordance with present-day businesses' wide use of social media, fast fashion brands are marketed all over social media, including the Twitter platform, currently known as X. Twitter, or X, accounts of fast fashion brands such as H&M (2019) and Zara (2019) have millions of followers combined, and due to their vast audiences and amount of influence, it is relevant to study the communication and the means of meaning-making of these successful brands. Further, by drawing attention to the means of meaning-making and attempts of influencing audiences, consumers can become more aware of how these means affect their purchase decisions.

The aim of the present study is to examine the language use and other semiotic resources related to social media marketing of fast fashion brands. Semiotic resources are the means through which brands present themselves as environmentally or socially sustainable and aim to convince audiences to purchase their products. Many consumers are persuaded through semiotic resources to buy fast fashion brands' products even though the production processes have alarming effects including social and environmental impacts (Freise and Seuring 2015; Byun and Sternquist 2011). Since the fast fashion industry contributes to current environmental

issues such as global warming, as well as to social issues including poor working conditions, the social media marketing of fast fashion brands on Twitter, i.e. X, is a timely topic of research.

The data consist of video tweets that may, in some cases, include audio material. As the research aims to make conclusions about meaning-making through these semiotic resources, or semiotic modes, a theoretical framework considering language, images and audio must be applied. Kress (2010: 5) explains that social semiotics is a field of linguistics that focuses on studying the different forms of meaning-making, such as gestures, music, and images, as one unified whole. Further, semiotic modes represent a social relation between the producer, the receiver and the object of representation (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 42), and therefore they play an integral part in human communication.

Marketers can benefit from the results of the study, as they gain knowledge about the use of semiotic resources in marketing as well as advertising from a linguistic perspective, which is a topic that has not been studied extensively to this day. In addition, they may use this knowledge to develop guidelines for more useful and perhaps more ethical promotional practices. Furthermore, ethical practices can be used to marketers' advantage. For example, many companies, including fast fashion retailers, are increasingly pressured and consequently more eager to implement ethical practices (e.g. Niinimäki 2015; Bowen 2014: 3). They can announce their ethicalness in public, functioning as a technique to effectively appeal to an audience of conscious consumers.

In the present study, both marketing and advertising are discussed even though the present approach centres on the marketing perspective. The distinction between marketing and advertising is that advertising is paid promotion and a component of the marketing communications mix (Armstrong et al. 2016: 394). Marketing, on the other hand, deals comprehensively with establishing and sustaining customer relations (Armstrong et al. 2016: 33). However, social media marketing applies multiple features of conventional advertising, and thus previous research on advertising as well as advertising discourse are relevant from the perspective of this study.

In order to analyse fast fashion brands' Twitter marketing and meaning-making on the social media platform, certain concepts as well as theoretical and analytic tools must be examined firstly. The most basic concepts relating to the present study include fast fashion, green marketing, and Twitter. The definitions of these concepts and relevant previous research

relating to them are discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Subsequently, marketing in social media platforms and on Twitter particularly is reviewed. Furthermore, in the background section, social media marketing is looked at from a discourse point of view due to the linguistic characteristics and objectives of the study.

2 FAST FASHION

Fast fashion is a branch of fashion retail that is named after its supply chain model (Zamani, Sandin, and Peters 2017: 1368), meaning that the design and production processes of garments and other fashion items are short (Doyle, Moore and Morgan 2006: 272). According to Byun and Sternquist (2011: 189), fast fashion retailers aim to gain a competitive advantage by responding quickly to the shifting fashion trends with their products and by limiting the amount of supply. Consumers are forced to act rapidly due to the uncertain atmosphere, which stems from the perception that the fast fashion merchandise is perishable and scarce (Byun and Sternquist 2011: 189–190).

As a result of the fast-changing trends, the time span of wearing an item of fast fashion is brief (Zamani et al. 2017: 1368). Birtwistle and Moore (2007: 211) observe that fast fashion retailers sell clothing that is not expected to be worn more than ten times altogether, after which it likely ends up in landfills where it occupies space and will not decompose. Additionally, the production and transport of fast fashion items are factors that burden the environment. Further, according to Zamani et al. (2017: 1369), global warming, fresh water eutrophication, and fresh water ecotoxicity are associated with fast fashion. Therefore, the environmental impacts of fast fashion are considerable.

In the context of marketing, Sheridan, Moore, and Nobbs (2006: 301) emphasise that the business structure of fast fashion demands fast marketing, meaning the ability to respond quickly to product demand as well as fast promotion and diverse forms of support. Social media is a valuable tool for facilitating the promotional and relationship-building communication of brands, as it is constantly available for use. Kontu (2015: 342) supports this argument by stating that social media has reached an integral status among fashion brands regarding connecting with consumers and offering new opportunities for innovative marketing communications. Yet, she observes that there is particularly little knowledge on marketing communications through social media in the fashion industry (Kontu 2015: 344).

A recently increased interest towards fashion marketing on social media is noticeable in research. For example, Bonilla, del Olmo Arriaga and Andreu (2019: 348–355) studied factors that contribute to audience engagement in H&M's Instagram posts and that provoke both positive and negative responses actualised through comments and likes. Among factors such as emotions, relationship, self-efficacy, sales response, and symbolism, they discovered that H&M

applies rhetorical strategies, such as scarcity, authority, and sympathy, in their Instagram marketing to a great extent. Moreover, they found that persuasion generates more engagement and comments than other marketing posts (Bonilla et al. 2019: 353).

In addition to Instagram, Twitter has gained attention in relation to social media marketing due to its unique qualities that allow marketers and consumers to engage in real-time conversation (Agresta and Bough 2011: 89). Thus, responding to consumers can be handled more rapidly and with more dedication. Moreover, since social media enables marketers to contact consumers individually by tagging or with direct personal messages, meaningful dialogue and trust between marketers and consumers can be built further (Agresta and Bough 2011: 29, 40). However, fast fashion marketers may try to benefit from the trust of consumers by the means of persuasive and deceptive claims, especially in the context of green marketing. These false and deceptive marketing attempts are referred to as greenwashing, which is discussed in the next chapter.

3 GREEN MARKETING OR GREENWASHING?

The standpoint of the present study inevitably places emphasis on recognising the difference between green marketing and greenwashing practices. Lane (2013: 20) explains that green marketing is the marketing and advertising of environmentally friendly products, services, and business practices. In contrast, greenwashing can be defined as the intention to deliberately convey information about products, services, or operating models that build businesses' environmentally friendly image, regardless of evidence that the claims are false or inaccurate (Bowen 2014: 3). For instance, 'sustainable', 'green', or 'carbon neutral' are characterisations that are used when businesses aim to reassure consumers of their environmental impacts. In fact, the products and procedures do not necessarily have improving effects on the environment at all, according to Bowen (2014: 3).

Papadas et al. (2017: 237) suggest that green marketing is to be conducted in a manner that satisfies the needs of firms, consumers and of the society through sustainable and profitable means and that is compatible with the natural environment as well as eco-systems. However, green marketing poses a challenge to the companies that promote their sustainable products or services. According to Parkman and Krause (2018: 83–84), green marketing can encourage greenwashing behaviour among rivals. Parkman and Krause (2018: 100) also state that greenwashing is prominent in situations in which one company operates in an environmentally friendly manner while their competitor does not. These tendencies encumber consumers with misleading information and make it difficult to differentiate which companies are genuinely acting upon protecting the environment.

For many fast fashion brands, greenwashing is part of their marketing strategy. Niinimäki (2015: 7) mentions two examples of greenwashing practices used in the fast fashion industry. The first example is eco-labelling fashion items or product lines when, in fact, the brand produces vast quantities of items in a short production cycle, straining the environment. Eco-labels are used for greenwashing in other industries as well (Lyon and Montgomery 2015: 237). The second example of greenwash in fast fashion is offering paper bags instead of plastic ones to customers (Niinimäki 2015: 7). In this instance, reverse greenwashing is at play, as the negative environmental effects of plastic bags are emphasised in comparison with paper bags (Lane 2013: 20). These practices are trivial due to the implicit unsustainability and unethicallity of the fast fashion business logic, Niinimäki (2015: 7) concludes. Therefore, green marketing of fast fashion is inherently greenwashing.

A new form of greenwashing has emerged in the fast fashion industry in the recent years as a counter-phenomenon to the concern that fast fashion destroys the environment (Birtwistle and Moore 2007: 211–212). Birtwistle and Moore (2007: 213) state that buyers of fast fashion are aware of how inexpensive clothing quickly becomes unwearable and has to be thrown out sooner than higher quality clothing. Currently, many fast fashion stores provide a recycling service for used and unwanted garments, the aim of which is to prevent the disposal of textiles, adding needless waste in landfills. Although the reuse, recycling, and upcycling of textiles can be beneficial from an environmental viewpoint, the issue of overconsumption is still not solved (Gould 2017). Moreover, the easy discarding of garments may lead consumers to feel indifferent about constantly buying new clothes, to ignore the number of resources that has been put into producing the items, and to ultimately up their consumption, as Gould (2017) reports.

Today's consumers valuing sustainability have a notable effect on the marketing strategies of fast fashion brands. This can be seen in the manner brands conform their values according to their target audiences and resort to greenwashing in order to increase sales (Niinimäki 2015: 7). Furthermore, Freise and Seuring (2015: 1) state that companies benefit from driving environmental matters in order to differentiate themselves from competitors, the pressure of which can perform as another incentive for greenwash. In actuality, striving toward increased profits and business differentiation are not the only drivers of greenwashing. Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 234–235) provide a comprehensive list of the driving factors, including external factors, such as vague regulations and weak political pressure, and internal factors, such as low visibility and size of the company.

In addition, Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 236–239) distinguish evident forms of greenwashing. According to them, a particularly interesting variety of greenwashing to researchers is the selective disclosure of firms. Selective disclosure may occur, for instance, in companies' sustainability reports. By providing information on environmental impacts and improvements on environment-related practices, companies aim to construct a sustainable and eco-friendly image. Since these reports can only offer information to a limited degree, audiences cannot verify whether the reports are correct and whether they cover all relevant issues in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 237) note that companies and brands can express empty green claims and policies as a part of their greenwashing strategy. Companies often fail to fulfil these claims, promises, or policies but

they may succeed in appealing to stakeholders whose interests align with those of the company, for example, investors and shareholders (Lyon and Montgomery 2015: 237).

Labels and certifications are convenient for companies and brands to convey their environmental, social, and ethical considerations to consumers. With regard to fashion brands, Niinimäki (2015: 7) states that standardised and internationally recognised eco-labels are granted by independent organisations and therefore their labels can be viewed as objective and reliable, whereas a company's own environmental statements do not necessarily hold any value. Carrying eco-labels, such as the EU Ecolabel, requires fulfilling certain criteria to obtain the permission to use the label in connection with a product. Thus, an independent eco-label indicates that a product or service has proven to be environmentally friendly on external metrics. However, according to Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 237), eco-labels may be exploited by dishonest brands, and, contrary to common perception, even corporate environmental certification may become a form of greenwashing.

Greenwashing may also be latent in the manner companies engage in partnerships with NGOs, i.e. non-governmental organisations, as well as in government-sponsored voluntary programmes (Lyon and Montgomery 2015: 237–238). Implementing new practices with the help of NGOs or voluntary programmes does not necessarily lead to environmental improvements in businesses, Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 238) report. Previous research on public voluntary programmes suggests that their effectiveness depends on the stringency of standards and their capacity to enforce penalties against members who fail to meet the set requirements. In addition, studies have demonstrated that environmental NGOs may not agree on the legitimacy of co-opted NGO endorsements and partnerships, and they essentially view such partnerships as greenwashing (Lyon and Montgomery 2015: 237).

Misleading discourse and imagery are forms of greenwash closely related to the subject of the current study. Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 238) confirm that social media plays an important part when discussing discourse as well as visuals and symbols in relation to greenwashing. In regard to corporate environmental discourse, Mason and Mason (2012) studied the discourses and rhetorical strategies applied in corporate environmental reports. They found that businesses publish these reports with the intention to shape audiences' opinions and beliefs about their corporate environmental performance and to avoid accusations of greenwash. In order to achieve this aim, they apply a hybrid genre of discourse at micro and macro levels. The macrostructural levels contain exclusively the topics that companies want to report and

promote. Further, at the micro levels, companies harness independent sources and metrics that reflect corporate environmental compliance (Mason and Mason 2012: 485–499). Mason and Mason (2012: 499) define corporate environmental compliance as measures that comply with environmental regulatory standards.

Considering how greenwash occurs in imagery, Lyon and Montgomery (2015: 238) note that a great deal of previous research relating to misleading imagery in green marketing focuses on product labels and the means to guide consumers to detect social and environmental relationships and values behind the products. They also remark that numerous luxury brands use biodiversity symbols as their logos. In addition, Chen (2016) investigated the imagery of green marketing attempts in Chinese automobile commercials. He demonstrates that the car commercials apply natural imagery to present a utopian world in which appealing natural scenery introduces added value and significance to driving. Further, green consumerism is promoted in the commercials by repeatedly referencing, for example, energy efficiency and environment-friendliness (Chen 2016: 12–13).

As a communicational device, social media can serve as an excellent tool for branding (Cromity 2012: 31), as well as for facilitating dialogue construction and the building of long-lasting relationships between consumers and brands (Wallace et al. 2011: 423). On the other hand, environmental groups and ethically minded consumers may obstruct greenwash by naming the companies and organisations engaging in green washing practices. Evidently, social media is crucial in enhancing the power to protest unethical conventions and perhaps in ending greenwashing practices altogether (Lyon and Montgomery 2015: 239). Due to these significant arguments, the conveyed meanings and values of brands and their social media use are relevant focuses of research.

The next section addresses social media and particularly Twitter as a social media platform. After these definitions, I move onto social media marketing on Twitter carried out by businesses.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND TWITTER MARKETING

Social media is a present-day phenomenon that has obtained several purposes in people's lives. According to Cromity (2012: 23), social media covers media which is dedicated to social interaction. Along with the popularity of social media among private users, marketers have noticed the benefits that can be achieved from the type of two-way relationships and communication that social media favours (Chu, Chen, and Sung 2016: 423). Chu et al. (2016: 422) note that marketers have therefore followed the masses to various social media platforms. This study focuses on Twitter, currently known as X. Since the research data was gathered at a time when the social media platform X was called Twitter, I refer to Twitter in this study.

In previous research concerning social media and Twitter, the terms 'marketing' and 'advertising' are often used synonymously. Traditionally, marketing is viewed to consist of selling and advertising. However, at present, marketing can be referred to as an umbrella term for all types of communication that engages customers, fulfils customer needs, and supports creating and maintaining customer relations (Armstrong et al. 2016: 33). Furthermore, Armstrong et al. (2016: 394) specify advertising to be a form of paid promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identifiable sponsor. Because social media is mostly free to use, the social media marketing of fast fashion brands does not fit into this definition of advertising (Armstrong et al. 2016: 394). However, in addition to advertising, Armstrong et al. (2016: 394–395) suggest that marketing communications contain four other dimensions: sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct and digital marketing, the last of which includes social media marketing.

Armstrong et al. (2016: 394) refer to direct and digital marketing as the communication targeted at specific consumers and groups of customers with the intention to respond quickly and build lasting customer relationships. Regarding the efficient communication for which businesses strive, Twitter, or X, is the best available platform for answering rapidly to customer inquiries and other attempts of contact (Agresta and Bough 2011: 89). In addition, Armstrong et al. (2016: 396) claim that some marketers depend almost completely on digital and social media even though the marketing communications mix contains a total of five different promotion tools presented above (Armstrong et al. 2016: 394–395). The significance and the extent of digital marketing are evident because of the radical development of digital technology and the resultant changes in communication (Armstrong et al. 2016: 395).

From the point of view of marketers, social media is a tool for building and maintaining connections as well as brand loyalty. Cromity (2012: 29) states that businesses can promote their products and services through different forms that occur in social media. Such forms include text, images, audio, and video. Cromity (2012: 30) also emphasises the importance of these social forms from the perspective of branding visibility. Moreover, according to Chu et al. (2016: 421), marketers aim to spark their audience's interest and boost their sales figures through social media. As Grönroos (1994) mentions, building relationships with customers is a vital factor when businesses strive for profit. Consequently, brands typically create their own social media profiles with the objective of introducing themselves to consumers and establishing long-lasting relationships (Chu et al. 2016: 422).

In addition to social media offering an advantage to marketers, it also poses potential threats to the public image of brands (Nitins and Burgess 2014: 293). Due to its dialogic culture, social media exposes brands to social media users' public opinions and criticism concerning the brands' products, services, and processes. An uninterrupted flow of renegotiation is therefore affecting the meanings and qualities associated with brands (Nitins and Burgess 2014: 294). However, Nitins and Burgess (2014: 294) note that businesses should not avoid social media altogether because the conversations and information exchange between social media users will continue to occur regardless of the brands' participation. Moreover, Nitins and Burgess (2014: 294) claim that, by interacting with consumers, businesses and brands can acquire more control over their reputation. Therefore, it is more beneficial for businesses to take part in the conversations taking place in social media rather than let others define their public image through this type of new media (Nitins and Burgess 2014: 294–295).

The services of social media are provided by social media platforms. Every platform has its special qualities that distinguish it from other social media. Twitter is a platform based on the principles of microblogging (Lahuerta-Otero et al. 2018: 562). Microblogging is referred to as a series of messages, i.e. tweets, each of which were originally limited to 140 characters (Chu et al. 2016: 423). Later, the number of characters was altered to 280 to allow more expression in a single tweet (Twitter 2023). Chu et al. (2016: 423) specify that engagement on Twitter is closely related to consuming and spreading information, and this makes it stand out from other social media sites. Furthermore, Twitter users are exposed to different types of information as well as advertising, regardless whether they follow other users or not, according to Lahuerta-Otero, Cordero-Gutiérrez and De la Prieta-Pintado (2018: 563).

For years, Twitter has been regarded as the preeminent microblogging service of social media (Lahuerta-Otero et al. 2018: 562). Ever since its launch in 2006 (Kwon and Sung 2011: 5), brands have migrated to Twitter with an aim to attract large groups of consumers and to communicate with them in real time in a more personal fashion in comparison with conventional means of communication (Read et al. 2019: 1916). In addition to instant and personal messaging, a key factor for marketers on Twitter is ‘searchable talk’, enabled by hashtags (Zappavigna 2012: 95). These main features seem most relevant from a marketing perspective.

Lahuerta-Otero et al. (2018: 574) continue that Twitter can be used to improve brand visibility without costs, creating a multitude of benefits for companies and organisations of any size. To gain visibility and popularity, brands should focus on conveying as much information as possible in a tweet. Hyperlinks are not recommended to be included in brand tweets because inclusion of a hyperlink reduces valuable space that could be reserved for information, according to Lahuerta-Otero et al. (2018: 573–574). Further, on Twitter, retweets generate more visibility than likes, opposed to other social media platforms where liking is the norm for increasing the number of views per post (Lahuerta-Otero et al. 2018: 574).

Within the scope of Twitter marketing, a study by Kwon and Sung (2011: 14) accentuates that Twitter is an important platform for marketers, as it allows brands to establish and maintain relationships with both current and potential customers. Knoll (2016: 279–280) explains that the possibility of immediate response, which social media allows, supports the creation of dialogue between companies and consumers. Through the dialogue, marketers intend to humanise brands and bring them to life, as Kwon and Sung mention (2011: 14). Consumers may thus be influenced to believe that brands are actual relationship partners rather than mere passive objects. For instance, brands often encourage their audience to act by applying phrases such as “join us” and “sign up” in their social media pages (Kwon and Sung 2011: 13).

In their study, Read et al. (2019: 1924–1925) discovered that consumer engagement arises from brand customer service and brand intimacy on Twitter. Further, first-rate customer service and disclosing brand insights on Twitter are related to consumers’ experience of feeling engaged with a brand. Also, due to the open nature of Twitter, brand followers can base their brand perceptions on public customer service efforts. Moreover, in comparison to brands with fewer followers, popular brands with large numbers of followers attract stronger consumer engagement and are perceived to offer better customer service. The perceived level of customer

service affects followers' readiness to co-promote the brand. Read et al. (2019: 1926) propose that the responsiveness of popular brands causes followers to feel closer to them, correlating with increased traffic flow on these Twitter accounts.

As discussed, social media and brand marketing are closely linked. Also, relationship marketing, which is often carried out through various channels of social media, is considered to be necessary for businesses in terms of reaching their financial goals and making sufficient profit and thus is vital for the survival of businesses (Grönroos 1994: 9). Twitter is currently the number one platform for marketers from the viewpoint of customer relationship establishment and management (Kwon and Sung 2011: 14). Therefore, Twitter is a particularly interesting channel of social media to examine from the viewpoint of the research purposes specified in this study.

In addition, language, discourse, and the use of semiotic resources are a relevant part of social media marketing. The next chapter addresses essential theories and research findings related to discourse and semiotic resources in the social media sector of digital marketing.

5 DISCOURSE AND MULTIMODALITY

In this chapter, the relations between discourse and verbal, visual, and auditory meanings are examined from relevant perspectives regarding the present study. First, the field of social semiotics and is discussed. Second, multimodal discourse and semiotic resources in online marketing along with relevant theories and research is looked at from relevant viewpoints.

5.1 Social semiotics

The present study focuses on the meanings that brands create with the objective to persuade consumers to buy their products or services. Therefore, an examination of the features of digital discourse and applied semiotic resources of brands' social media marketing is needed. Furthermore, in terms of linguistic theories, the perspective of social semiotics is useful when studying meanings in digital marketing, as the online world is highly multimodal. Social semiotics is a field of linguistics that focuses on studying how semiotic resources, such as the grammar of a language, are used to construct meaning (Halliday 1978: 192, as quoted by van Leeuwen 2005: 3). Semiotic resources can be both physiological and technological actions and artefacts present in social situations (van Leeuwen 2005: 3). The theories of social semiotics are discussed subsequent to discourse on Twitter as well as its affordances and social dynamics.

Twitter discourse has special characteristics which shape the forms of Twitter marketing. Zappavigna (2012: 1) introduces the concept of 'searchable talk' which refers to the hashtags used to label the topics of microposts. Townsend and Wallace (2016: 12) explain that the use of hashtags implies that the users of platforms like Twitter are keen to contribute to a community or debate. Furthermore, Zappavigna (2012: 1) characterises searchable talk on Twitter as an invitation to bond over certain values. Twitter also contains a functionality which allows users to see which hashtags or conversation topics are trending at a specific time (Ahmed, Bath and Demartini 2018: 4).

With reference to the communication-related effects of digital and social media, Kress (2010: 5–6) mentions the developments that have particularly resulted from globalisation. He specifies that the changes are apparent in the dissemination of messages, in semiotic production, and in representation. By this, Kress (2010: 6) implies that electronic devices have become more popular than technologies of print as channels of communication and that writing, for instance, has lost some of its significance as a semiotic mode after the rise of images as tools of communication. According to Kress (2010: 2), multimodal social semiotics is useful to apply

when studying the emerged multimodal communicational means because the approach focuses on meaning in all semiotic modes, i.e. appearances of meaning, which include language, images, gesture, typography, graphics, icons, and sound, to mention but a few (Siefkes 2015: 114).

Cook (2001: 31) specifies that online advertising is more fragmented compared to the conventional channels of advertising, such as television and print, as the internet offers a medium of communication towards specific consumer groups that have particular demands. For example, Peirson-Smith and Evans (2017) studied the eco language used by sustainable fashion brands. They define eco language as a lexicon most often associated with environmental and social sustainability, including words such as green, ethical, fair trade, organic, and recycled (Peirson-Smith and Evans 2017: 4–6). They found out that the average consumer does not necessarily understand the meaning of these words. Therefore, it is concluded that sustainability-related vocabulary does not help consumers make informed decisions in the fashion sector (Peirson-Smith and Evans 2017: 21).

As mentioned, multimodality is a fundamental feature that accompanies digital content on the internet as well as in social media. Multimodal social semiotics centres on the actual making of signs, according to Kress (2010: 13). To be able to analyse digital signs, one must take a broader look at the theory of representation and communication in relation to multimodal meaning and semiotic modes (Kress 2010: 13). Moreover, van Leeuwen (2005: 69) describes social semiotics as a field of linguistics that deals with multimodal and interdisciplinary methods and theories. In the next subchapter, multimodality and its analytic tools are discussed in further detail.

5.2 Multimodal discourse and semiotic modes

Multimodality means the use of combinations of various semiotic modes, i.e. sign systems (van Leeuwen 2005: 281). For example, websites may contain text, images, and audio. These qualities cause web pages to be multimodal. When receivers consume different types of content, they are rarely mindful of the distinctions between semiotic modes (Stöckl 2004: 16). However, Stöckl (2004: 16–17) explains that modes can be differentiated from one another according to their semiotic properties, cognitive orientation, and semantic potential. Further, he claims that language is a less ambiguous semiotic mode compared to images, for instance.

Stöckl (2004: 25) brings forth an important issue related to multimodality and meaning. He considers that, due to the interconnectedness of multimodal aspects in texts, different modes are affected by common semiotic principles. Therefore, as Siefkes (2015: 114–115) notes, meanings created between modes are an essential focus for multimodality research. Van Leeuwen (2005: 179) presents four aspects in which various semiotic resources are combined and which appear in multimodal texts as well as communicative events. The first dimension is rhythm, which is relevant, for example, in common interaction, film, and music. Composition, the second aspect, is related to spatial organisation in images or three-dimensional displays. As the third dimension, van Leeuwen (2005: 179) mentions information linking, i.e. the connections between informational items. The fourth aspect, dialogue, aims to explain the relationships of semiotic modes with forms of dialogic exchanges and musical interaction.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 41–43) emphasise that semiotic modes are required to have certain representational and communicational qualities for them to operate as a complete system of communication. They explain the three metafunctions of semiotic modes. The ideational metafunction refers to the requirement of a semiotic mode to represent objects as well as their relations outside the representational system (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 42). For instance, objects may be related to each other by being parts of the same process. Similarly, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 42), the interpersonal metafunction deals with the notion that semiotic modes represent a social relation between the producer, the receiver and the object of representation. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 43) lastly define the textual metafunction as the capacity of semiotic modes to form texts, i.e. combinations of signs coherent with each other and with the context.

As van Leeuwen (2005: 179) states, semiotic modes are never separate entities. Further, intermodal relations are at play when the semantic and stylistic features of a semiotic mode as well as its expression are distinctly influenced by one or more other modes (Siefkes 2015: 115). Even though language is one of the most researched semiotic resources in the field of linguistics and social semiotics, Siefkes (2015: 113–114) articulates the significance of other semiotic resources to meaning-making. As previously concluded, meanings as well as intention can be formed and accomplished by utilising semiotic modes in a coherent and effective way. In the next chapter, I describe the details of the aims and the execution of the study.

6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Having discussed in the previous chapters the relevant concepts, phenomena, and theories relating to the topic of this research, I move on to specify the goals of the study, the gathered and analysed data as well as the methodological framework applied in the analysis of fast fashion brands' green marketing tweets and their use of semiotic resources. Next, the research aims, the research question, data selection and collection, and methods of analysis are presented.

6.1 Aims and research question

The present study is an opportunity to expand linguistic knowledge with respect to both fast fashion brands and Twitter marketing. The fundamental objective of the present study is to bring awareness to fast fashion brands' stakeholders of the influence of social media marketing, which is low among average consumers and social media users, according to Voorveld and van Noort (2014). To be more specific, the focus is on green marketing practices of the leading fast fashion brands and how the brands portray themselves as ecologically sustainable operators. In addition, the study aims to highlight the meanings that may be considered promotionally unethical and to provide marketers an incentive to develop ethical marketing practices and guidelines.

Out of the most successful social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, Twitter was chosen as the source of data due to its distinct significance to the marketers of present day. Therefore, the study focuses on the following research question:

How do fast fashion brands present ecological sustainability through language and other semiotic resources in their green marketing Twitter videos?

This study draws on the theories and methodologies of the fields of social semiotics, multimodal studies, social media studies, and marketing and communication studies. As previous research shows, scholars have concentrated on examining consumers' buying behaviour regarding fast fashion and the general marketing strategies of fast fashion brands (Sheridan et al. 2006), which provide valuable information for the present study. Moreover, research on Twitter marketing has been recently conducted and often from the relationship marketing point of view (Kwon and Sung 2011). A linguistic aspect, however, has not been central to marketing research regarding fast fashion.

6.2 Selection and collection of data

The two leading retailers in the fast fashion industry are H&M and Zara (Byun and Sternquist 2012; Zamani et al. 2017). Aaker (2011: 69–76) argues that Zara and H&M are pioneers of fast fashion and that they have changed the fashion retail landscape irrevocably. Zara's competitive edge is the integrated design and supply chain as well as the cheap manufacturing of items (Aaker 2011: 75), which allow the brand to respond to new trends faster than its competitors and make profit. H&M offers fast fashion at even lower prices than Zara and is therefore able to sell fashion items very quickly, resulting in high growth rate (Aaker 2011: 76). Based on these arguments, H&M and Zara are seen as the most significant fast fashion retailers of the 2010s. Thus, they are the targets of this research.

The present study is qualitative and mainly draws from the theories of social semiotics. In accordance with the semiotic modes in social media as well as on Twitter, the videos, which include writing, images, and audio, tweeted by fast fashion brands are studied. The research data was gathered at a time when the X social media platform was called Twitter. Therefore, in this study, I refer to Twitter despite the new platform name X. Since the focus is on the tweets and not on the entire Twitter pages of H&M and Zara, features such as the layout or the use of colour on the Twitter pages themselves are not analysed. Rather, the videos in the sample tweets are examined closely because video includes multiple semiotic modes at a time. Thus, the most relevant research method applied in this study is multimodal discourse analysis.

Tweets gathered from the official Twitter pages of H&M and Zara are the data of the study. The Twitter profiles were investigated from 1 December 2018 to 30 November 2019 in order to collect an adequate number of video tweets containing green marketing. Altogether, 45 videos were associated with green marketing during the mentioned period with 35 videos from H&M and 10 videos from Zara. The green marketing of these brands was primarily recognised from their verbal content. Furthermore, a considerable factor in the green marketing tweets is the imagery which concentrates on nature, plants, and the colour green. All the green marketing tweets that included video material are accounted for in the analysis.

The selected data exclude the replies the fast fashion brands send to those who have contacted them on Twitter, as they do not include video. Still, the replies can be viewed as an integral part of relationship marketing. However, the scope of the study is limited, and thus it is reasonable to narrow the focus specifically to original video tweets. Therefore, depending on whether fast

fashion brands reply through social media to their potential and existing customers, the study leaves an opening for further research on the reply practices of fast fashion brands on Twitter as well as on other social media sites. In addition, the dialogue between brands and customers and the means of meaning-making in dialogue is another approach for research in relation to brands' Twitter marketing.

To analyse video material while considering written and spoken language as well as imagery, gestures, and music, examples of the data were multimodally transcribed, i.e. divided into tables by frames, shots, text, and soundtrack in chronological order. This style of data representation enables viewing each semiotic mode of a video both separately and simultaneously, revealing the various layers of meaning-making. The data representation used in this study is depicted in more detail in the subchapter addressing method of analysis. Prior to that, I discuss the ethical issues related to collecting data from Twitter. The ethical issues are part of what type of tweets can be used in research and how the data can be gathered and processed.

6.2.1 Ethical issues in collecting data from Twitter

When collecting data from social media for research purposes, ethical issues must also be taken into consideration. Ahmed et al. (2018: 79–107) introduce several of these challenges. In terms of ethics in social media research, it is debated whether social media is private or public. Ahmed et al. (2018: 86) emphasise that online spaces, such as Twitter and Facebook, are perceived differently in terms of privacy. Facebook is often considered a private platform, whereas Twitter is mostly used for public messaging. However, individual users may not be aware of the public nature of Twitter as a social media platform, and thus researchers should be discreet and not intrude on the privacy of individuals (Ahmed et al. 2018: 86). Regarding this ethical issue, in the present study, the research focus is on specific brands without violating Twitter users' personal privacy.

In addition, another ethical and privacy issue in relation to social media data collection relates to informed consent. Ahmed et al. (2018: 86–87) note that obtaining informed consent from Twitter users can be difficult, especially when the dataset is large. Users could be approached about the consent via tweets or Twitter's direct messages, which are private, without a guarantee of reply (Ahmed et al. 2018: 87). Research data can however be collected on the basis of Twitter Terms of Service (Twitter 2018), which each Twitter user is required to accept in order to use the online service.

You agree that this license includes the right for Twitter to provide, promote, and improve the Services and to make Content submitted to or through the Services available to other companies, organizations or individuals for the syndication, broadcast, distribution, promotion or publication of such Content on other media and services, subject to our terms and conditions for such Content use (Twitter 2018).

Referring to the Terms of Service is acceptable unless research data is gathered by scraping tweets (Ahmed et al. 2018: 88). Web scraping using automated processes is a form of gathering data that is prohibited in Twitter Terms of Service (Twitter 2018). Therefore, all the data analysed in this study have been collected manually.

Digital and social media marketing is multimodal according to the background literature and direct observations. Furthermore, data that include marketing or advertising tweets require certain analytical methods and processes. The methods are introduced next.

6.3 Methods of analysis

As discussed earlier, advertising is included in the marketing communications mix (Armstrong et al. 2016: 394–395). Even though the tweets of the two leading fast fashion brands are not advertising in terms of its definition according to Armstrong et al. (2016: 394), green marketing tweets have multiple characteristics similar to conventional advertising. For instance, they promote fast fashion items and persuade audiences to buy them by appealing to sustainability and eco-friendliness. Cook (2009: 3) states that the discourse of advertising makes use of the combination of language, sound, and pictures. For these reasons, qualitative research on the multimodal modes of green marketing tweets is relevant.

A qualitative analytical framework by Pauwels (2011: 576–580) is the framework I applied in the current study since the framework answers to the requirements of the present study and conforms to the applied research method. Pauwels (2011: 576–580) provides a detailed description of his framework for analysing multimodal web phenomena, which can also be considered to include the phenomena appearing in social media, although his principal focus is on websites and web pages. The framework suggests an analytical method which starts from recognising immediately prominent features and performing straightforward measurements. Then, the analytical framework proceeds to compiling interpretations of the constituting elements and their relations (Pauwels 2011: 575).

Following Pauwels's (2011: 576) guidelines, I first preserved initial impressions and reactions relating to the examined material, meaning a rough categorisation according to the "look and

feel” of the sample and recording emotive reactions originating from it. Subsequently, I carried out a thorough inventory of prominent features and topics discovered in the sample. Also, the quantifying and categorising of features and attributes was used to discover which features and topics are absent, i.e. to perform a negative analysis. According to Pauwels (2011: 576), both present and absent topics form a cultural reality together and can therefore be equally significant.

The third stage of my analysis was analysing content and formal choices. Two sub-phases of this stage, distinguished by Pauwels (2011: 578–580), were applied: intra-modal analysis and the analysis of cross-modal interplay, the latter of which in particular corresponds to the remarks of other linguistic researchers regarding multimodality (e.g. Siefkes 2015: 115). As Pauwels (2011: 578–580) explains, in the intra-modal analysis elements such as verbal, typographic, visual representational, and sonic signifiers were identified. In comparison, in the cross-modal analysis I focused on the meanings constructed by the interplay of two or more elements (Pauwels 2011: 580).

Pauwels (2011: 580–583) introduces further stages for his analytical framework but I determined them to be irrelevant for the purposes of this research. The fourth, fifth and sixth stages concentrate on the speaker and audience perspectives, organisation of information, spatial priming strategies, and identifying the senders and sources of messages as well as the technological platforms and their implications. Foremost, this study does not cover audience perspective. Moreover, these stages are not applicable, for example, when considering information organisation and structural and navigational options on Twitter, as tweets cannot exceed 280 characters and Twitter pages do not differ from each other structurally. Also, technological factors, such as browsers, programming languages, and database structures, are beyond the scope of the present study.

In order to analyse short videos embedded in tweets from a multimodal perspective, the present data requires multimodal transcription. Baldry and Thibault (2006: 46–51) have constructed a model for micro-level multimodal transcription with regard to film texts. The model is based on dividing the clip into phases, subphases, and shots, which together form the underlying meanings of the material (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 49). Finally, according to Baldry and Thibault (2006: 49), the transcription process allows the reconstruction of the boundaries between phases and subphases, following the identification of different phase types by comparing the texts to one another. The model provides a solution for discovering how various

semiotic devices are used in the marketing tweets of fast fashion brands, as the embedded video material can contain multiple semiotic modes simultaneously.

Taking into account written and spoken words, visuals, gestures, and sound, I transcribed instances of the data multimodally. The videos that were selected for transcription were identified as representative examples of the initial grouping formed in the first and second stages of the analysis method provided by Pauwels (2011: 578–580). By video transcription, I refer to breaking the examined videos down into tables, which are organized chronologically by frames, shots, text, and soundtrack, as Baldry and Thibault (2006: 46–51) instruct in their framework. This method of presenting data in tables allows reading the analysis in written form, while studying each aspect of the video individually and, at the same time, uncovering the different levels of meaning-making.

The transcription tables are divided into five columns. Each investigated video frame is labelled with a time, i.e. the seconds that have passed since the start of the video. The table column ‘Frame’ includes screen shots of video frames. Following the frame column, the column titled ‘Shot’ contains descriptions of frames’ visual content in written form. In the ‘Text’ column, any written text appearing in a frame is presented. A dash (-) signifies that no written text is included in the frame placed on the same line as the dash. Lastly, the column ‘Soundtrack’ contains the sounds of the video frame by frame. If an arrow is displayed in the soundtrack column, the soundtrack repeats the previous written description.

Applying Pauwels’s and Baldry and Thibault’s frameworks offers the means to analyse the data in view of the research question regarding how fast fashion brands use language and other semiotic resources in their tweeted green marketing videos. The next chapter presents the detailed qualitative multimodal analysis of the data where I also demonstrate the findings of the study and provide examples to support my arguments.

7 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented and examined in relation to the theoretical background using the methods expressed above. The data analysis focuses on the semiotic resources that are applied most often in terms of the green marketing of H&M and Zara on Twitter. An initial finding indicated that the number of tweets between these two brands differed significantly. Altogether, H&M posted 896 tweets and Zara 573 tweets during the time frame between 1 December 2018 and 30 November 2019. In total, green marketing was discovered in 35 video tweets by H&M, i.e. close to 4 per cent of all H&M tweets, and in 10 video tweets by Zara, i.e. 1.7 per cent of all Zara tweets. Therefore, it is evident that H&M was more active, and perhaps even more aggressive, on Twitter than its competitor as regards green marketing as well as marketing in general.

Table 1. The number of all marketing tweets and green marketing tweets including video by H&M and Zara between 1 December 2018 and 30 November 2019.

	H&M tweets in total	H&M green marketing tweets including video (%)	Zara tweets in total	Zara green marketing tweets including video (%)
December 2018	79	1 (1.3)	35	1 (2.9)
January 2019	73	5 (6.8)	30	0 (0.0)
February 2019	79	1 (1.3)	55	0 (0.0)
March 2019	86	2 (2.3)	56	2 (3.6)
April 2019	97	17 (17.5)	59	1 (1.7)
May 2019	74	1 (1.4)	57	2 (3.5)
June 2019	56	0 (0.0)	21	0 (0.0)
July 2019	57	0 (0.0)	49	1 (2.0)
August 2019	85	4 (4.7)	57	3 (5.3)
September 2019	61	2 (3.3)	46	0 (0.0)
October 2019	86	1 (1.2)	59	0 (0.0)
November 2019	63	1 (1.6)	49	0 (0.0)
Total	896	35 (3.9)	573	10 (1.7)

To analyse the data in more detail, the tweets were separated into smaller groups with common features and attributes, as Pauwels (2011: 576) suggests. The data were divided into four categories of themes according to the content of the collected tweets. It was instantly noted that the data mainly consists of tweets that focus on the promotion of eco-friendly products, natural and sustainable materials, recycling programmes, and participation in environment-centred and sustainability movements, such as the Earth Hour and Climate Action. One tweet could include one or two themes, and thus some of the 45 video tweets studied are counted twice in Table 2 below, resulting in a total of 53 tweets.

Table 2. The number of video tweets categorised into groups by common content features.

Group	H&M green marketing tweets including video	Zara green marketing tweets including video
Eco-friendly product lines	20	4
Natural and sustainable materials	4	2
Recycling programmes	10	6
Environment-centred and sustainability movements	5	2

From the four main groups, the largest data category was eco-friendly product lines. Grouping the data according to the four themes described helps discover the similarities and differences in H&M and Zara's Twitter marketing in contribution to addressing the research question, i.e. how fast fashion brands present ecological sustainability through language and other semiotic resources in their green marketing video tweets. The differences and similarities are discussed in the following subchapters that present the analysis on the four green marketing tweet categories. After the full analysis, I summarise the findings regarding the green marketing efforts of the two leading fast fashion brands in terms of various semiotic resources, including text, speech, sound, and visuals.

7.1 Eco-friendly product lines

Advertising sustainable clothing lines is a significant marketing strategy for fast fashion brands in the current consumer sphere due to the rising anxiety in relation to environmental and social issues prevalent in the fashion industry. In relation to this, Zara has its own all-inclusive green marketing campaign, Join Life, offering clothing for women, men, and children. In turn, H&M has launched a product line named Conscious and developed it further with the clothing line

Conscious Exclusive. The Conscious Exclusive was marketed on Twitter in April 2019 when a peak in the number of H&M's green marketing tweets occurred. The main focus group for the Conscious Exclusive campaign is from young to middle-aged women in view of the women portrayed in the campaign's promotional content.

Overall, the language features applied in the green marketing tweets of the eco-friendly clothing lines of H&M and Zara repeat the findings of Peirson-Smith and Evans (2017). Words, such as 'green', 'recycled', and 'ecological', are dominant throughout the data. In Figures 1 and 2 that represent examples of the data, words of this category are 'sustainable', 'upcycled', and 'recovered'. As a further discovery, the data shows instances of exceptionally powerful language use in regard to building positive associations between fast fashion and the environment with mentions of sustainability strategies and post-consumer clothing collections, for example. By this, H&M and Zara highlight their willingness to look for and be part of solutions that protect the environment.

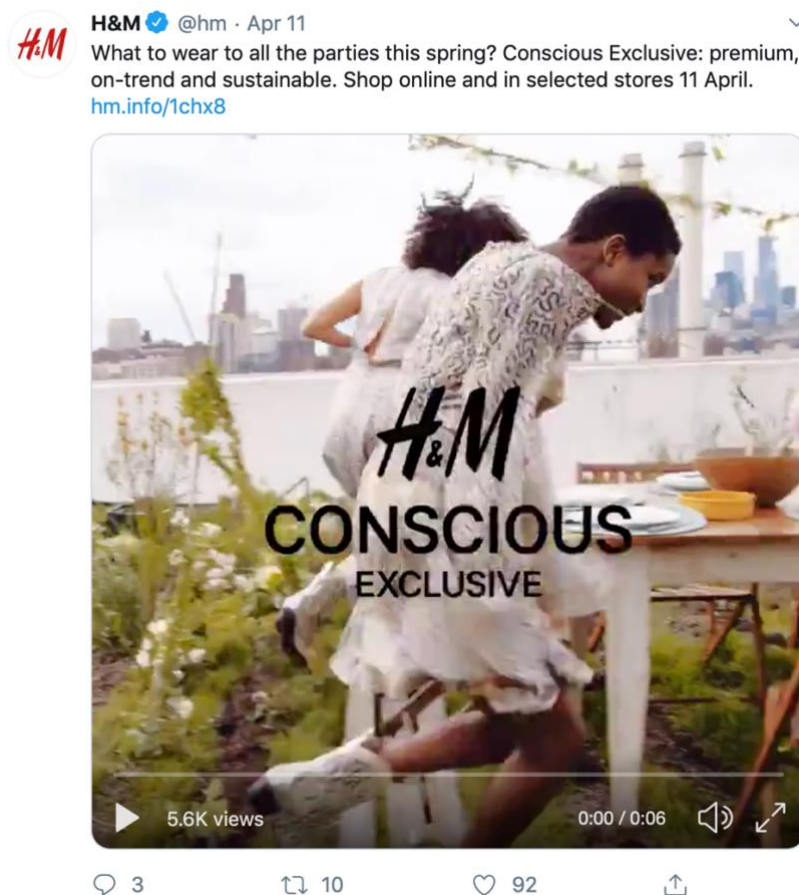


Figure 1.

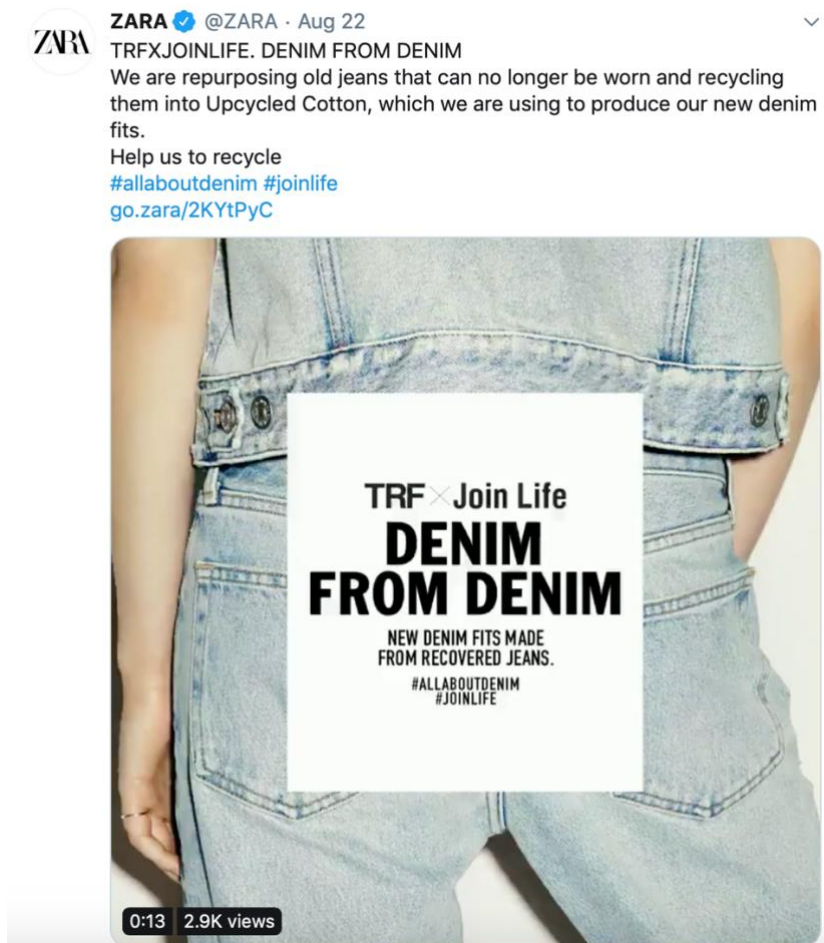


Figure 2.


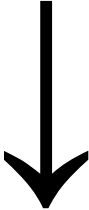
Furthermore, in the studied green marketing tweets, using the imperative form aims to convey instructions, commands, requests, or suggestions in a direct, clear, and concise manner. The imperative indicates an objective to directly influence the audience to act upon commands. Examples of these are “Shop online” (see Figure 1) and “Help us to recycle” (see Figure 2). The purpose is indeed to increase traffic on the brands’ websites and to sell more items in online stores, following the general objectives of social media marketing. Ultimately, the two fast fashion brands strive to influence consumers to such an extent that brand site visits and shopping become a habit.

The tables below showcase in detail how the fast fashion retailers apply visual and auditory elements, in this instance, without the aid of verbal content (see Tables 3 and 4). They aim to construct nature-related visualisations taking place in modern urban environments. The common feature of the videos is the opposition of modern cities and the surrounding plants and flowers. On one hand, this contrast between man-made structures and natural greenery can symbolise vitality, endurance, and the power of nature. On the other hand, the videos may

pursue to convey that humans and nature can coexist in a symbiosis and without difficulty when human consumption is environmentally sustainable. However, as presented in Table 3, H&M deliberately separates nature and a metropolitan environment, as the camera focuses on the natural aspects of a flower garden, leaving a city in the background.

Table 3.


Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:03		Eye-level long shot of two women standing side by side.	-	Laid back music with prominent bass.
0:04		Close-up shot of a white flower.	-	Female voice starts to sing a melody with no words.
0:04		Low angle close-up shot of a woman laughing.	-	↓



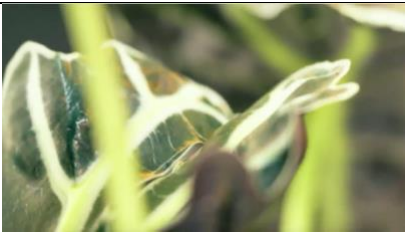
0:05		Medium eye-level shot of a woman leaning on prop, smiling and looking into the camera.	-	
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In addition to the emphasis on nature rather than the urban surrounding, H&M's campaign video portrays young women who are depicted as active and happy, wearing the H&M's Conscious Exclusive clothes. Furthermore, the white flower and other plants have an important function in signifying that the two women are connected with nature and that they value it, as they perform miscellaneous tasks in the flower garden. Drawing on this depiction, young active women with a sustainable and environmentally aware mind-set are the most probable target audience for this video.

A similar marketing video by Zara also involves an active individual as well as the element of colour and contrast (Table 4). A young man is introduced as the protagonist in the beginning of the video. Proceeding to the middle of the video, the man is sitting on a chair reading. In the next shot, he is standing and holding a bag as if ready to leave. The fast-paced scenes and movements create an impression of energy and vitality. In terms of the use of colour, dark greens are highlighted against the bright yellow background through the entire video. Other earthy colours, including brown and grey, are also present, signifying closeness to the natural environment. Further, the contrast of the grey stone floor and the living green plant is similar in comparison with the incongruity of the flower garden and the city background in H&M's Twitter video in Table 3. In light of similarities, the two videos have multiple features in common considering visual expression.

Table 4.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:17- 0:18		Medium shot of a man sitting on a chair.	-	Deep house music.

0:19		Medium side angle shot of the man sitting and reading.	-	↓
0:20– 0:21		Medium shot of the man standing with a bag on his shoulder.	-	↓
0:22– 0:23		Close-up shot of a green plant.	-	↓

Contrary to the happy-looking women in the H&M video clip, Zara's male character seems severe and even business-like. Yet, the man's gestures and movements are relaxed, similar to the smiling women. This distinction is coherent throughout the data since people performing in H&M's videos smile more often, regardless of their gender or other apparent differences. Further dissimilarities in the imagery include fewer natural elements that are replaced with the features of modern indoor living, especially furniture. In addition, examining the details of the video clip, the green plant in the Zara video is not integrated as fluently into the video compared to H&M's video. Even though plants are referenced in the shape of a shadow at 0:20–0:21, the green plant appears on the screen at 0:22, creating a seemingly forced representation of the greenness of the advertised products, as can be seen in Table 4. Still, the viewer gains broader knowledge of the clothes and shoes the man is wearing due to the comprehensive filming from head to toe, lacking in the video by H&M.

Comparing the soundtracks of the two video clips, it is interesting that H&M applies soft music and sounds, whereas Zara implements more energetic music that is deep house. This may be linked to the opposite genders of the target groups. Evidently, in H&M's promotional video, the singing female voice and other feminine sounds can be viewed to appeal to the female target audience. Moreover, the energetic music genre of deep house is compatible with the stereotypical presentation of a strong and powerful male. The similarities of the two pieces of music refer to the age of the target audiences: modern sounds that are popular among young adults affect the audience impressions of the two fast fashion brands and their promoted

clothing lines claimed to be eco-friendly and sustainable. The main purpose of the music therefore appears to be to intensify the effect of the visual imagery in appealing to the audiences' feelings and emotions.

7.2 Natural and sustainable materials


The studied fast fashion brands, H&M and Zara, mention several sustainable materials used in their products. In the green marketing tweets found in the data, H&M introduces organic cotton, Pinatex, Orange Fiber, Bloom Foam, Lyocell, and Tencel as the most sustainable materials used especially in their Conscious Collection and the Conscious Exclusive line. In turn, organic cotton, linen, jute, paper, and rope are the natural and sustainable materials used in Zara's products, including clothes, bags, and shoes. Promoting the natural and sustainable materials inherently makes use of logos in that, in order to protect the environment, the consumer must choose the products that include such materials. An overview of the data showed that H&M promotes using innovative new materials. Zara, by contrast, promotes applying more traditional materials, such as linen and jute. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether these materials are sustainable or not.

Organic cotton is the most frequently occurring natural textile material promoted both by H&M and Zara in their tweets included in the data. Organic cotton is thought to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly than regular cotton. Zara supports this argument by stating that, due to natural farming, organic cotton protects the environment, people, and biodiversity. H&M also advocates the sustainability of organic cotton. These logically appealing arguments that support the cause of organic cotton aim to influence consumers' decision-making and persuade them to buy products made from organic cotton instead of regular cotton.

Among the campaign videos included in the research data, the discussion surrounding sustainable clothing materials can also be observed. In H&M's Conscious Collection video, three women are discussing organic cotton and the future of clothing materials in the context of sustainable clothing production. The clip transcribed in Table 5 presents the women wearing naturally-hued pink and red H&M Conscious clothing items and sitting in a garden surrounded by greenery. The scene is accompanied by calm guitar music, which adds to the video's tranquil atmosphere. The movements, gestures and tone of conversation of the women are relaxed, as if they are real-life friends chatting about common everyday topics, and despite the seriousness of the matter, the women are mostly smiling. The woman in the middle talks throughout the

video about her views in relation to organic cotton. The other two women are indicating signs of attention by making eye-contact and turning their bodies towards the speaker.

Table 5.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00- 0:01		Medium shot of two women sitting down. The woman on the left is speaking.	"One day everybody's just gonna--"	Calm background music played on an electric guitar.
0:02- 0:03		The camera zooms out into a wider shot, showing a low side angle of the previous women and a third woman.	"--it's gonna be a given--" Text on screen: H&M CONSCIOUS COLLECTION BENI	↓
0:04- 0:05		Medium shot of the first two women. The woman on the left is talking, the woman on the right looks at the talking woman and smiles.	"--to have, you know, organic cotton in a dress--"	↓

In terms of speech and language use in this Conscious Collection promotion video by H&M, the woman in the middle, named Beni (see 0:02–0:03 in Table 5), speaks nonchalantly and momentarily hesitates how to communicate her thoughts. She makes a strong statement that eventually organic cotton will be the norm in terms of using cotton as a textile material. Yet, as indicated by the use of the verb ‘going to’, she refers to organic cotton as a material of the future in a manner that implies that it is not plausible to use organic cotton for all cotton clothing. The utterance shows endorsement of H&M’s operations and does not put pressure on the company to start using exclusively organic cotton sooner than later to support the conservation of the natural environment. The key impression is that the video attempts to persuade by portraying the advertised clothing items in a natural environment accompanied by speech and music that match with the notion of sustainable fashion without presenting actual promises or actions to protect the environment.



Figure 3.

The theme of natural and sustainable materials is not as common in Zara’s green marketing tweets compared to H&M. H&M tweeted about natural and sustainable materials twice as often as Zara did in the same period. Moreover, Zara does not put as much effort into promoting natural and sustainable materials or fabrics. In the sample Figure 3, a male model is portrayed in various sun-lit settings while string instruments play energetically in the background. Twice, for a short duration, the text “Summer linen” appears on screen referring to the clothes the model is wearing. The model does not speak in the video, and the video does not include a

voice-over. However, the tweet contains a written request or suggestion in imperative form that natural fabric is in season and that the audience should ‘rework’ items of natural fabric into their wardrobe.

When discussing natural and sustainable materials, in particular organic cotton, natural hues of browns, greens, blues, and even pinks are predominant in the data collected from H&M and Zara’s Twitter profiles. Furthermore, similar to the marketing of eco-friendly clothing lines, H&M and Zara apply earthy tones and nature-related visual elements in the background, including trees, flowers and other plants. In contrast, the fluorescence of neon colours is traditionally connected with extreme brightness, and therefore neon is not encountered in the green marketing tweets of the two fast fashion brands studied presently. Consequently, the data in the group of natural and sustainable materials draw on the stereotypical image and visions of what is perceived natural and sustainable.



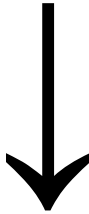
7.3 Recycling programmes

To an increasing degree, consumers are encouraged to recycle their old garments through fast fashion retailers, such as H&M and Zara. The notion of this type of circular economy is claimed to be beneficial to both consumers and retailers, as consumers can discard old and worn clothing in an ostensibly sustainable manner, while retailers gain materials for producing new products with lower costs. In addition, fast fashion retailers provide an easy solution to the issue of disposing of textiles that cannot be utilised by any other means than through the process of recycling. By demonstrating a commitment to ethical and eco-friendly practices, fast fashion brands are likely to attract and retain environmentally conscious customers and improve brand image and reputation.

Both H&M and Zara have established programmes that encourage consumers to bring textiles to their stores to be recycled. Zara has named its programme the Clothes Collecting Programme, whereas H&M urges consumers to be fashion recyclers through the company’s promotional efforts on Twitter. The majority of the tweets relating to recycling programmes were posted at the turn of the year, which is the time of unwanted Christmas gifts as well as the concept “New Year, New Me.” Therefore, the established recycling programmes of fast fashion brands could be the result of guilt gained from overindulgent consumerism. To counteract the guilt, fast fashion brands offer an easy option to recycle.

The linguistic aspects related to the textile recycling programmes of H&M and Zara are similar. Particularly often occur the three Rs for sustainability, also known as reuse, reduce, and recycle. These principles promote environmentally responsible behaviour and consumption patterns to help minimise the negative impact of human activities on the environment. The three Rs appear slightly varying in both of the leading fast fashion brands' campaign tweets, as is evident in Tables 6 and 8. For instance, H&M talks about 'reworn', 'reused', and 'recycled' clothing items. The alliteration, i.e. the occurrence of the prefix 're' in the three words, helps emphasise the message of circular economy and sustainability strategies. To add to the emphasis, the slogan is written for the most part in upper case in the analysed tweets.

Table 6.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00- 0:03		Low angle close-up shot of a woman wearing a coat and looking into the camera.	Text on screen: CLOTHES COLLECTING PROGRAMME	Fast rhythmic music without melody or chords.
0:04- 0:06		Low angle close-up shot of the woman brushing hair off her face and looking into the camera.	DONATE CLOTHES YOU NO LONGER WEAR	

0:07- 0:10		Eye-level angle medium shot of the woman taking off several layers of coats and looking into the camera.	BRING THE CLOTHES YOU NO LONGER WEAR AND GIVE THEM A NEW--	
0:11		Close-up shot of a pile of clothes.	-	
0:12- 0:13		The clothes are lifted up into the air revealing light background.	IN AID OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	
0:13		Eye-level angle close-up shot of the woman smiling and bending her head to the side.	#REUSE	



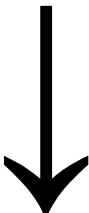
0:14		Low angle close-up shot of the woman looking into the camera.	#REDUCE	
0:15		Low angle close-up shot of the woman looking into the camera.	#RECYCLE	

Table 7 presents examples of how these videos can be constructed step by step, varying from close-up shots to mid shots without revealing the people's faces, or by focusing on a specific person throughout the video. The video by H&M transcribed in Tables 7 and 8 does not include audio but conveys its message to audiences with the aid of text and visuals. Similar to the findings relating to natural and sustainable materials, the videos include language and logical arguments to influence audiences to advance recycling practices and improve the fast fashion retailers' public image. For instance, the imperative form is used in the request "Leave your old textiles with us" to appeal to the audience to provide H&M with recyclable materials. The brand aims to reassure its audience by stating "We'll make sure they get a new life". The statement leads to assuming that H&M offers a solution to the audience's problem regarding what to do with textiles that are no longer of use to them.

Table 7.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00- 0:01		Close-up shot of green and silky fabric.	Text on screen: Leave your old textiles with us	No audio.
0:02- 0:03		Low angle close-up shot of a woman pulling off a green knit.	-	-
0:04		Low angle medium shot of a woman wearing a green shirt.	We'll make sure they get a new life	-



As depicted in Table 7, the H&M video portrays two women who are wearing a knit and a blouse. The first woman is dark-skinned and has voluminous curly hair. The second woman has light skin and long red hair. The drastic differences in the women's appearances can be considered to promote H&M as an advocate for diversity. Yet, the presentation of two women raises the question whether men are also expected to participate in the recycling of their worn clothes and old textiles. By applying Pauwels's negative analysis (2011: 576), the absence of men stresses the view that women are expected to comply with the social norm of buying fashion in large volumes in order to keep up with the current trends and, consequently, to discard clothing pieces that have gone out of style in a short time period. Thus, H&M maintains

and even reinforces the discourse according to which women should comply with the pressures relating to the beauty norms established by the fashion industry.

In the video, the colour green is dominant in the textiles that cover the screen in nearly all of the shots. In this context, green can be linked with eco-friendliness and awareness of the environment. Shades of brown are also present in the background of shots. Brown may symbolise soil from which plants grow. Further, the red hair colour of one of the women is highlighted when it is paired with green. As red and green are known to be a complementary colour pair, it can be concluded that the use of the two colours is premeditated and is intended to create a prominent effect. In addition to applying the colours green, brown, and red in the video, its written text appears on screen as white. In this instance, white is more distinguishable from the background than black or other dark colours would be. Therefore, the white text is fairly powerful in attracting attention. Moreover, the various colours used in the video can be considered earthy.

In Table 8, the slogan “Be a fashion recycler” addresses viewers who are not yet accustomed to and in the habit of recycling their old garments. The language use emphasises that being a recycler is something everyone should aspire to be since it is stated in imperative. In addition, the pragmatic act “We’ll make sure they get a new life” forms a promise to the audience that they would do a good deed by donating old clothes to the retailer because the old garments would be utilised by some means. Although the claim reinforces the notion of those donating to H&M as benefactors, the single indication for what the old garments would be used is the statement “reworn, reused, recycled” without specifying how the clothes would come to be reused or recycled. Furthermore, the instruction to “Leave your old textiles with us” is a direct appeal that invites the audience to obey. With little verbal content, H&M gives a favourable impression of its actions regarding protecting the environment.

Table 8.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:07– 0:08		Close-up shot of a green knit.	Be a fashion recycler. REWORN/ REUSED/ RECYCLED	–
0:09– 0:10		High angle shot of a woman pulling on the green knit.	Be a fashion recycler. REWORN/ REUSED/ RECYCLED	–

Even though Zara has produced a campaign similar to H&M's textile recycling, the video content for Zara's clothes collecting programme contrasts its counterpart in multiple ways. Contrary to H&M, as noted in table 9, the colours used in the Zara video do not include green, whereas earthy greys and browns as well as sky blue are used to an extent, symbolising recycling as an environmentally friendly act. Furthermore, a woman is portrayed throughout the video mostly walking and smiling. In contrast to the H&M video, the woman's face is revealed and focused on in numerous instances. In addition to the differences in the use of visual effects and colours, upbeat music is included in the video. The fast pace seems to be a central theme in the video, in a sense, reflecting the production and consumption of fast fashion clothing.

Table 9.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:16		Eye-level side angle mid shot of a woman walking.	GIVE THEM A NEW--	Fast rhythmic music without melody or chords.
0:17-0:19		The woman turns her gaze toward the camera and walks by.	--LIFE IN OUR STORES	
0:20-0:22		Low angle close-up shot of the woman laughing.	#JOINLIFE	Music stops at the end of video.

The written text in the Zara recycling campaign video, however, has several similarities with the H&M campaign discussed above. Firstly, the use of imperative is similar in the requests “Give them a new life in our stores” and “Be a fashion recycler.” The intention is to directly influence the audience to act upon these requests. Secondly, Zara indicates that consumers become healers of the environment by giving clothing items a new life, and H&M echoes the same message by assuring that the donated textiles will be given a new life. Both of the brands suggest that recycling is beneficial to the individual as a part of a global community. Further, in both videos, the text is written in white which symbolises, for example, light, goodness, and pureness. Therefore, both Zara and H&M supposedly aim to communicate that recycling is

essentially a good deed that compensates for the unethical and unsustainable impacts created from the production and excessive consumption of fast fashion.

To summarise, the analysis of the recycling programmes of the two leading fast fashion brands suggests that the key aim is to promote the benefits of circular economy of textiles to both consumers and retailers from the perspective that recycling is fundamentally a good deed and a natural phase of consumption. It is conveyed that consumers should aspire to be recyclers and give clothes a new life to compensate for the negative effects that stem from fast fashion production. However, the three Rs of sustainability prioritise reducing and reusing over recycling. In addition, the visual elements related to the recycling programmes of H&M and Zara are similar in that the brands exclusively apply colours connected to nature, including greens, greys, browns, and blues. Finally, it is noted that the imagery in textile recycling programmes is primarily feminine, signifying that women are the main focus group of influence efforts in relation to the recycling of clothes.

7.4 Participation in sustainability and environment-centred movements

Promoting sustainability and environment-centred movements in fast fashion marketing is a strategic choice. It can enhance brand reputation, appeal to conscientious consumers, and contribute to the long-term success of the fast fashion industry. H&M and Zara are active in promoting their participation in sustainability and environment-centred movements to assure consumers of their concern for the environment and the climate. In many cases, they also acknowledge the environmental issues related to the complete fashion supply chain as well as the reality that they contribute to these problems to a great extent. In pursuing to be perceived as socially and environmentally responsible, the two fast fashion brands display themselves as part of the solution and as actors that encourage others to take note of and act upon sustainability and environment-related issues.

H&M and Zara have participated in global sustainability campaigns, such as the Earth Hour. Figure 4 demonstrates how Zara announces being involved in switching off lights in their store windows for an hour on 30 March. However, it should be questioned whether switching off store window lights is a sufficient procedure compared to switching off all unnecessary lights in Zara stores, offices, and warehouses, for instance. Also, as the incentive is to save energy, the brand could on the other hand choose to promote practices that support saving energy to a greater extent than not using electricity for lighting. The priority for Zara therefore appears to


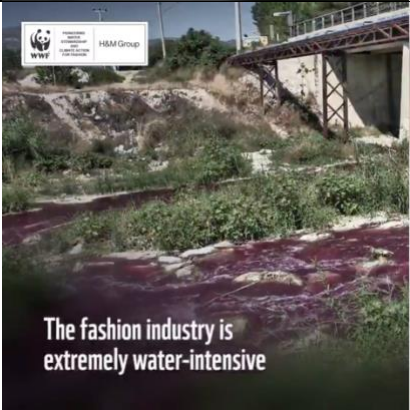
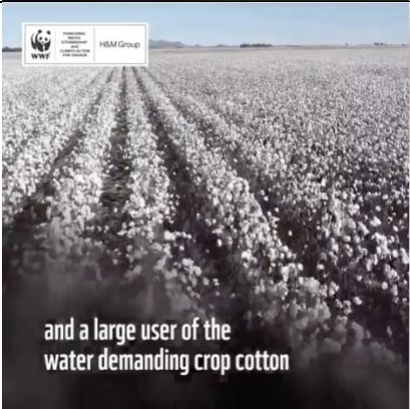

be to present itself as a fast fashion brand that participates in collective sustainable and environmentally-friendly actions rather than proactively expanding their sustainability and environment-focused efforts.



Figure 4.

Rather than taking part in a worldwide environmental movement, such as the Earth Hour, H&M took a step further in declaring their sustainable and environment-centred practices by partnering up with WWF in a collaboration project to manage and use water resources in a sustainable and responsible manner, i.e. Water Stewardship. They define ‘water stewardship’ as the act of understanding the risks that the fashion industry poses to the environment, managing water in a sustainable way, and engaging other companies and policy makers to make a change (see Appendix 6). As Niinimäki (2015) states, a company’s own environmental statements or programmes do not necessarily hold any value compared to, for example, standardised and internationally recognised eco-labels that are granted by independent organisations. Thus, by integrating WWF into the project, H&M’s object is to gain credibility in the eyes of audiences.

Table 10.

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:15- 0:19		Top shot of a waterfall.	All life needs water	High-pitched whistling sound with a quieter low sound in the background .
0:20- 0:22		High angle long shot of a polluted river.	The fashion industry is extremely water-intensive	↓
0:23- 0:28		High angle long shot of a cotton field.	and a large user of the water demanding crop cotton	↓
0:29- 0:34		Eye-level close-up shot of a person holding a glass scooping water.	Since 2011 - H&M Group is taking the lead for a change, together with WWF	Upbeat piano and strings play in major.


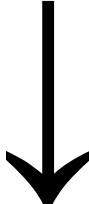
0:35– 0:36		High angle long shot of a river and fields.	With Water Stewardship we are starting to make a change	
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Table 10 indicates how companies can intentionally affect audience's views with green marketing. The above-described marketing video has two distinct parts: the former emphasizes the negative impact of the fashion industry on the environment (see until 0:28), and the latter promotes the Water Stewardship programme established to overcome the problems caused. When comparing the two parts, it is evident that the video first conveys a grim atmosphere in connection with environmental problems and then highlights the positive change the programme has started. The differences of the parts are clear in the language, imagery, and music used. The contrast created with these semiotic devices intends to convince the audience that H&M has been taking concrete steps to protect the environment for several years. Still, the improvements stated in the video are vague due to the occurrences of ambiguous words, such as 'improved', 'cleaner', and 'less'.

To summarise the analysis on fast fashion brands' participation in sustainability and environment-centred movements, H&M and Zara have implemented marketing strategies that include, *exempli gratia*, sustainability-themed events, participation in global environmental movements, and co-operation with the non-governmental organisation WWF that is particularly known for wildlife and wilderness preservation. These actions to promote sustainability and environmental awareness on behalf the fast fashion brands are categorically green marketing (Lane 2013). The language, visuals, and sounds used in the research data support this claim, as stated above. In the discussion regarding the research findings, applications and evaluation of the current study, the findings are summarised and assessed, and perspectives to potential future steps for green marketing research are contemplated.

8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate green marketing within the context of fast fashion retail on a global scale, with a specific focus on Twitter promotion strategies employed by H&M and Zara – the fast fashion retailers considered to be the leading brands in their industry on a global scale. The study had one main research question:

How do fast fashion brands present ecological sustainability through language and other semiotic resources in their green marketing Twitter videos?

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of green marketing within the fast fashion industry. Both H&M and Zara, as industry leaders, have demonstrated a commitment to ecological sustainability in their Twitter promotions. Language and semiotic modes were employed adeptly to communicate environmental responsibility, showcasing eco-friendly practices and sustainable fashion choices. These efforts align with the growing global awareness of environmental issues and the demand from consumers for more sustainable products.

8.1 Findings

When considering Twitter marketing in particular, the findings of this study indicate that the two leading fast fashion brands, the Swedish H&M and the Spanish Zara, construct their green marketing in a multifaceted way in their tweets that include video. Their approach involves not only promoting eco-friendly product lines but also emphasising the natural and sustainable materials used in their products, highlighting recycling initiatives for old and used textiles, and actively participating in sustainability and environment-centric movements. Most of them were used individually per tweet, but in a few video tweets a combination of two themes were detected.

Eco-friendly products were the most common theme when studying the green marketing video tweets of H&M and Zara. In the category of eco-friendly product lines, both brands prominently use environmentally conscious language such as ‘green’, ‘upcycled’, and ‘sustainable’ to promote their clothing lines, as the previous research by Peirson-Smith and Evans (2017) indicated. The aim of using environmentally conscious language is to create positive associations between fast fashion and sustainability, emphasising their commitment to environmental protection. Imperative verbs are used to direct and influence consumers,

encouraging them to visit brand websites and make purchases, aligning with the objectives of social media marketing.

Furthermore, H&M and Zara are highlighting their commitment to sustainability by stating that they use natural and sustainable materials like organic cotton and innovative textiles derived from eco-conscious sources. Both brands mention several sustainable materials in their products, with organic cotton being the most frequently mentioned. They both emphasize the eco-friendly attributes of organic cotton, underlining its sustainability and positive effect on the environment. Additionally, both brands use nature-inspired visual elements in their marketing materials, such as earthy tones and imagery of plants, to reinforce the idea of natural and sustainable materials.

However, some significant differences become evident when comparing how H&M and Zara approach the promotion of natural and sustainable materials in their green marketing. H&M appears to be more active in promoting a wider variety of sustainable materials, including Pinatex, Orange Fiber, Bloom Foam, Lyocell, and Tencel, especially in their Conscious Collection and Conscious Exclusive line. In contrast, Zara seems to focus more on traditional materials like linen and jute. Moreover, H&M tweets about natural and sustainable materials more frequently than Zara does, indicating a higher level of emphasis on sustainable fabrics and other clothing item components in their marketing strategy.

In the data, recycling programmes encourage consumers to contribute to circular fashion by repurposing old clothing items, reducing waste, and promoting responsible consumption. Recycling programs by H&M and Zara encourage consumers to recycle textiles by bringing them to stores. The research reveals that both brands employ similar linguistic strategies, emphasizing the three Rs (reuse, reduce, and recycle) to promote environmentally responsible behaviour. By doing so, the brands effectively communicate the central means of responsible and sustainable fashion consumption. Visual elements include earthy colours and nature-related imagery to convey eco-friendliness and sustainability.

Lastly, H&M and Zara's involvement in sustainability movements, such as Earth Hour and collaborations with environmental organizations, not only shows their dedication to broader environmental goals but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility, urging consumers to join the cause for a more sustainable future. In their participation in sustainability and environment-centred movements, H&M partners with WWF to manage water resources

sustainably, while Zara participates in events like Earth Hour. Both brands aim to position themselves as environmentally responsible, although the study suggests that Zara's efforts may focus more on appearing eco-friendly rather than making significant sustainability improvements.

Overall, the research findings accentuate the four primary themes of green marketing strategies employed by two leading fast fashion brands, H&M and Zara. The present study provides valuable insights into how these brands use language, visuals, and sounds to influence consumer perceptions and behaviour, contributing to ongoing discussions about the sustainability efforts of the fast fashion industry.

8.2 Applications

Current marketing research lacks in taking a linguistic point of view into account. The means of marketing efforts created with semiotic resources remains to be a relatively unexamined area in comparison with other marketing-related research focuses. Therefore, this study has a great deal to offer to marketers who use social media in their everyday promotional practices. For example, the results of the present study can be used to create more effective marketing campaigns. Understanding how specific linguistic and visual cues influence consumer perceptions can help fashion brands craft more compelling and authentic sustainability messages.

The study indicates how semiotic resources can be used to create content that is considered to be particularly effective in green marketing. By emphasizing the mechanisms of creating meaning and the strategies aimed at influencing consumers, the present study sheds light on the ways in which individuals can gain a deeper understanding of how these methods affect their purchasing choices. This knowledge may lead to more discerning and critical consumers who can differentiate between genuine sustainability efforts and greenwashing. However, the effect of green marketing strategies is not straightforward since audience members are guided by their personal attitudes, feelings, and experiences, among other factors.

It is essential to recognize that the green marketing strategies employed by H&M and Zara may be perceived by some as a response to societal pressure rather than genuine, long-term commitment. As a consequence of the increased knowledge concerning fast fashion brands' green marketing practices gained through the present study, fast fashion retailers could be encouraged to transform their marketing to be more ethical in terms of transparency and

authenticity. Thus, greenwashing as an example could be completely avoided in the marketing schemes of fast fashion brands. Additionally, the study highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in marketing practices within the fast fashion industry.

As Voorveld and van Noort (2014) state, consumers and social media users are not aware of the pervasiveness of social media marketing techniques. If consumers were familiar with the attempts of influence that they encounter in social media daily, they might gain the ability to reject these attempts more efficiently. Therefore, the amount of consumption would decrease, which would, in turn, mitigate the environmental and social impacts that fast fashion causes at present. On the other hand, through extensive research, brands may be encouraged to provide more accurate and detailed information about their sustainability initiatives, allowing consumers to make more informed choices. This can lead to improved trust between brands and consumers.

Finally, the application of this study can contribute to the overall wellbeing of both people and the environment. As consumers become more discerning and brands become more transparent, there is potential for a shift towards more sustainable and responsible consumption patterns. This can have a positive impact on environmental conservation and social equity, aligning with the broader goals of sustainability. As consumers opt for products and brands that genuinely prioritise ecological sustainability, there is a reduced demand for resource-intensive and environmentally harmful production practices and more incentives for the industry to create and maintain fair labour standards and reasonable supply chain practices.

In conclusion, studying the language and semiotic resources used in fast fashion green marketing has the potential to bring about positive changes in the industry. By empowering consumers, fostering ethical marketing practices, and promoting transparency and accountability, the research can contribute to a more sustainable and responsible fashion industry that benefits both individuals and the environment. To this contribution, the present study has aimed to take part.

8.3 Evaluation and further research

Social media has revolutionised interpersonal and corporate communications with unprecedented connectivity and engagement. It has transformed the way individuals interact, enabling instant communication and the sharing of thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Moreover, social media platforms have become indispensable tools for businesses and organizations,

allowing them to connect directly with their audiences, build brand loyalty, and spread information rapidly. With the ability to reach millions of users worldwide, social media has enabled new opportunities for marketing, customer service, and public relations. The fast development of social media is ongoing, and thus the need for further research on it is constant.

In addition to social media in general, further research on green marketing practices on social media is required. Due to the limited scope of the current study, future studies could involve a larger sample size, encompassing a more extensive range of fast fashion brands. Additionally, a comparative analysis of various brands' green marketing strategies would shed light on industry-wide trends and differences among individual brands. This type of analysis could inform both businesses and consumers, facilitating more informed decision-making.

For example, this study does not take a stand on whether the green marketing claims of fast fashion brands are true or not. Ensuring the truthfulness of sustainability claims in marketing campaigns is important, as it affects consumer trust, corporate accountability, and environmental conservation. Future research should focus on scrutinising the credibility of these claims and evaluating their real-world effect on sustainability practices, thereby contributing to a more transparent and responsible marketing landscape in the fast fashion industry.

Moreover, an examination of the effectiveness of green marketing efforts is essential. Future research could focus on consumer perceptions and behaviour in response to such marketing campaigns. Do consumers truly value and reward brands that promote sustainability in their marketing? Do these campaigns drive meaningful change in consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions? These questions can be addressed through surveys, focus groups, and behavioural analysis, providing valuable insights into the real-world implications of green marketing strategies.

Fundamentally, the fast fashion industry's commitment to ecological sustainability is a complex and evolving landscape that requires continual investigation, innovation, and adaptation to address the urgent global challenges of sustainability and climate change. Fast fashion brands have considerable power and responsibility to shape consumer behaviour and production standards. Further research in this domain has the potential to provide a more comprehensive picture of the landscape of green marketing within the fast fashion industry, aiding both

academics and industry stakeholders in making informed decisions about sustainability practices and consumer engagement.

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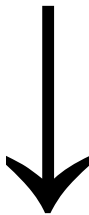

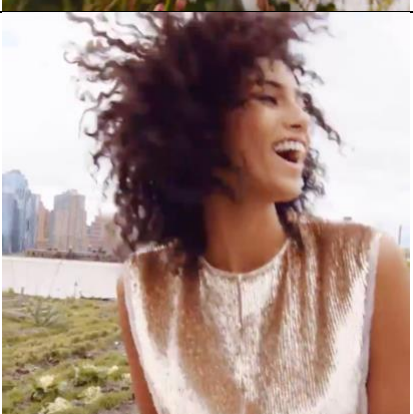
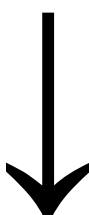
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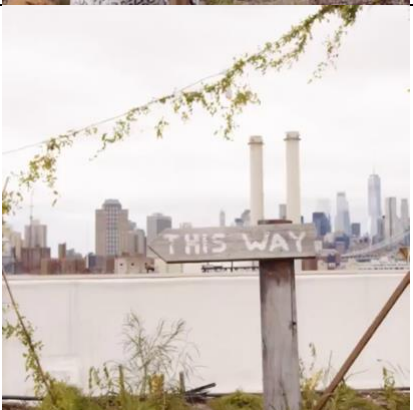
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APPENDICES








Appendix 1. Transcription of H&M Conscious Exclusive campaign video tweeted 9 April 2019


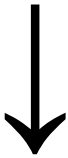












Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00		Low angle medium shot of two women with towers in the background.	Text on screen: H&M CONSCIOUS EXCLUSIVE	Laid back music with prominent bass.
0:01		Eye-level long shot of a woman walking in a flower garden with a city in the background.	H&M CONSCIOUS EXCLUSIVE	↓
0:02		Low side angle shot of a woman hanging lights.	H&M CONSCIOUS EXCLUSIVE	↓




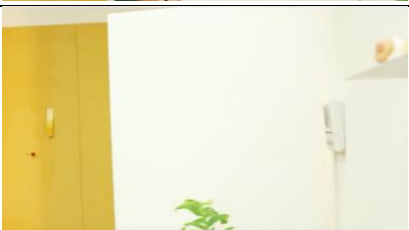

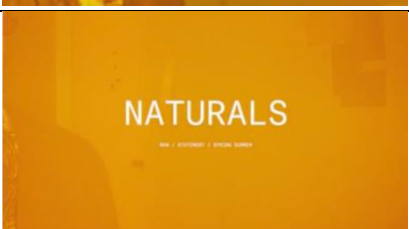
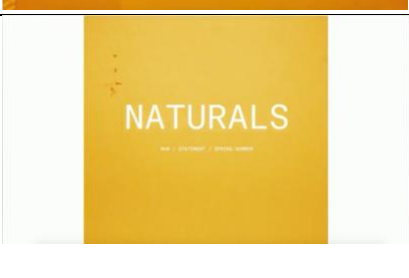
0:03		Low side angle shot of a woman looking into the camera.	H&M CONSCIOUS EXCLUSIVE	
0:03		Eye-level long shot of two women standing side by side.	-	
0:04		Close-up shot of a white flower.	-	Laid-back music with prominent bass. Female voice starts to sing a melody with no words.
0:04		Low angle close-up shot of a woman laughing eyes closed.	-	

0:05		Medium eye-level shot of a woman leaning on prop, smiling and looking into the camera.	-	
0:06		Medium shot of greenery and a sign pointing to the left with a city in the background.	Sign with text: THIS WAY	Music stops at the end of the video.



Appendix 2. Transcription of Zara Natural Textures for Man campaign video tweeted 16 April 2019

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00		Yellow background with a shadow of leaves widens up.	Text on screen: NATURALS MAN / STATEMENT / SPRING SUMMER	Deep house music.
0:01		Medium shot of men's striped trousers.	Text on screen: NATURALS MAN / STATEMENT / SPRING SUMMER	↓
0:02		Medium shot of the man standing up, face half cropped.	-	↓
0:03		Medium shot of the man face half cropped, holding a shell.	-	↓
0:04		Close-up shot of the shell.	-	↓
0:05		Right close-up shot of the man looking into the camera.	-	↓
0:06- 0:07		Left close-up shot of the man looking into the camera.	-	↓

0:08		Medium shot of the man's feet and legs.	-	
0:09		Medium shot of a hand grabbing a yellow plastic square.	-	
0:10		Medium shot of the man holding the square in front of his face.	-	
0:11		Side angle close-up shot of the man holding the square in front of his face.	-	
0:12- 0:16		Close-up shot of the man's clothes.	-	
0:17- 0:18		Medium shot of the man sitting on a chair.	-	
0:19		Medium side angle shot of the man sitting and reading.	-	

0:20- 0:21		Medium shot of the man standing with a bag on his shoulder.	-	↓
0:22- 0:23		Close-up shot of a green plant.	-	↓
0:24		Medium side angle shot of the man opening a door.	-	↓
0:25		Medium angle shot of an open door, as the man goes through.	-	↓
0:26		Close-up shot of the man on the other side of the door.	-	↓
0:27- 0:28		The frame fades into text with an orange background.	Text on screen: NATURALS MAN / STATEMENT / SPRING SUMMER	↓
0:29		The background fades from orange to yellow, narrowing until it disappears.	Text on screen: NATURALS MAN / STATEMENT / SPRING SUMMER	Music stops at the end of the video.


Appendix 3. Transcription of H&M Conscious Collection campaign video tweeted 12 April 2019


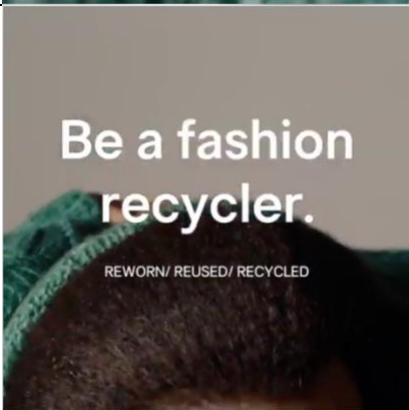
Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00- 0:01		Medium shot of two women sitting down. The woman on the left is speaking.	"One day everybody's just gonna--"	Calm background music played on an electric guitar.
0:02- 0:03		The camera zooms out into a wider shot, showing a low side angle of the previous women and a third woman.	"--it's gonna be a given--" Text on screen: H&M CONSCIOUS COLLECTION BENI	↓
0:04- 0:05		Medium shot of the first two women. The woman on the left is talking, the woman on the right looks at the talking woman and smiles.	"--to have, you know, organic cotton in a dress--"	↓

<p>0:06- 0:07</p>	 <p>- Hopefully it's gonna be the norm. - It needs to be, yeah.</p>	<p>Medium shot of the two women turning to look at the woman on the left when she is speaking.</p>	<p>"Hopefully it's gonna be the norm."</p>	
<p>0:08</p>	 <p>- Hopefully it's gonna be the norm. - It needs to be, yeah.</p>	<p>Medium low angle shot of the woman in the middle talking.</p>	<p>"It needs to be, yeah." "Yeah, absolutely." "</p>	<p>Speech and music stop at the end of the video.</p>



Appendix 4. Transcription of H&M Be a Fashion Recycler campaign video tweeted 11

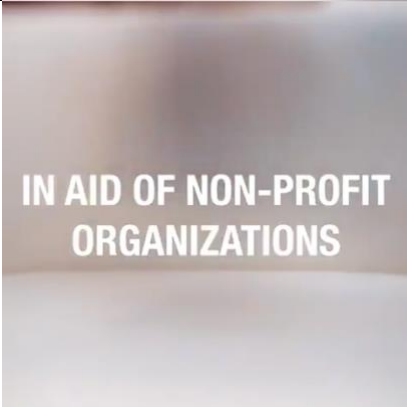
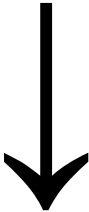

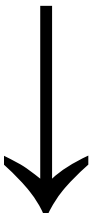

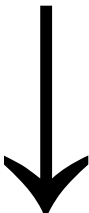

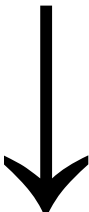
December 2018

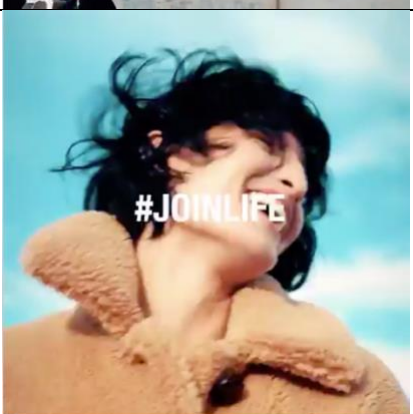
Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00- 0:01		Close-up shot of green and silky fabric.	Text on screen: Leave your old textiles with us	No audio.
0:02- 0:03		Low angle close-up shot of a woman pulling off a green knit.	-	-
0:04		Low angle medium shot of a woman wearing a green shirt.	We'll make sure they get a new life	-
0:05- 0:06		Close-up shot of a button on the green shirt.	-	-

0:07- 0:08		Close-up shot of a green knit.	Be a fashion recycler. REWORN/ REUSED/ RECYCLED	-
0:09- 0:10		High angle shot of a woman pulling on the green knit.	Be a fashion recycler. REWORN/ REUSED/ RECYCLED	-





Appendix 5. Transcription of Zara Join Life Clothes Collecting Programme campaign video
tweeted 13 December 2018

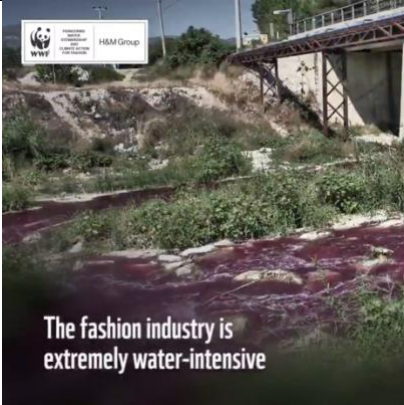



Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00– 0:03		Low angle close-up shot of a woman wearing a coat and looking into the camera.	Text on screen: CLOTHES COLLECTING PROGRAMME	Fast rhythmic music without melody or chords.
0:04– 0:06		Low angle close-up shot of the woman brushing hair off her face and looking into the camera.	DONATE CLOTHES YOU NO LONGER WEAR	↓
0:07– 0:10		Eye-level angle medium shot of the woman taking off several layers of coats and looking into the camera.	BRING THE CLOTHES YOU NO LONGER WEAR AND GIVE THEM A NEW--	↓
0:11		Close-up shot of a pile of clothes.	-	↓




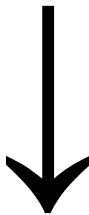

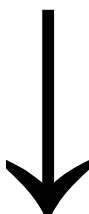

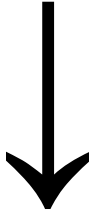
0:12- 0:13		The clothes are lifted up into the air revealing light background.	IN AID OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	
0:13		Eye-level angle close-up shot of the woman smiling and bending her head to the side.	#REUSE	
0:14		Low angle close-up shot of the woman looking into the camera.	#REDUCE	
0:15		Low angle close-up shot of the woman looking into the camera.	#RECYCLE	





0:16		Eye-level side angle mid shot of the woman walking.	GIVE THEM A NEW--	
0:17-0:19		The woman turns her gaze toward the camera and walks by.	--LIFE IN OUR STORES	
0:20-0:22		Low angle close-up shot of the woman laughing and looking to the side.	#JOINLIFE	Music stops at the end of video.





Appendix 6. Transcription of H&M and WWF collaboration campaign video tweeted 29 August 2019




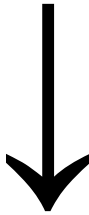

Time	Frame	Shot	Text	Soundtrack
0:00– 0:04		Low angle close-up shot of a water tap leaking.	Text on screen: Three in ten people worldwide lack safe drinking water at home	High-pitched whistling sound with a quieter low sound in the background .
0:05– 0:09		Low angle medium shot of a girl drinking from a water bottle with sun in the background casting a shadow.	Water demand will exceed supply by 40% in 2030	↓
0:10– 0:14		High angle close-up shot of a frog sitting on a branch.	Freshwater species populations have suffered a decline of 83% on average since 1970	↓
0:15– 0:19		Top shot of a waterfall.	All life needs water	↓

0:20– 0:22	 <p>The fashion industry is extremely water-intensive</p>	High angle long shot of a polluted river.	The fashion industry is extremely water-intensive	↓
0:23– 0:28	 <p>and a large user of the water demanding crop cotton</p>	High angle long shot of a cotton field.	and a large user of the water demanding crop cotton	↓
0:29– 0:34	 <p>Since 2011 - H&M Group is taking the lead for a change, together with WWF</p>	Eye-level close-up shot of a person holding a glass scooping water.	Since 2011 - H&M Group is taking the lead for a change, together with WWF	Upbeat piano and strings play in major.
0:35– 0:36	 <p>With Water Stewardship we are starting to make a change</p>	High angle long shot of a river and fields.	With Water Stewardship we are starting to make a change	↓

0:37- 0:39	 <p>With Water Stewardship we are starting to make a change</p>	High angle long shot of a river and trees.	With Water Stewardship we are starting to make a change	
0:40- 0:45	 <p>Water stewardship = understanding the risks, manage water in a sustainable way, engage other companies and policy makers to make a change</p>	Close-up shot of droplets against a dark background.	Water stewardship = Understanding the risks, manage water in a sustainable way, engage other companies and policy makers to make a change	
0:46- 0:49	 <p>Here are some results of the H&M Group and WWF partnership:</p>	Top shot of a moving water mass.	Here are some results of the H&M Group and WWF partnership :	
0:50- 0:54	 <p>In China, the Water Stewardship led to improved water management in H&M Group's supply chain</p>	High angle long shot of a sailing boat on water moving away from camera.	In China, the Water Stewardship led to improved water management in H&M Group's supply chain	

0:55- 1:00	 <p>A water management guideline for Industrial parks, a stakeholder platform; the Taihu Forum.</p>	Top shot of a water treatment plant.	A water management guideline for Industrial parks, a stakeholder platform; the Taihu Forum.	↓
1:01- 1:07	 <p>It also encouraged farmers to use more sustainable practices, to help restore the health of the Yangtze river in China - engaging in saving the finless porpoise</p>	High angle, side close-up shot of a porpoise peeping its head from water.	It also encouraged farmers to use more sustainable practices, to help restore the health of the Yangtze river in China - engaging in saving the finless porpoise	↓
1:08- 1:12	 <p>500 of H&M Group's suppliers use less chemicals and use water in a more sustainable way</p>	High angle long shot of a beach.	500 of H&M Group's suppliers use less chemicals and use water in a more sustainable way	↓
1:13- 1:15	 <p>We developed a Cleaner Production Guideline for the textile industry in Turkey</p>	Top shot of a ploughing machine on a field moving upwards on screen.	We developed a Cleaner Production Guideline for the textile industry in Turkey	↓

1:16- 1:21	 <p>In only one year seven local textile producers have committed to cleaner production investments</p>	High angle close-up shot of a person sewing clothing with a sewing machine.	In only one year seven local textile producers have committed to cleaner production investments	↓
1:22- 1:27	 <p>HSBC, Tommy Hilfiger, Target and many other brands joined H&M Group in collective action for Water Stewardship</p>	Low angle cropped close-up shot of a man placing clothes on to a clothing rack.	HSBC, Tommy Hilfiger, Target and many other brands joined H&M Group in collective action for Water Stewardship	↓
1:28- 1:29	 <p>We want more companies to join us - for cleaner water - for people and nature</p>	High angle long shot of a plantation and hills and blue sky in the background.	We want more companies to join us - for cleaner water - for people and nature	↓
1:30- 1:31	 <p>We want more companies to join us - for cleaner water - for people and nature</p>	Low angle close-up shot of a shrub with greenery in the background.	We want more companies to join us - for cleaner water - for people and nature	↓

1:32- 1:33		Top shot of a boat on water moving from right to left.	Fashion brands may compete in business, but must stand joined in action for a sustainable future	
1:34- 1:35		High angle long shot of a boat on water moving away from camera.	Fashion brands may compete in business, but must stand joined in action for a sustainable future	
1:36- 1:40		Black background image.	Join H&M Group and WWF in Water Stewardship	Music stops when text appears on screen.