What a great website!

Website design and the perception of sustainability towards a product range of a German company

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Abstract

Aim: This study aims at exploring which element on a corporate website can influence sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level towards a product range of a company. Thus, to contribute to the field of website design, marketing, and sustainability perceptions of companies.

Method: Experimental research including a questionnaire was conducted with 101 participants in a 2x2 between-subject design. Participants were exposed to one of four website conditions, entailing either a header and footer in green or blue without any eco-claim or a green or blue header and footer with a present eco-claim on the website. Thus, to study the effects of colour and claim on three dependent variables. The variables colour and claim were picked as independent variables because previous research suggested that colour, as well as an eco-claim, have beneficial effects on sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level. The results were analysed by employing a multivariate analysis (MANOVA).

Findings*:* The research findings show that using blue on a corporate website, especially on a landing page of a product range, has a significant effect on sustainability perception and purchase intention of consumers and influences the variables the most. No significant effect of a certain colour or an eco-claim can be detected on trust level. Therewith, using blue on a corporate website has significant effects on making a website and the products appear sustainable.

Practical implications: As the study was made in cooperation with the German company EMSA GmbH, blue colour can be used by the company to adapt the corporate website and to enhance sustainability perception and purchase intention. Blue can, for example, be used in the header of a website. For trust level, further research is needed to provide more insights.

Conclusion: This study and its findings provide new insights into the field of sustainability and designing corporate websites and are beneficial for marketers in the professional field. Furthermore, contradicting previous research that suggests that blue and not green shall be used on a website to increase sustainability perception. Further, the study disagrees with blue being perceived as trustful which was found out in previous research.

Keywords: website design, sustainability, eco-claim, colour

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Enclosures

1. Introduction

Nowadays, sustainability and being environmentally friendly is an important value for humans and especially customers, leading to an increase in purchasing environmentally friendly products (Chang & Chen, 2014). Executives are also concerned as 62% of managers within companies perceive sustainable strategies as important to be "competitive today" and 22% think that sustainable strategies are important for future doings of the company (Haanaes, 2016). Moreover, Kenyon (2017) outlines one reason for this development by stating that concerns regarding the environment evermore increase. The author reveals that, for instance, people in the USA eventually consider climate change as a "serious threat". This concern has also been reported by Revkin in 2019, stating that awareness for global warming increases among people but that many have a change of mindset only because of natural disasters like "heat-fuelt wildfires" and "catastrophic hurricane strikes" and not resulting from political influences. In addition, environmental growth can be held accountable for the "destruction of natural resources" and, therewith also organisations have a responsibility to fulfil (Ioannou & Hawn, 2016). Therefore, companies are important actors in the sustainable debate as those impact economies, the environment, and social factors by their activities (Armindo, Fonseca, Abreu & Toldy, 2018). Additionally, studies show that incorporating sustainability concerns into organisational doings, increases the success of the company on a long-term basis (Arevalo & Aravind, 2017). Furthermore, as the importance and issues of sustainability are on the rise, (Harwood et al., 2011; Armindo et al., 2018) environmentally friendly solutions should be incorporated into future business strategies of enterprises. However, in reality, "a knowing-doing gap" exists, showing that only 60% of organisations include sustainable doings into their business even if those companies claim to perceive sustainability as important (Hannaes, 2016). Reasons for that are, for instance, higher costs by using environmentally friendly raw materials or being transparent about company doings (Ashkin, 2019).

Even if this gap exists, companies can no longer ignore the shift towards incorporating the environment into daily business and already adapt marketing strategies to comply with environmentally friendly values to satisfy consumer needs (Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Hence, companies can provide customers with products that are more environmentally friendly. Furthermore, most companies mind sustainability in the economical doings to build a good reputation and "overall corporate strategy" (Bonini, Görner & Jones, 2010). This is often done by publishing a sustainable page or section on the corporate website. Additionally, linking

sustainability to another field of interest, i.e. packaging of products is already being adapted by using specific labels or colours promoting sustainability of the product (Celhay & Trinquecoste, 2015, cited in Steenis, Van Herpen, Van der Lans, Ligthart & Van Trijp, 2017). Relating to these design choices, Rahbar and Wahid (2011) state that one of the most important marketing tools showing sustainable actions of a company, is using eco-labels placed on "environmentally friendly products". Those labels underline sustainability of products and might change the behaviour of customers towards the goods. Moreover, next to eco-labels, colours can also increase the perception of sustainability regarding a company and the products (Chu & Rahman, 2010). Especially colours like green and blue are being perceived as most sustainable (DeLong & Goncu-Berk, 2012).

Therefore, the question arises if such elements like the eco-labels/claims and the use of certain colours which are already being used in packaging design might also be beneficial for websites of companies to make a product range appear more sustainable and increase the likelihood of customers to perceive the products as sustainable. In fact, the corporate website of a company is one of the main channels of communicating to stakeholders, like consumers (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). Being rarely new in the '90s and adding "prestigious value to" organisations (Nielsen, 2002), today many companies are present on the Internet by employing a corporate website. Therefore, the following question arises: When the packaging design of a product can already influence sustainability perception, might a website fulfil the same purpose by adapting the right elements? Taking the example of the German company EMSA GmbH, manufacturing goods for the household and gardening sector, the connection between a company's website and sustainability perception shall be explored. The aim is to detect elements on a website that might influence customer's decisions and to better advertise products sustainably. Hence, that purchase intention and the trust level towards a company and the products increases. During literature search, it appeared that no comprehensive work has been dedicated to how sustainability of a product range can be best presented on a corporate website and the influence of certain design elements on sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level. In the following study, four different elements on the landing page of the TRAVEL MUG thermo mug on the companies' website have been manipulated, (see Appendix A). In this study, referring to a landing page describes the page where the thermo mugs are portrayed and customers can see the whole product range. However, in general, a landing page can be defined as "any webpage on which an Internet visitor first arrives on their way to an important action" (Ash, Ginty & Page, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to find out which specific manipulation on a website increases the perception of sustainability of the products, purchase intention and trust level, the most. Afterwards, the company may adapt the website of the thermo mugs and those of other product ranges. Thus, to better market the products and advertise them using a sustainability strategy. In addition, the research shall reveal the influence colours and sustainability claims have on consumer perceptions towards products shown on a corporate website. Furthermore, to fill the gap of limited knowledge towards the field and detecting new design choices of websites communication professionals may apply in organisational settings. Eventually to provide new knowledge to the field of marketing and sustainability research and giving communication professionals as well as marketers the chance to follow new innovative and sustainable strategies. This will be done by a quantitative, between-subject method, in a 2x2 design, to find an answer to the following research question:

> *"Which element on a corporate website does influence the perception of users towards sustainability, of a product range, the most?"*

The paper contains six chapters. Next to the introduction which has already been given, the theoretical framework will provide insights about sustainability in general, sustainability used as a marketing tool, as well as used in relation to colours and claims. Additionally, the chapter explores four hypotheses that will be analysed by the study. Third, the methodological choices used in the study will be outlined and justified. Afterwards, results of the study will be analysed, before fifth, results are being discussed and meaning will be given to them. Lastly, a discussion about findings will be given, including practical and theoretical implications as well as future attempts and finally, a conclusion of the study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Sustainability and organisations

Sustainability has been developed as an essential marketing strategy for organisations over the years (Kumar, Rahman, Kazmi & Goyal, 2012). Bortree (2014), outlines that the trend of incorporating sustainability into business communication increases and that this strategy is now one of the key strategies a company can use. Furthermore, sustainable or "environmentally friendly attributes and characteristics" of products are being promoted by companies, for instance, to address more consumers (Campbell, Khachatryian, Behe, Dennis & Hall, 2015). This development is a result of different crises concerning the environment like climate change or increasing awareness of people and consumers regarding nature (Belz, 2005, cited in Roth, Klingler, Schmidt & Zitzlsperger, 2009). Therefore, issues concerning the environment should be integrated by companies into their day-to-day strategies and actions (Nidumolu, Prahalad & Rangaswami, 2009). In addition to those arguments, including sustainability on a business basis is "a key issue when designing, developing, and marketing new products" (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017). Moreover, some different perspectives can be taken while studying the field of sustainability in marketing. Therefore, working as a "triple bottom line" sustainability in marketing always considers, humans, economic outcome and the planet (Savitz, & Weber, 2006). It appears that implementing sustainability into business doings is a beneficial choice and therefore, also particularly important for this study and crucial for advertising products.

But how can sustainability be defined? Therefore, Callicott and Mumford (1997) analysed sustainability from the angle of ecology as connecting the ecosystem with human needs. This argument is also supported by Dresner (2008), referring to sustainability as humans being careful with the environment and protecting it. Sustainability can also be depicted from the economic standpoint, thus, that no future generations are being harmed by current organizational performances and that companies try to achieve financial purposes (Foy, 1990). According to Wong, Tuner and Stoneman (1996), when an environmentally friendly initiative is being communicated to customers, it has a positive outcome towards consumer behaviour. Therefore, sustainability is an important element to implement into marketing strategies of organisations.

2.2 Sustainability as a marketing tool

Sustainability is also being used as a marketing tool, by many companies. Therefore, Gronroos (1990) defined marketing as "a set of tools and techniques" like "packaging, promotion, distribution activities and pricing". Another term used to refer to marketing techniques, concerning the environment and sustainable solutions, is called "green marketing". Peattie (1995, cited in Rex & Baumann, 2006) states that green marketing is detecting and satisfying the needs of consumers and society by being sustainable and profitable. Additionally, green marketing can be defined as "strategies to promote products by employing environmental claims either about their attributes or about the systems, policies and processes of the firms that manufacture or sell them" (Prakash, 2002). Furthermore, the construct can be detected as an element of CSR (corporate social responsibility) of organisations. CSR can be described as an organisational doing which is not required of companies and is being done to increase general social good (Carroll, 2000). Additionally, this further exceeds the general organisational interests. Donaldson and Preston (1995) stress out that the construct aims at satisfying ethical and moral needs towards stakeholders and Hart (1995) adds that competitive advantages may appear by doing so. Hence, stakeholders are included and tackled by CSR processes. Further, companies more often need to be responsible for social consequences as well as consequences resulting from business doings (Cornelissen, 2014). This means, holding more responsibility for the environment as well as, for instance, the employees' well-being and, in the broader sense, acting environmentally friendly and minding sustainability.

Moreover, the construct "environmental advertisement" serves as a strategy following the objective of influencing "consumers' purchase behaviour by encouraging them to buy products that do not harm the environment and to direct their attention to the positive consequences of their purchase behaviour, for themselves as well as the environment" (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). This means, that in the best case, consumers decide to buy products of a company following a sustainability strategy without harming the environment. Furthermore, as the awareness of people regarding the environment rises and climate change is on the run, companies need to take environmental and sustainable factors into account (Burhan & Rahmanti, 2009). If companies do not comply with this, organisations might lose customers or profit against competitors who already incorporated sustainable claims and strategies. In addition, using sustainability as a marketing tool results from a rise in "environmental and social (…) regulations" and growing concerns about "natural resources"

(Jones, Clarke-Hill, Hiller & Comfort, 2007). Hence, companies need to follow stricter regulations formulated by governments to protect nature and society. Additionally, Charter, Peattie, Ottman and Polonsky (2006) argue, that by using sustainability as a marketing tool, stakeholders' needs and sustainable solutions are being connected and entangled with each other.

To counteract those problems, the number of companies that prepare "sustainability reports" increases. According to Burhan and Rahmanti (2009), such a report is being used to "explain the communication of the companies' effect on social, environmental and economic performance" and their study reveals that sustainable reporting has indeed an effect on the performance of the company. The purpose of sustainable reports is to present information about organisational performances regarding sustainability to stakeholders of the company (Hubbard, 2008). Therewith, companies are acting transparent towards stakeholders and might increase the chance to be preferred over competitors. However, companies still need to "belief in [the] realization" of sustainable reports and the consequences, because some companies are afraid of accusations of "greenwashing" even if giving away a good marketing strategy by not preparing a sustainability report (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016). For the sense of clarity, greenwashing can be defined as false claims about products and services regarding sustainability and being environmentally friendly, presented by companies (Dahl, 2010). Therefore, companies should compare the pros and cons of such report and afterwards decide if a sustainability report is beneficial for the future of the company.

However, as technology is on the rise and more online activities are done, sustainable reports are being more often replaced by uploading sustainability statements on the corporate website (Wanderley, Lucian, Farache & de Sousa Filho, 2008). Therefore, the statements are oftentimes presented with and connected to environmental aims of the company (Bonini et al., 2010). On the website, information about the manufacturing of the products might be stated and within a text, it might also be mentioned that natural resources are being protected. Furthermore, the website can immediately present what sustainable attempts a company is following and, therewith, influence the interests of stakeholders (Krätzig & Warren-Kretschmar, 2014). As corporate websites are the main communication stream to stakeholders (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007), landing pages entailing sustainability attempts of the company or similar information can be placed on the platform. Hence, the Internet gives companies the chance to spread more information about sustainability and provide information about environmentally friendly topics to consumers (Gill, Dickinson & Scharl, 2008). The given

arguments can also be related to the present study in this paper as a corporate website will be manipulated and sustainability will be advertised on the website.

2.3 Sustainability and colours

Next to sustainability in an ecological sense and used as a marketing tool, some literature about design choices useful for presenting sustainability attempts, can be outlined. This knowledge may also be useful for the present study about website design, as colour can be a good manipulation and influence of consumers within the study. First, regarding the question which colour is perceived as sustainable, DeLong and Goncu-Berk (2012) found out that green promotes the perception of sustainability, especially regarding the environment. The reason for that is that green is being related to nature but also because many companies already use the colour and, therefore, consumers relate green to sustainability. In addition, the authors claim that only the word green can imply "sustainable best practices" even if green is not shown visually. The argument is also underlined by Chu and Rahman (2010), stating that green has been "intentionally or subliminally used as a marketing tool to promote the notion of eco-friendliness" of products. Especially botanic green has been identified as appearing natural and relating to the environment. Moreover, Moller, Elliot and Maier (2009) claim, that colours like green are being related to higher success rates of companies. In conclusion, not only environmental factors are being influences by green but also economic and profit-related factors.

However, next to green the colour blue is perceived as sustainable, especially sky blue (Chu & Rahman, 2010). This is because blue relates to the ocean and by entailing blue, products are being perceived as recyclable. For example, the "energy star certificate" which is being awarded to homes, goods or other architectures being "energy-efficient" is coloured in a blue shade (DeLong & Goncu-Berk, 2012). Moreover, a field study held by Sundar and Kellaris (2017) underlines that argument and reveals that consumers perceive blue as being environmentally friendly. Additionally, the authors contribute a new argument, that green and blue are evoking "similar perceptions of eco-friendliness". Next to the argument that blue is being perceived as a sustainable colour and therewith might influence sustainability perception, blue has also been proven to increase trust and is connected to reliability and responsibility (Palmateer, 2019). With trust a good relationship between customers and a business can be built (Dahlqvist & Preiksaite, 2018), leading to more purchase intentions or decisions for the brand of consumers (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Furthermore, blue is perceived

as increasing competence and can be connected to efficiency, moral or legal obligations or, as already mentioned, trust (Fraser & Banks, 2004; Mahnke, 1996; Wright, 1995). Lastly, when shown or used on a website, blue can increase trustworthiness of users (Alberts & Van der Geest, 2011).

Taking all arguments into account, it is sufficient to say that green and blue are good colour choices to include and manipulate into the study, to research sustainability perception and trust level of consumers as well as purchase intention. Based on the retrieved literature the following hypothesis has been formulated that shall be answered by the study:

H1: Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used.

2.4 Sustainability and eco-claims

Sustainability perception of a product can, additionally, be presented by eco-labels or claims, which are already being used on an upswing level (Campbell et al., 2015). According to Koos (2011), sustainability labelling can strengthen a companies' effort towards sustainability and environmental friendliness. Therefore, and as already mentioned above, eco-labels can be placed on products and used as a good marketing strategy (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). In addition, eco-labels provide indications for consumers about how products are being made (Rex & Baumann, 2007). Hence, customers can discern if limited resources have been used and therewith destroyed or if manufacturing a product damages the environment. However, decision-making processes about which products to buy may vary among consumers because of different trust levels, values granted towards the eco-claims and understanding (De Boer, 2003). Eco-labels are also used to improve perceptions of products because the labels can act as quality claims. In addition, values can be attached to products by informing the consumers and the recyclability after use (Sammer & Wüstenhagen, 2006). Furthermore, eco-labelling can indicate attributes and characteristics of a product which are beneficial for the environment (Truffer, Markard & Wüstenhagen, 2001) and a study conducted by Rashid (2009) reveals that purchase intention of a product can be increased by an eco-label placed on the product. Next to that argument, promoting sustainability of the manufacturing of goods can improve the companies' position within the market (Kuhn, 1999). As a result, this can be communicated towards consumers and the company might hold a higher position in the market than competitors. Moreover, sustainability claims increase the awareness of consumers for

sustainable issues of a company (De Boer, 2003) and influence purchase behaviour (Ferguson, Hair, Vinhas da Silva, Oliveira-Brochado & Mollah, 2017). Additionally, the authors state that eco-claims increase "the positive perception of sustainable products" and the ambition to buy an environmentally friendly product. It appears that eco-claims, next to colours, are also good visualisations of sustainability and increase purchase intention. Hence, the element is beneficial for this study. Based on this argumentation, the following hypotheses have been depict:

H2: Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used and an eco-claim is present on the website.

H3: Purchase intention increases if green is being used and an eco-claim is presented on the website.

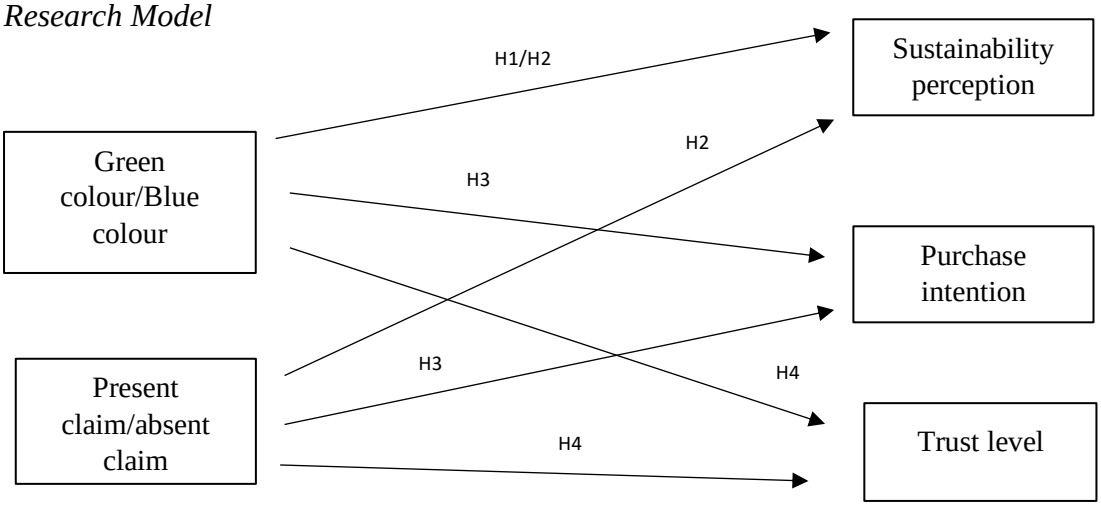
H4: The trust level towards the company increases if blue in combination with a claim is being used on the website.

2.5 Research model

Figure 1 presents the research model formed after relevant literature has been reviewed, and variables have been identified. The model presents how the independent variables influence the dependent variables sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level. How the hypotheses can be incorporated in the model was also illustrated.

Figure 1

Research Model



3. Methods

3.1 Experimental design and stimuli

To answer the research question and provide answers to the hypotheses, the impact of colour and a sustainable claim on the landing page of a product range have been investigated by a 2 (colour: green vs. blue) x 2 (claim: presence vs. absence) design within a field study. After the literature review has revealed existing knowledge, the variables colour and eco-claim have been chosen as the independent variables to be manipulated on the website. Literature suggested that green and blue are being perceived as very sustainable colours and that an eco-claim is beneficial for companies to present. In addition, the dependent variables were identified as sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level. Furthermore, the stimulus material consisted of four different variations of a website design wherein either the colour or the sustainable claim, (see Appendix B) -which has already been designed by EMSA GmbH - was manipulated. As the claim was only available in German, a text within the survey questionnaire was included to explain the meaning of the claim, so people not speaking German understood the claim, (see Appendix B.1). To manipulate the variable colour, the header and footer on the website were coloured in green or blue. Thus, the manipulations were apparent on the website. In addition, the eco-claim was either present or absent on the green or blue coloured website. During the study, participants only saw one of the website designs and were randomly assigned to the conditions. This was done, to prevent participants from active awareness of the other manipulations and give them the chance to only focus on one condition. Afterwards the results of the different websites were compared to see which manipulation was perceived as enhancing the perception of sustainability, purchase intention and trust level, the most. To evaluate the website manipulations, a questionnaire was designed. For all four conditions, the same questionnaire was used, containing the same questions, to study the same variables in each condition. Thus, there was no need to send out different questionnaires for different conditions. However, solely the visual which shows the website with the manipulation was adapted to a certain condition. All research material was in English except the visual material of the eco-claim.

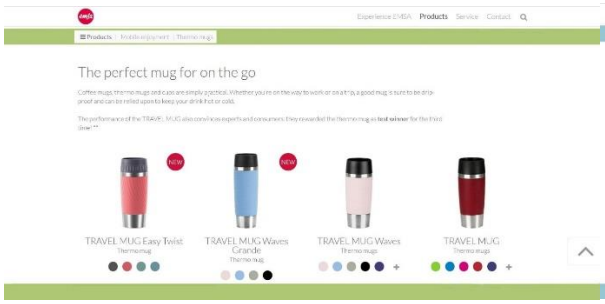
For the first website condition green was used in the header and footer on the landing page of the product range, (see Appendix C). As several literature -referred to before- provided proof that green is being perceived as very sustainable, green has been used as a manipulation. Additionally, the used shade of green for the header and footer was depicted from the eco-claim. The reason behind that choice is that, for the two conditions showing the present eco-

claim, the colour of the claim and the coloured header align with each other and appear consistent. Furthermore, as literature suggested that next to green, blue is perceived as a colour supporting sustainability perception and increasing the trust level of consumers, the second condition included a blue header and footer on the website, (see Appendix D). The shade of blue was also retrieved from the eco-claim. However, both conditions contained no eco-claim placed on the website and thus, the condition of an absent eco-claim in combination with both colours was portrayed.

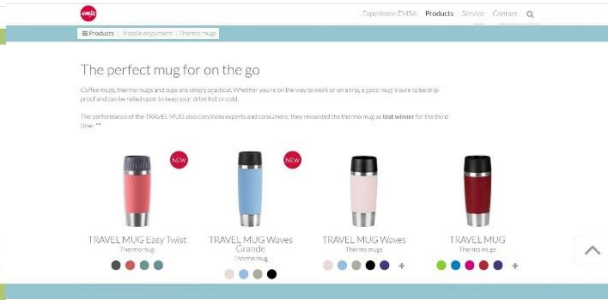
Contradicting, in the third condition not only the colour but also the eco-claim was used as one stimulus material. Therefore, the claim was placed on the website, with the green header and footer next to the product range, (see Appendix E). The claim has been placed on the upper right-hand corner, parallelly to the text. This has been done, as some free space can be found in that position and compared to the left side, no text is stated. The position has also been used to avoid cognitive load on the left side and to place information not only at one side of the website but spread it over the website. This is, because Reedy (2015) for instance, argues that the "working memory has very discrete limits" and therefore cannot process large amounts of information at a time. Referring to Halarewich (2016), some practical reasons for the choice can be outlined. For instance, overstimulation is being avoided as symmetry is given to the website by placing the claim on the right side. This is because elements are balanced out on the website and are not placed at one spot, i.e. only on the left-hand side, but also on the right-hand side of the landing page. Moreover, the option has also been chosen for aesthetic reasons as that version was perceived as more appealing by the researcher than the version where the claim is placed on the left and because the most space was available on that spot. In the last condition, the claim in combination with the blue header and footer was presented on the website, (see Appendix F). In conclusion, the third and fourth conditions portrayed a present eco-claim in combination with both colours.

Figure 2

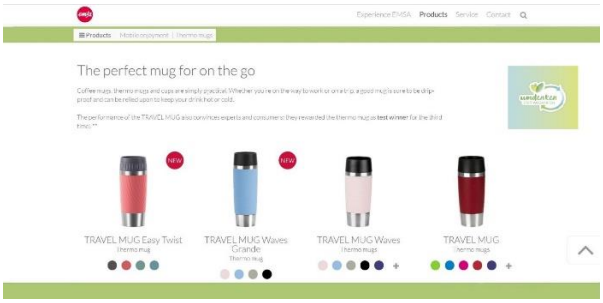
Stimulus Material showing Website Conditions



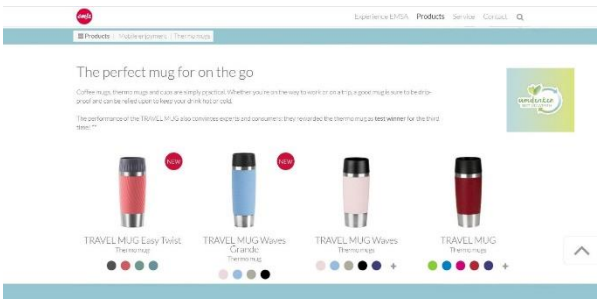
Condition 1



Condition 2



Condition 3



Condition 4

3.2 Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four website conditions. Respondents who did not finish the questionnaire have been retrieved from the study. Participants first had to read through a short introduction of the study, including general information as well as the purpose of the study, (see Appendix G). Additionally, a part in the introduction clarified that participants could opt-out of the survey at any time and that provided data will be handled anonymously, thus, participants were asked for their informed consent. Within the questionnaire, closed-ended questions have been used to easier analyse and compare results from all four conditions (Martin, 2006). After the informed consent was agreed to, the questionnaire started, (see Appendix H):

On the first slide of the questionnaire, a picture of the manipulated website was shown to participants with the request to look carefully at the website. For the two conditions were the eco-claim was placed on the website a short comment was added, explaining the claim in English, to clarify the meaning for non-German speakers. Afterwards, questions regarding

sustainability perception followed. In total, four questions for the category were placed. After the first block, four questions about purchase intention were stated. Furthermore, the third block included questions about the dependent variable trust level and four questions were placed for that variable as well. In total, the sections in the questionnaire where participants evaluated the three dependent variables all together contained 12 questions. After questions about the dependent variables were asked, respondents had to provide some general demographics. Questions about age, gender, highest educational level, nationality and if the respondent is familiar with the EMSA GmbH were asked. Finally, a question asked about the importance of sustainability for the respondent. The purpose of the demographics was to get an idea of what the population of the study looked like. In addition, the demographics show if participants in a study are "representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes" (Salkind, 2010). After the questionnaire was completed, the researcher thanked the respondent for participating in the study and mentions that data has been recorded and will be analysed. Lastly, contact details of the researcher were provided a second time, offering that participants can contact the researcher for further questions or comments.

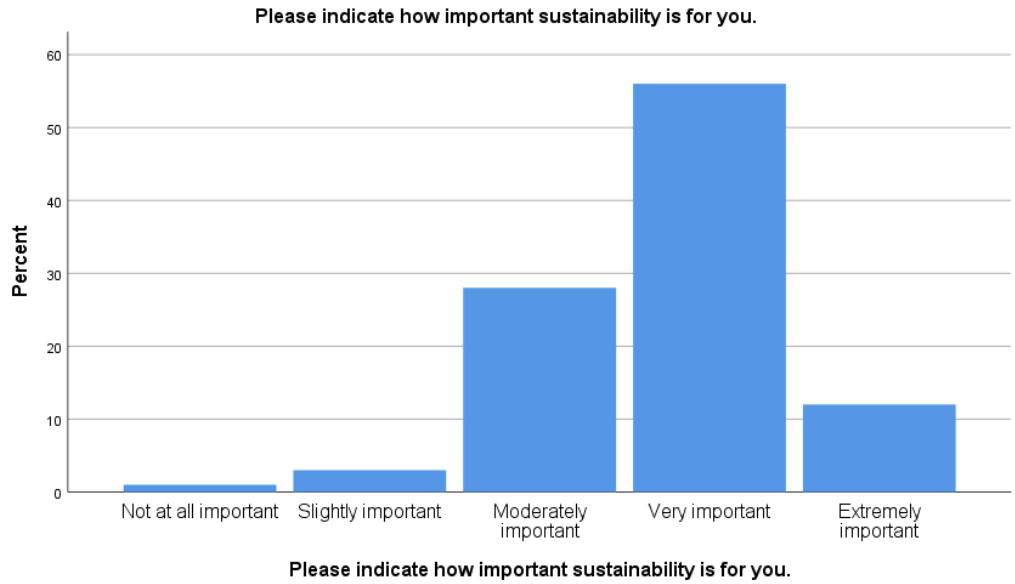
3.3 Sample

After the study was ethically approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Twente, a total amount of 101 respondents participated in the study and were recruited via email, WhatsApp and the scientific research platform SONA of the University of Twente. However, 40 participants gave incomplete answers in the questionnaire and, consequently, were removed from the data set. This led to a downgrading from 141 respondents to 101 participants. Participants were almost equally distributed among the four questionnaires including the four conditions. The survey was created and designed using Qualtrics. Out of the total amount of 101 respondents, 38.6% male and 59.4% female attended in the study and completed the questionnaire (see Appendix I, Figure 3). The respondents were aged between 18 and 62, (see Appendix I, Figure 4). Respondents below 18 were not recruited as they were underaged and specific consent forms of parents would have been necessary. Furthermore, 90.1% of participants were from Germany, 2% from the Netherlands and 7.9% indicated another nationality or the option "rather don't tell". Most participants, holding 41.6% of the total amount, were high school graduates, while 26.7% had a university degree. In addition, for 55.4 % of participants sustainability is very important, contradicting 1% for whom sustainability is not important at all (see Figure 5). Moreover, 35.6 % of respondents are very

familiar with EMSA GmbH. However, 13.9 % of participants stated not knowing EMSA GmbH at all (see Appendix I, Figure 6). In conclusion, a wide spectrum of different participants was recruited as those are good representatives of possible customers and a possible consumer group for the product range of thermo mugs.

Figure 5

Importance of Sustainability



3.4 Measures and reliability

The study used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree “. In addition, a “neither agree, nor disagree” option was provided, to filter “out respondence who do not have an opinion” (Martin, 2006). The reliability and validity of the scale have been tested by Finstad (2010) who also identified that the scale reflects “a respondent’s true subjective evaluation of a usability-questionnaire item” compared to a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the scales measuring the dependent variables has been examined by a Cronbach’s Alpha of equal to or above $\alpha = .70$. For this study, all three dependent variables complied with this score.

3.4.1 Sustainability Perception

The dependent variable sustainability perception was included in the study to measure sustainability perception of respondents towards the product range as well as the company. As

the company strives for a sustainable reputation and was interested in the perception of consumers regarding sustainability towards the products, the variable was crucial in the study. In addition, questions about the environment were included. For example, questions like “The product range is sustainable” or “The product range protects the environment” were asked.

For sustainability perception Cronbach’s Alpha was α= .79 (items = 4). This indicates that the variable is reliable. If the item “the company acts sustainable” is deleted, Cronbach’s Alpha would increase to α= .81. However, as the improvement of the figure is very small, the item can remain.

3.4.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention was introduced as a dependent variable to measure if participants are willing to buy a product of the product range or the company in general. Thus, to detect if elements on the website can influence this variable to provide the company with better outcomes. As online shopping increases and many people already buy products online (Goldsmith & Flynn, 2004), the variable is interesting to study on the website of a household company. Example questions for the variables were “I would purchase a product of the product range to protect the environment” and “It's very likely that I would purchase other products of the company.”.

For purchase intention Cronbach’s Alpha was α= .78 (items = 4). This indicates that the variable is reliable. However, no higher score was reached when deleting an item as the item-score was always lower than the criterion.

3.4.3 Trust Level

The last dependent variable trust level was intended to measure if consumers have trust in the company and its products. For example, a previous study conducted by Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2002) explored how customer trust might be built by online activities and handling the website. Another study already researched how online trust can best be built with consumers using e-commerce on a website (Hidayat, Saifullah & Ishak, 2016). For the present study, one example question used for the dependent variable within the survey was “I have a high trust level towards the company”.

For trust level Cronbach's Alpha was α= .83 (items = 4). This score also indicates that the variable is reliable. No item shall be deleted as Cronbach's Alpha would decrease.

3.5 Chi-Square test

A chi-square test was conducted to detect if the age or gender of participants in the study was related to the preference of colour or claim. The relation between age and colour was X^2 (33, N = 101) = 43.64, p = .102 indicating no significant association between those two variables. Moreover, for the relation between age and claim, chi-square was X^2 (33, N = 101) = 33.13, p = .461, with no significant association. Furthermore, the relation between gender and colour was X^2 (2, N = 101) = 4.27, p = .118. Again, no significance can be reached for these two variables. Between the variables gender and claim chi-square indicated X^2 (2, N = 101) = 0.52, p = .76, with no significant relation between the two variables. In conclusion, no relationship between age and gender can be detected with colour preference and absent vs. present claim. Therefore, the distribution of males and females was equal while choosing a website with a certain colour or an absent/present claim. In addition, participants equally preferred colour or claim, without age influencing the choice.

3.6 Analysis

To test the hypotheses, the results provided by participants in the survey were analysed. Thus, analysing the effect of the independent variables on the three dependent variables. Therefore, the statistics program SPSS was used. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted for sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level to determine significance, presented by a p-value, of existing differences between groups. This significance score for alpha was set to .05 for all tests. Therewith, if the p-value was smaller than .05, the hypotheses was significant. The multivariate analysis method was used as more than one dependent variable was studied (Beukelman & Brunner, 2016) and more than one independent variable was included in the research (Liu, 2018). Additionally, as mentioned before, two chi-square scores have been calculated to analyse differences between groups and a "significance statistic" (McHugh, 2013). However, there was no significant relationship between gender and age regarding the conditions.

4. Results

After a multivariate analysis was conducted, F-values used in this measure are reported to see which of the dependent variables can be determined as significant. In addition, the mean and standard deviation of all conditions are outlined. However, before those results are being presented, Wilks' Lambda will be analysed to detect the general effect between colour and claim, as independent variables.

4.1 Overall effect between independent variables

To analyse the overall effect between the two independent variables colour and claim, Wilks' Lambda (Λ) was performed. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the two independent variables. For colour no significant main effect can be detected $\Lambda = .94$, $F(1,97) = 2.02$, $p = .115$. Furthermore, the second independent variable claim also reaches no significant main effect, with $\Lambda = .97$, $F(1,97) = .70$, $p = .553$. Lastly, analysing the interaction of colour and claim, again, no significant interaction effect of the two variables can be depict, with $\Lambda = .95$, $F(1,97) = 1.44$, $p = .236$. In conclusion, no significant effect between the two independent variables can be reached in any condition.

Table 1

Multivariate Test: Wilks' Lambda

Effect		Value	F	Sig.
Colour	Wilks' Lambda	.94	2.02	.115
Claim	Wilks' Lambda	.97	.70	.553
Colour*Claim	Wilks' Lambda	.95	1.44	.236

4.2 Sustainability Perception

For sustainability perception (Q1-Q4) results indicate a main effect between sustainability perception and colour with F (1,97) = 5.20, p = .025. However, there is no main effect between claim and sustainability perception, with F (1,97) = 0.03, p = .856. Furthermore, the combination of colour and claim on sustainability perception was also not significant, F (1,97) = 1.00, p = .318. Moreover, comparing the two colours it can be said that using blue on a website (M = 5.41, SD = .82) increases sustainability perception more than using green (M = 5.01, SD =.96).

These results have consequences for the hypotheses. Hypothesis H1 "Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used" needs to be rejected as no significance can be found for green being used on the website. In addition, the second hypothesis H2 "Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used and an eco-claim is present on the website" can also be rejected as no sufficient p-value was reached.

Table 2

Test of Between-Subject Effects: Sustainability Perception

Effect	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Colour	4,315	5,20	**,025**
Claim	,028	,033	,856
Colour*Claim	,835	1,00	,318

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Sustainability Perception

Green	Blue	Claim present	Claim absent
M = 5.01	***M* = 5.41**	M = 5.22	M = 5.17
SD = .96	***SD* = .82**	SD = .94	SD = .90

4.3 Purchase Intention

With respect to purchase intention, colour has also an effect on this variable (Q5-Q8) with a significance level of F (1,97) = 4.40, p = .039. In addition, there is no main effect between purchase intention and claim with F (1,97) = .59, p = .442. Lastly, no significant interaction effect of colour and claim can be detected for purchase intention, F (1,97) = 1.80, p = .182. Furthermore, results of the study indicate that using blue on a website (M = 5.45, SD = 1.05) induces a higher purchase intention in comparison to green (M = 5.01, SD = 1.12).

In conclusion, the results lead to the rejection of hypothesis H3 “Purchase intention increases if green is being used and an eco-claim is presented on the website” as no significance for the factors were found.

Table 4

Test of Between-Subject Effects: Purchase Intention

Effect	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Colour	5,229	4,40	**,039**
Claim	,707	,59	,442
Colour*Claim	2,144	1,80	,182

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics: Purchase Intention

Green	Blue	Claim present	Claim absent
M = 5.01	***M* = 5.45**	M = 5.15	M = 5.29
SD = 1.12	***SD* = 1.05**	SD = 1.12	SD = 1.09

4.4 Trust Level

Lastly, no significant main effect between colour and trust level (Q9-Q12) can be detected, as F (1,97) = 3.08, p = .082. Therefore, this main effect can be determined as marginal significant. Moreover, a claim has also no significant effect on the level of trust, with F (1,97) = 0.003, p = .954. In addition, the combination of colour and claim have also no significant interaction effect on trust level, F (1,97) = 0.11, p = .740. Hence, for trust level, no significance has been reached for colour, eco-claim or the interaction effect of both.

In conclusion, hypothesis 4 "The trust level towards the company increases if blue in combination with a claim is being used on the website" needs to be rejected as no significant effect can be depict from the results.

Table 6

Test of Between-Subject Effects: Trust Level

Effect	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Colour	3,365	3,08	,082
Claim	,004	,003	,954
Colour*Claim	,121	,11	,740

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics: Trust Level

Green	Blue	Claim present	Claim absent
M = 4.90	M = 5.26	M = 5.07	M = 5.05
SD = 1.04	SD = 1.01	SD = 1.09	SD = .99

4.5 Overview of hypotheses

Table 8 provides an overview of the hypotheses of the study and indicates if the hypotheses are significant or if they can be rejected.

Table 8

Significance of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Results
H1: Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used.	Reject
H2: Users perceive a product range as more sustainable if green is being used and an eco-claim is present on the website	Reject
H3: Purchase intention increases if green is being used and an eco-claim is presented on the website	Reject
H4: The trust level towards the company increases if blue in combination with a claim is being used on the website.	Reject

5. Discussion

The present study was designed to answer the research question "*Which element on a corporate website does influence the perception of users towards sustainability, of a product range, the most*" and, additionally, to discover effects on purchase intention and trust level of consumers. Therefore, four different manipulations were included on the landing page of EMSA thermo mugs. Colour and claim were assigned as the independent variables and sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level were chosen to be dependent variables. No mediation variable was included. In total four hypotheses (see Table 8) were answered by an experimental study.

After analysing all results of the study, none of the stated hypotheses can be confirmed and need to be rejected. However, the study still reveals some interesting findings that shall be discussed in the following and demonstrate that there is indeed a main effect of visual elements on consumer perceptions.

5.1 General discussion of findings

5.1.1 Discussion of colour

First, the study revealed some results that differed from expectations resulting from previous research (i.e. DeLong & Goncu-Berk, 2012). Hence, no positive effect of green on sustainability perception was detected. However, results suggest that instead of green the colour blue has a positive effect on sustainability perception and next to that also on purchase intention. Some justifications for that result can be depict from Chu & Rahman (2010), who found out that blue can also be a colour presenting sustainability as the colour can be connected to the ocean and therewith, to nature. Furthermore, the authors claim that blue can imply recyclability. Thus, it could be that participants also held this perception and perceived blue as a good indication of sustainability. And as results show that for many participants sustainability is very important this might have been a reason for higher purchase intentions of participants of the products, because with thermo mugs, i.e. the number of coffee-to-go cups can be decreased. Relating to this argument, the product range might also play an important role in this discussion. The study indicated a landing page of thermo mugs which can be used several times. For participants this might have been a clue for recyclability and that the mugs are sustainable. Moreover, a study also found that blue is perceived as being environmentally friendly by consumers (Sundar & Kellaris, 2017).

Furthermore, as only a marginal significant effect of colour on trust level was detected, colour has no positive influence on trust on a corporate website. This is because marginal significance does not indicate high confidence levels of results, has "low evidential values" (Olsson-Collentine, Van Assen, & Hartgerink, 2019) and hence, only significant levels shall be perceived as credible in this research. Moreover, in literature, a lot can be found about blue having a positive effect on trust as several authors found out that trust can be increased by blue (Alberts & Van der Geest, 2011; Mahnke, 1996). However, the present study does not support these findings. One reason might be that the colour does not fit the corporate field the company and products can be embedded in. On the one hand, big companies like Facebook or PayPal successfully use the colour to increase user's trust (Smith, n.d.). On the other hand, a study conducted by Schorn, Brunner-Sperdin and Ploner (2014) still revealed that blue has no significant effect when used in some online shops and that the effect of blue on trust can differ across sectors. This argument might also apply to the household sector EMSA GmbH is embedded in, leading to decreased trust levels. Furthermore, it might also be that participants did not perceive the extraction of the website as aesthetic and therefore, no high trust was achieved as the appearance of the website does play a role in this discussion (Bart, Shankar, Sultan & Urban, 2005). One last argument is that "trust is developed over a process of repeated visits to a website as a user gains experience and believes that his/her expectations are met during the visits" (Urban, Amyx & Lorenzo, 2009). This was not possible in the study as participants only once saw the website and, additionally, only saw an extraction of the website.

5.1.2 Discussion of claim

Second, a claim placed on a corporate website has no effect on sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level of consumers and provides no benefits for the company. One explanation for that argument might be that the effectiveness of eco-claims is still controversial among researchers. On the one hand, literature suggests that eco-claims are beneficial marketing strategies (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011), increase purchase intention of consumers (Rashid, 2009) or influence the positive perception of products (Ferguson, Hair, Vinhas da Silva, Oliveira-Brochado & Mollah, 2017). On the other hand, other researchers criticise that eco-claims need to be understandable and believable for consumers to buy the products (Krarup & Russel, 2005) and that internal eco-claims - also named CSR claims - have no significant effect on, for instance, purchase intention (Gosselt, van Rompay & Haske,

2017). One reason the authors give is that claims designed by companies might lead consumers to “attribute intrinsic motives to uncertified internal” claims and make them inconceivable.

Furthermore, as no pre-test has proven the effectiveness and appearance of the eco-claim by asking participants about the claim, this might be another reason for the results. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that there is no reason to believe that the claim failed the intended purpose because of participants not understanding the claim. This argument is justifiable as most participants were from Germany.

5.1.3 Discussion of interaction effect

Additionally, results indicate that the interaction effect between colour and claim was not significant and had no effect on the three dependent variables. For both variables, literature exists, indicating that certain colours are sustainable and that eco-claims have beneficial outcomes for companies (Koos, 2011; Kuhn, 1999). However, only limited research has been conducted including and combining both manipulations and demonstrating that the interaction of certain colours and eco-claims influences the variables depict in this study. Therefore, the novelty of the study might be a reason why outcomes did not match assumptions of existing literature. Lastly, as the claim was not proven to be effective by a pre-test, this might be another reason for the results.

5.1.4 Sustainability

Lastly, another interesting result was detected by analysing demographics of participants in the study. As one question asked about the importance of a sustainable life and sustainability for participants, many respondents indicated that sustainability plays an important role in their lives. This finding confirms that, nowadays, the tendency of people rating sustainability as important increases, that the perception of the environment changes and that more people are willing to buy sustainable products (Chang & Chen, 2014). This might also be increased by the awareness of climate change or that environment movements lead by, for instance, Greta Thunberg, shed more light on sustainable and environmental problems (Carrington, 2019; Watts, 2019).

5.2 Practical and theoretical implications

After all results of the study have been analysed some practical implications for EMSA GmbH can be detected. Those might also be useful for other companies aiming at an increased level of sustainability perception of their products by adapt the corporate website. Furthermore, as the study followed a scientific manner, some theoretical implications can be outlined.

In the case of EMSA GmbH, the company can use a blue colour on the website to enhance sustainability perception and purchase intention of the thermo mugs. Thus, the company might either colour the header and footer of the website in blue or only one object. In addition, the adaptions might also be applied to other product categories and their landing pages, for instance, include a blue colour on the landing page of the food storage container or drinking bottles. Moreover, as the study did not reveal any indication of increasing the trust level of consumers by including a certain colour or claim on the website, the company might prepare further research to get more satisfying results on these variables. Lastly, EMSA GmbH should not include the claim on the landing page of the products, as the eco-claim was proven to be not effective.

Next to practical implications for the company, theoretical implications can be outlined. As the study aimed at website design of corporate websites, the study contributes to the field of marketing and how a company can better design their website to make it more sustainable. Results of this study implicate that it is possible to transfer sustainability perception and purchase intention by colour cues, using the colour blue. The research included an eco-claim in combination with colours aimed at indicating sustainability, which was not done in this format in previous research and can be used to build a foundation to research more about eco-claims and colour clues on websites. Moreover, the study contradicts previous research, as trust level was not being increased by blue. Therefore, further research can be conducted to support or deny this outcome and to help professionals or academia to formulate better statements and suggestions within the field of communication.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Although, the study provided new insights about elements on a website increasing sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level, some limitations of the study can be outlined. The construct of limitations can be defined as “the systematic bias that the

research did not or could not control and which could inappropriately affect the results" (Price & Murnan, 2004). Naming a first limitation, a larger sample size could have been included in the study. In this study, originally 141 participants were recruited, but some respondent's data had to be deleted because of unfinished questionnaires. In other studies, the problem of smaller sample sizes than expected also occurs, and a larger sample size (i.e. N=200- or N=300) could provide more insights into the topic, higher reliability and validity.

Second, only three dependent variables were measured in the study. Including more variables might have revealed more effects of colour and eco-claims on specific variables. In addition, by using more variables the chance of rejecting fewer hypotheses can be increased. Further variables to study might be, for example, brand perception, attitude towards the company, attitude towards the brand or sustainable behaviour. Therewith, even more interesting knowledge can be provided with "minimal additional effort" (Price, Jhangiani & Chiang, 2015).

Third, no mediator was included in the study which limits the research in that manner. The mediator would have provided some additional information about the relation between the independent variables and the dependent variables and why or how their associations are strong (Bennett, 2000). For example, if participants who already act sustainable would purchase a product of a product range more likely because green was used in the header, this would be one possible study question to include as a mediator. Thus, sustainable behaviour as a mediator could have revealed even more in-depth knowledge. Moreover, trust can also influence purchase intention (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2005) and, therefore, might also be a mediator.

Fourth, no comment section was included in the questionnaire before the survey was closed and participants were thanked as participants were not able to provide final thoughts. This limitation was concluded based on one comment of a participant send to the researcher by mail. The participant claimed that the website entailed "missing information about the manufacturing of the products and used materials or possible recycling information, to state an argument about sustainability. This is because I feel that the mug needs to be used several times to be environmentally friendly in general." According to the participant, it was difficult to conclude about the whole product range only by seeing the landing page of thermo mugs. If a comment section would have been presented at the end of the survey more detailed information would have been collected. This would have provided more knowledge within the study. Aligning with this argument, no underlying thoughts of respondents were researched as

the questionnaire was closed-ended. By conducting interviews or focus groups this limitation might be overcome.

Finally, due to time limitations, no pre-test was conducted to examine if participants in the study truly perceive green and blue as sustainable colours and understand the eco-claim and give indications if the manipulations were well-chosen. As the manipulations were based on existing literature, participants in the study might not act in alliance with the theories, as theory and reality sometimes contradict each other. Additionally, in a pre-test non-Germans could have evaluated the eco-claim and the explanation for it giving in English, to reveal if they fully understand what was meant by the claim. Thus, it could be that some participants did not get the message the eco-claim was intended to communicate, resulting in no significance of the eco-claim on the dependent variables. Additionally, a manipulation check could then also be conducted, as the test indicates the effectiveness of manipulations used in the study and if participants are aware of the manipulated elements on the website.

Taking all the limitations into account, some further research can be done in the future, using this study as a basis or starting point. Firstly, not only colour and eco-claim could be manipulated but also the text stated on the landing page of the thermo mugs. Therefore, including specific words or phrases to possibly nudge consumers in their behaviour. However, those words should be detected by a pre-test to choose the best text option. For example, a sentence might be included, stating why buying the product is beneficial for the environment.

Secondly, more dependent variables might be included in the study, for instance, how often the website is being opened when, i.e., an eco-claim is presented on the website compared to the website without any sustainability clue. This might be done utilizing an experimental setting and a program like Google Analytics. In addition, it might be studied what clues on the website influence consumers' sustainability perception. Therefore, eye tracking could be used to analyse elements participants look at when evaluating the website. Afterwards those elements can be adapted to get beneficial outcomes.

Lastly, the same study could be repeated but showing the whole landing page of the thermo mugs and not only an extraction. However, before new research will be conducted it can be studied if the chosen colour and claim are perceived as sustainable or if other colours and another claim should be used. Afterwards it can be analysed if consumer perceptions change with those new conditions compared to the present study.

6. Conclusion

The study was designed to reveal if elements like a green vs. a blue coloured header and footer and an absent vs. present claim on a website might influence sustainability perception, purchase intention and trust level. Hence, to contribute to the field of corporate website design as well as supporting a German company. The research question "*Which element on a corporate website does influence the perception of users towards sustainability, of a product range, the most"* was answered by employing a 2x2 experimental design. Therefore, four different website conditions were designed each containing a different manipulation. Although all hypotheses needed to be rejected, the study still revealed some interesting findings. To answer the research question, it can be concluded that using blue on a corporate website is the most beneficial element and influences the perception of users towards sustainability, of a product range the most. Additionally, blue can also increase purchase intention of consumers but not trust.

Applying the results to the professional field, outcomes can be used by the German company EMSA GmbH to adapt their website and to increase sustainability perception and purchase intention. Additionally, the study results can be depict by marketers of other companies and communication professionals to better design corporate websites or increase sustainability perception of products in e-commerce. As the study can be perfectly embedded into the field of communication science the research and outcomes might be a basis for further research.

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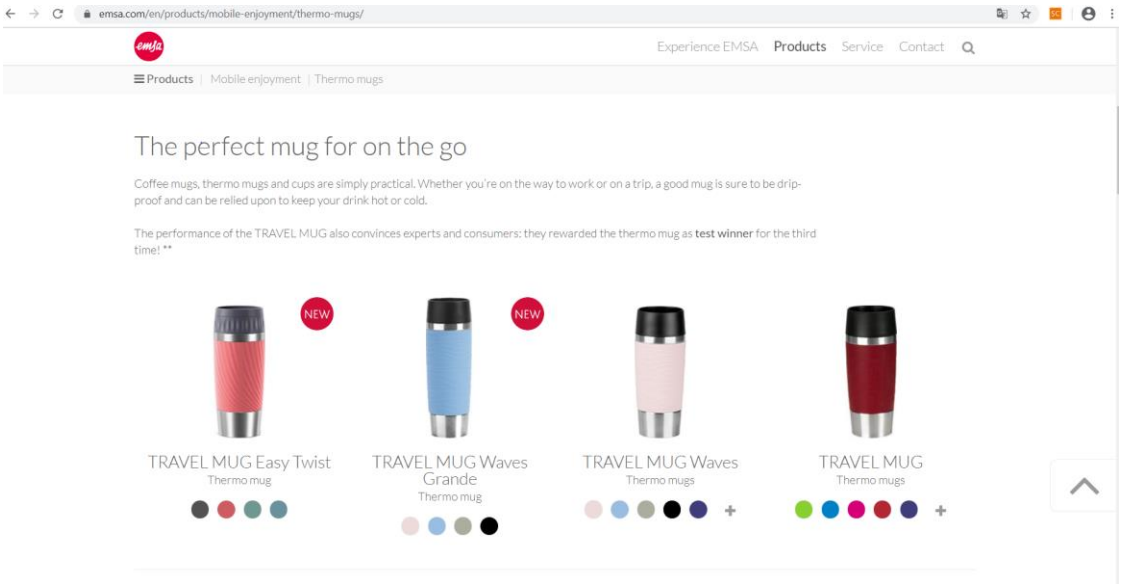
Enclosures

Appendix A - Landing page of EMSA TRAVEL MUG



Source: https://www.emsa.com/en/products/mobile-enjoyment/thermo-mugs/

Appendix B – Eco-claim designed by EMSA GmbH

Source: https://www.emsa.com/umdenken-statt-wegwerfen-nachhaltigkeit-bei-emsa/

Appendix B.1 - Explanation of claim in English

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Please take a moment to look at the following website of a German company showing a product range of vacuum mugs and answer the following questions.

[Comment: The claim on the website is in German an states three words: "Umdenken" means to rethink something, "statt" means instead of and "wegwerfen" means to throw something away. The claim implies that one should rethink the own behaviour instead of throwing something away.]

←

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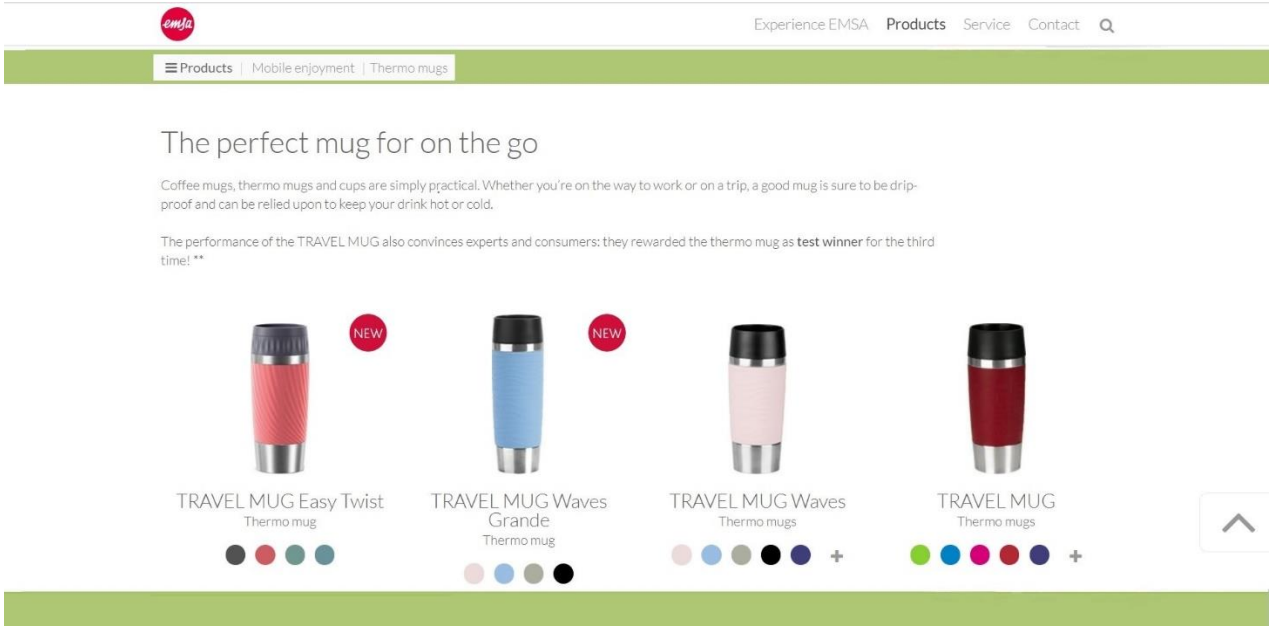
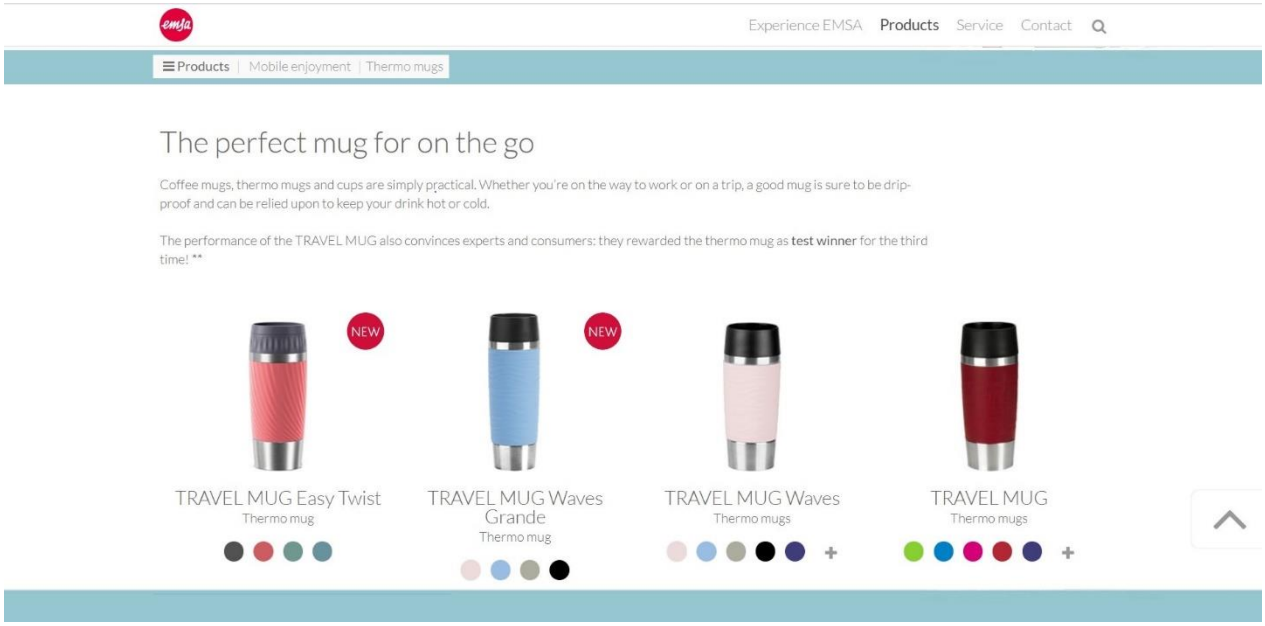
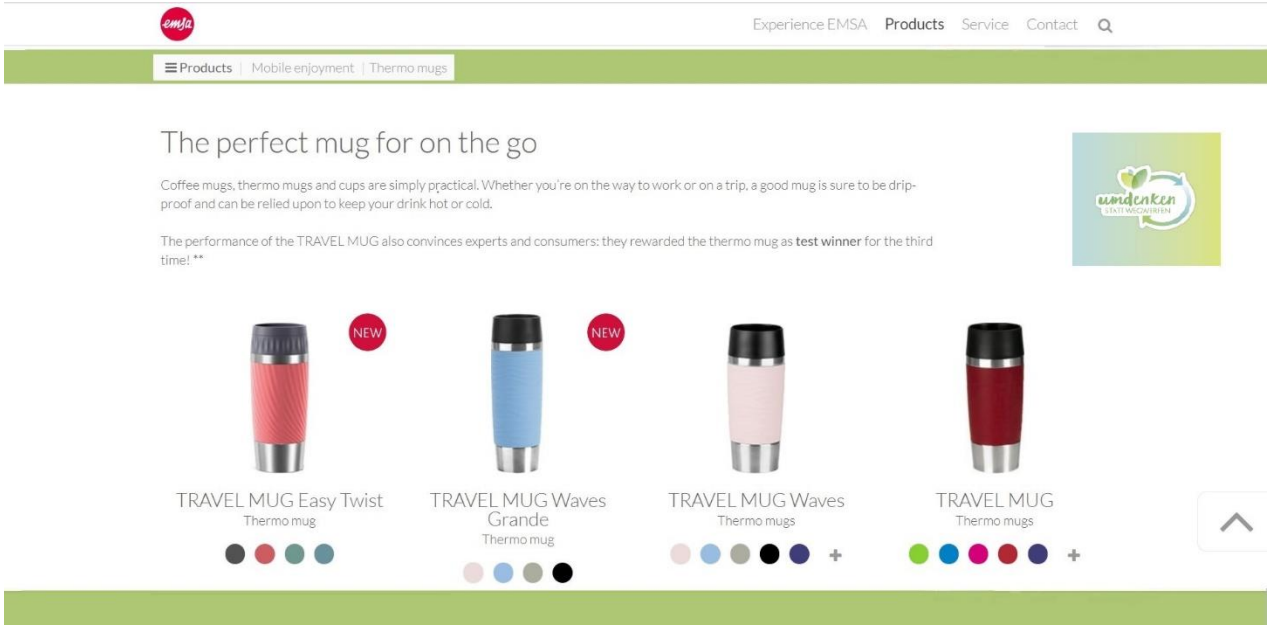
Appendix C - Website with green colour, absent eco-claim



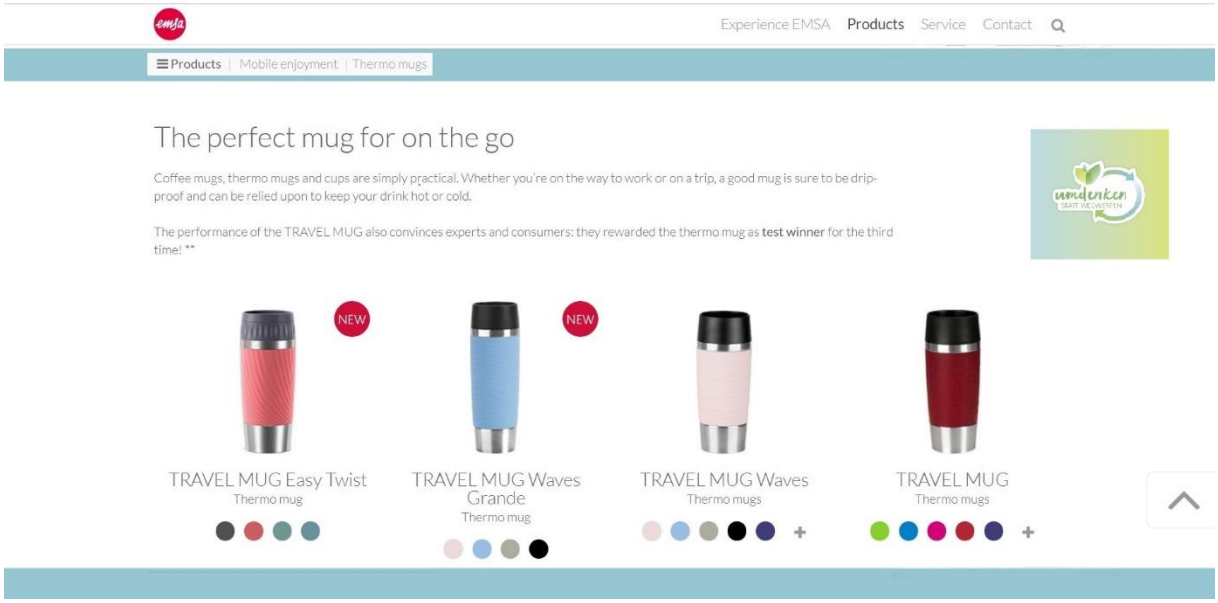
Appendix D - Website with blue colour, absent eco-claim



Appendix E - Website with green colour, present eco-claim



Appendix F - Website with blue colour, present eco-claim



Appendix G - Informed consent and introduction to study

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Introduction slide

Thank you for participating in this study about website evaluations. The study is part of my Bachelor thesis at the University of Twente. The purpose of the research is to detect which elements on a website can influence certain perceptions of users. Therefore, the website of a large German company, has been used as a basis.

This questionnaire will approximately take between 5-7 minutes.

Please be remembered that there are no wrong answers, so please give your personal opinion in a honest manner. In addition, participating in this research is completely voluntary, meaning that you can opt-out any time and stop answering the questions.

Your data will be processes anonymously and will not be shared with third-parties or outside of this research. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the information obtained by this study.

If you have any further questions or concerns, or like to get an abstract after the study is finished feel free to contact the researcher via mail m.flaschka@student.utwente.nl.

By clicking on the arrow on the right, you voluntarily participate in the survey, are above 18 years and got familiar with the information provided above.

Appendix H - Survey Questionnaire

Start of Block: Block 1

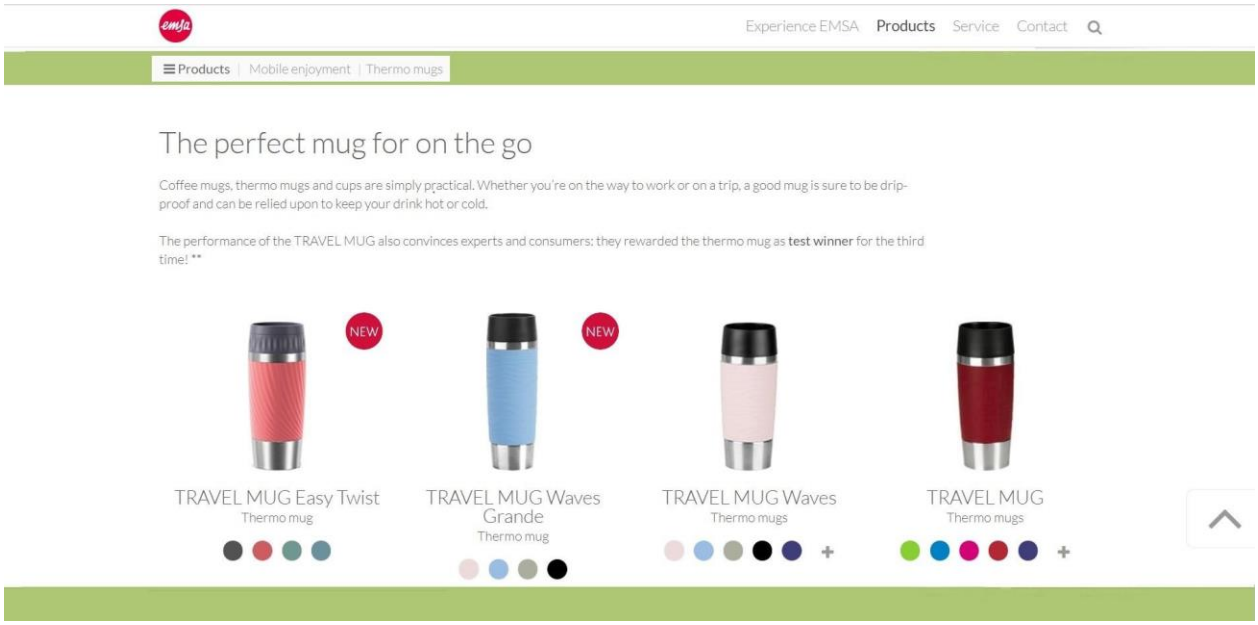
Introduction slide

Thank you for participating in this study about website evaluations. The study is part of my Bachelor thesis at the University of Twente. The purpose of the research is to detect which elements on a website can influence certain perceptions of users. Therefore, the website of a large German company, has been used as a basis.
This questionnaire will approximately take between 5-7 minutes.
Please be remembered that there are no wrong answers, so please give your personal opinion in a honest manner. In addition, participating in this research is completely voluntary, meaning that you can leave the questionnaire and stop answering the questions at any time.
Your data will be processes anonymously and will not be shared with third-parties or outside of this research. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the information obtained by this study.
If you have any further questions or concerns or like to get an abstract after the study is finished feel free to contact the researcher via mail m.flaschka@student.utwente.nl.
By clicking on the arrow on the right, you voluntarily participate in the survey, are above 18 years and got familiar with the information provided above.

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Please take a moment to look at the following website of a German company showing a product range of vacuum mugs and answer the following questions.



WHAT A GREAT WEBSITE!

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Q1: The product range is sustainable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q2: The product range does not harm the environment.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

WHAT A GREAT WEBSITE!

Q3: The product range protects the environment.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q4: The company acts sustainable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Q5: I would purchase a product of the product range.

- ○ Strongly disagree (1)
- ○ Disagree (2)
- ○ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ○ Somewhat agree (5)
- ○ Agree (6)
- ○ Strongly agree (7)

Q6: I would purchase a product of the product range to protect the environment.

- ○ Strongly disagree (1)
- ○ Disagree (2)
- ○ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ○ Somewhat agree (5)
- ○ Agree (6)
- ○ Strongly agree (7)

Q7: I would purchase a product of the company to protect the environment.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q8: It's very likely that I would purchase other products of the company.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Q9: I have a high trust level that the product range is sustainable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q10: I have a high trust level that I will protect the environment when using a product of the product range.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

WHAT A GREAT WEBSITE!

Q11: I have a high trust level towards the company.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q12: I have trust that the company takes steps to protect the environment.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Block 6

Finally, please indicate your demographics by answering the following questions.

Whats is your age?

_____

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other / Rather don't tell (3)

What is the highest degree or educational level you have completed? (for which you received a diploma / that you finished or doing)

- University degree (1)
- College degree (e.g. Germany=Fachhochschule; Dutch=HBO) (2)
- High School graduate (e.g. Germany=Abitur; Dutch=VWO) (3)
- Secondary School graduate (e.g. Germany=Realschule; Dutch=VMBO) (4)
- Secondary School graduate (e.g. Germany=Hauptschule; Dutch=VBO) (5)
- Other / Rather don't tell (6)

WHAT A GREAT WEBSITE!

What is your nationality?

- German (1)
- Dutch (2)
- Other / Rather don't tell (3)

End of Block: Block 18

Start of Block: Block 22

Please indicate how familiar you are with the company EMSA GmbH.

- Not familiar at all (1)
- Slightly familiar (2)
- Moderately familiar (3)
- Very familiar (4)
- Extremely familiar (5)

Please indicate how important sustainability is for you.

- Not at all important (1)
- Slightly important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Very important (4)
- Extremely important (5)

End of Block: Block 7

Closing slide
Thank you for your time and participating in the study. Your responses have been recorded. The data will now be analysed.
If you have some last comments or questions, feel free to contact the researcher via mail: m.flaschka@student.utwente.nl

Appendix I: Demographics Tables

Figure 3

Gender Distribution

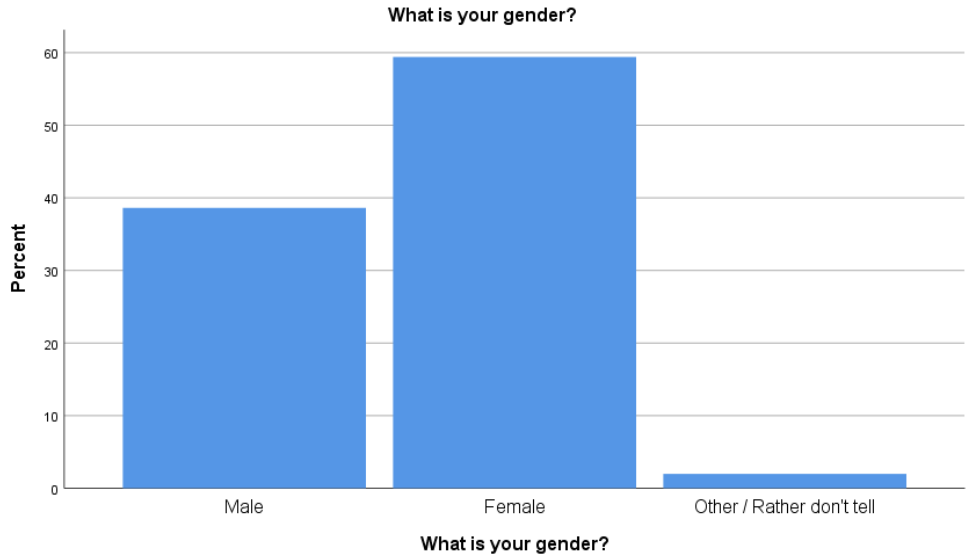


Figure 4

Age Distribution

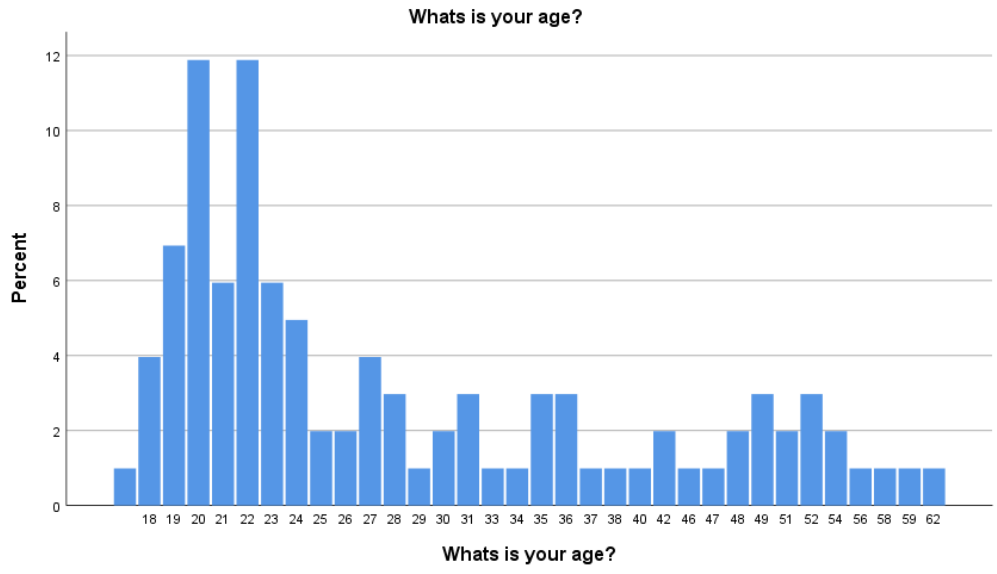
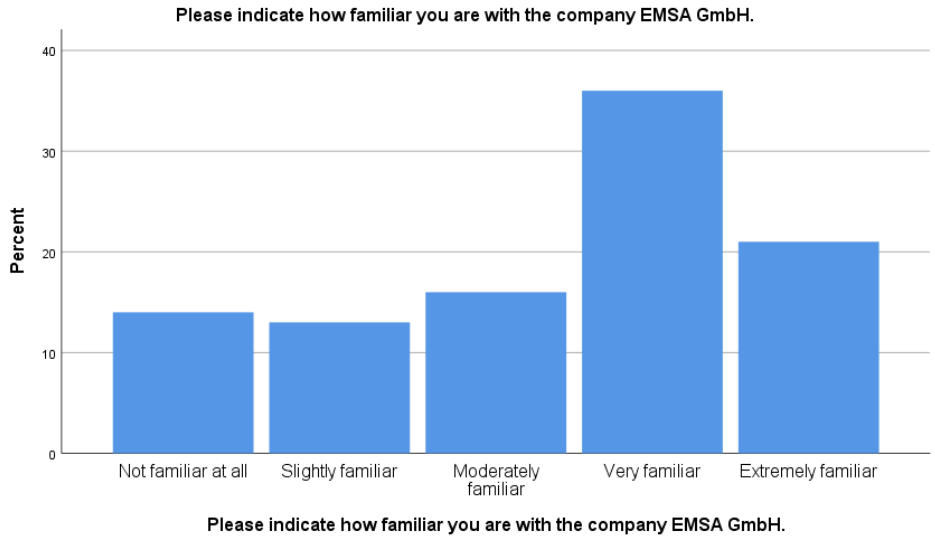


Figure 6

Familiarity with EMSA GmbH



Appendix J: Search Matrix and Logbook

Research question

Which element on a corporate website does influence the perception of users towards sustainability, of a product range, the most?

Variables

Sustainability perception, purchase intention, trust, green, blue, eco-claim, website design

Databases

For the sake of finding useful and sufficient results for the theoretical framework and other, supportive scientific sources, different databases have been used. Three different databases have been selected, namely Google Scholar, Scopus and the University of Twente's online library LISA. The platform Google Scholar holds a large amount of scientifically published articles from scientists located all over the world. Therefore, a lot of different papers have been retrieved from that database. In addition, searching for relevant articles for the study on Google Scholar was easy and, thus, many important articles have been selected from the website. Furthermore, the LISA website has been used as a supportive data base for literature, especially when no access was granted for relevant articles. Oftentimes, LISA held those articles and therewith, the researcher was able to retrieve even more interesting knowledge. Lastly, Scopus was used as a database as the website holds many articles reflecting on topics in social sciences and was, therefore, very crucial to use for this stud placed in the field of communication science. Additionally, high valued materials like, i.e. peer-reviewed journal articles or scientific books can be found on the website, also important to use in the present study.

Literature Search Matrix

Constructs	Related terms	Broader terms	Narrower terms
Sustainability perception	Sustainable, ecological-friendly, sustain, awareness	perception of environment, protect environment, perception of company's doings, attention, recycling, green	Environmentally friendly, sustainability, environmental awareness
Purchase intention	Buying, shopping, transaction, aim, motive	Investment, good deal, ordering, procure, purpose	Purchasing, to buy, plan
Trust	Trusting, trust less, to trust, reliability	Belief, faith, credence, certainty, positiveness, ability of something, truth	Trust in, confidence, reliance

Green	Greenish, colour	Grass, lawn, warm colour	Sustainable colour, environmentally friendly colour
Blue	Colour, blueish, sky blue,	Cold colour, trust colour, azure	Sustainable colour, environmentally friendly colour
Eco-claim	green label, logo, trademark, sustainable claim	Green tag, tag, offer of rewards	Eco-label, sustainability label
Website design	Internet, web page, home page, art	Composition of website, corporate design, colours, method	Corporate website, design attempts

Search Actions and Results

Date	Database	Search terms and strategies	Amount of hits	Related terms
27-02-2020	Scopus	"green" AND "marketing	3.769 hits	Greenwashing, marketing strategy, green advertising
04-03-2020	Google Scholar	"Eco-claims" AND "sustainability "	107 hits	Eco-claims, eco-labelling, sustainability, eco-advertising
10-03-2020	Google Scholar	"Sustainability perception" AND "colour"	88 hits	Sustainability, consumer perception, sustainable, green, blue
19-03-2020	University of Twente online library "LISA"	"Colour green" AND "sustainability perception"	379 hits	Green marketing, influence of green, environment
23-03-2020	Google Scholar	Colour blue meaning	882.000 hits	Blue, sustainability, trust, reliability
07-04-2020	Scopus	"colour" AND "blue" AND "marketing"	137 hits	Colour psychology, health claims, trustworthy
23-04-2020	Google Scholar	"Company website" AND "sustainability"	9.240 hits	Sustainability reporting, corporate sustainable information,

28-04-2020	Google Scholar	“Sustainability” AND “marketing strategy”	55.400 hits	Green marketing, marketing strategy, towards sustainability
07-05-2020	Scopus	“eco” AND “labels” AND “purchase” AND “intention”	29 hits	Eco-labelling, predict purchase intention, eco-friendly, consumer be