Sustainable Shock Advertisement – When Wicked Problems Need Disruptive Solutions

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ABSTRACT

In times where consumers are behaving unsustainable and are overwhelmed by advertisements, sustainable companies face not only the duty to solve wicked sustainability problems, since they can be made accountable for consumer's unsustainable behaviour. They are involved in a fight of gaining legitimacy and marketing their green products within an unsustainable and highly competitive playing field. The effectiveness of Shock Advertisement within the context of sustainable entrepreneurship shall be tested by a quasi-experiment. The results seem to be promising and depict Shock Advertising to be a radical marketing tool in order to gain legitimacy by delegitimizing competing unsustainable and greenwashing companies.

Keywords: Marketing, Sustainable Marketing, Green Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Shock Advertisement, legitimacy

INTRODUCTION

Ocean pollution, epidemics, widespread poverty, food scarcity, the loss in biodiversity and the well-known problem of the climate change are all wicked problems. Wicked problems are known as sustainability problems that are impossible to solve by using the present way of thinking and acting, (Kasser & Zhao 2016; Brundiers & Wiek, 2010). Having the mentioned wicked problems in mind, our planet needs wicked solutions to be able to address the problems as effective and soon as possible (Kasser & Zhao 2016), stressing out the need of a global shift towards sustainability (Smith & Sharicz, 2011), which has been recognized by businesses, academics and also governments (Chekima, Oswald, Wafa, & Chekima, 2016).

Since companies are able to influence consumers heavily (Young, Russell, Robinson & Barkemeyer, 2017) their marketing tools play a major role when effecting consumer behaviour (Shrum, McCarty, Lowrey, 1995). According to Morgan (2015) enterprises are even capable of influencing the behaviour and actions of consumers going beyond the classical customer-company relationship (Morgan, 2015) and through this encouraging a reduction on their environmental impact (Young, Russell, Robinson & Barkemeyer, 2017). Additionally, it has been discovered that branded product companies seem to have a stronger connection, and for this reason a greater capability to influence consumers than governments have on their residents (Wigley, Sinha, Goworek, Fisher, Cooper, Woodward & Hiller, 2012). As a result of this, companies or brands are often approached by the government to collaborate, to take on an exemplary role (Spaargaren & Mol, 2008) and create sustainable awareness by showing consumers how to reduce their environmental impact (Bocken & Allwood, 2012). Building up on this, first an enterprises' effective marketing strategy is capable of influencing the behaviour of a consumer and having a great effect on one's environmental impact, which could involve purchasing sustainable products (Janssen & Jager, 2002) instead of unsustainable ones. So, sustainable products must be promoted (WCED, 1987: 42; 58), also in order to be able to compete on the market (Chabowski, Mena & Gonzalez-Padron, 2011), especially against their unsustainable competitors. Therefore, secondly a good marketing strategy is crucial for the success of a company in terms of making profit and competing on the market (Rai & Choudhury, 2014). Being successful on the market includes gaining legitimacy among stakeholders. Connecting to this, an effective marketing strategy may bring changes to a consumer's mind and through this legitimize an enterprises' products or services, resulting in legitimizing the whole company (Rai & Choudhury, 2014). This is important especially for

sustainable entrepreneurs, since they are the ones struggling to legitimize their products in contrast to their unsustainable competitors (Pinkse & Groot, 2015; Delmar &Shane 2007). This barrier could be overcome by an innovative and superior marketing strategy (Turcan, Marinova & Rana, 2012).

Since marketing and sustainability are inextricably intertwined (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019), this paper will focus on advertisement, as being the most visible form of marketing and a part of the marketing mix, known to be the ground base of marketing (Goldsmith, 1999). Concisely, this paper will focus on a specific marketing advertisement tool, which is known to be used by NGOs already, but hasn't been researched on much yet: "Shock Advertising". Against this background the paper will undertake a qualitative approach to answer the research question:

"How can Shock Advertisement influence consumers and create a competitive advantage for sustainable entrepreneurs?

By answering this, I also aim to find whether a new radical and modern marketing approach is needed in order to tackle wicked problems efficiently. A qualitative approach and a quasi-experiment shall help to answer the research question and point out crucial factors for efficient Shock Advertising (SA). This paper responds to the call of sustainable entrepreneurs, with especially smart and emerging enterprises, enabling them to understand the opportunities given by SA, thus helping them to compete successfully on the market. On top, a framework will be created to point out importance, functions and connections of the necessary steps leading to legitimation of sustainable products. Moreover, this may contribute to potential new directions for research on sustainable marketing strategies and consumer behaviour, especially because until now there are no studies on SA being used to legitimize sustainable products by delegitimizing competitors.

In the theory section I review empirical studies on the importance and capability of companies to influence sustainable consumer behaviour. Connecting to this, the significance of legitimation will be described, which shall outline its function for consumer acceptance and competing on the market. Then, literature on Marketing and SA will be reviewed to show up function and usage. I then present the methodology designed to capture theoretical and practical knowledge on SA and SA-strategies. Findings and results are discussed next and in the end a

conclusion is drawn by proposing a guide for sustainable entrepreneurs on how to use SA as effective as possible in order to reach quick legitimation and thus a competitive advantage - especially when operating within an unsustainable and highly competitive market.

THEORY

Companies and their obligation to support the sustainable shift

Reaching sustainability is seen as a very complex task or a "wicked" problem, so the 17 SDGs have been created as a guide to ensure the shift towards a more sustainable planet (Blok, Gremmen, & Wesselink, 2016). One of the 17 SDGs is Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). To be clear in advance, the SDGs are all interconnected, so this report is an approach as a whole towards the creation of a more sustainable world. Nevertheless, SCP describes the urgent need of reducing our ecological footprint by changing the way of producing and consuming resources and goods in order to achieve sustainable development and also economic growth (Gunawan, Permatasari, & Tilt, 2020). The SDG takes into account shifting towards sustainable behaviour on a company- but also consumer- level (Chan, Weitz, Persson & Trimmer, 2018). This indicates that in order to reach a shift towards sustainability and to tackle wicked problems, understanding sustainable consumer behaviour is important (Biswas & Roy, 2015), as well as influencing consumer behaviour to reach a shift towards sustainable behaviour and consumption (Kostadinova, 2016; Connolly & Prothero, 2003).

To consume sustainable (as a consumer) does not mean to change every habit and to be fully dedicated to every sustainability trend, since it is "not about consuming less but consuming differently" (UNEP 1999 as cited in Jackson & Senker, 2011: 1030). To explain it more concisely, "sustainable consumption is the use of goods and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations" (Norwegian Ministry of Environment, 1994 as cited in OECD, 2002: 9). So, there is a focus on companies' environmental degrading actions too, which is why it has been agreed on, between businesses and the UN, to focus on 'a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development' (WCED, 1987, pp. 42, 58). Through this, it is clear companies need to strive for integrating sustainable development strategies and focusing on cleaner production (Kostadinova, 2016), but thereby

consumer behaviour needs to be targeted as well, for the reason that consumer actions may harm the environment just as companies may do (Young & Middlemiss, 2012).

Businesses are capable of influencing consumer behaviour by marketing their products or services to customers (Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey, 1995) and according to Morgan (2015) companies are even capable of influencing the behaviour and actions of customers going beyond the classical customer-company relationship and through this encouraging a reduction on their environmental impact (Young, Russell, Robinson & Barkemeyer, 2017). Going a step further, it is said to be a company's responsibility to focus on influencing and changing consumers' behaviour with regards to a sustainable lifestyle (Young & Middlemiss 2012), because done the right way it may lead to a huge sustainable impact (Kollmuss & Aygeman, 2002). Underlining this, Bocken & Allwood explain that companies have a wider responsibility and can even be held accountable for consumers' intentions and interests, since consumer's behaviour is driven by business actions (Bocken & Allwood,2014). Adding up to this, when comparing a branded product-company's capability of influencing consumers to a government's capability of doing so, Wigley et al. (2012) found out that the company's influence is much greater, because of a stronger connection with the consumer (Wigley et al., 2012).

Connecting to the previous paragraph, it is clear that companies can stimulate and influence a consumer towards reaching a sustainable mindset. Taking into account both, companies and consumers: "sustainable patterns of production and consumption can, it is argued, avoid reducing growth and compromising on economic and social demands, and instead permit increased prosperity through creation of new markets, decent jobs, and opportunities…" (Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019:3). So, it is clear that companies can focus on reducing sustainable impacts and at the same time making profit (Alberti & Garrido,2017; Hockerts 2015).

Sustainable products

In order to make profit, companies have to sell products or services to customers. Profit is inevitable for companies to exist on the market, "it is not a claim against the enterprise, but a claim of the enterprise without which it cannot survive" (Drucker, 1958: 87). Since this report focuses on sustainability and sustainable companies, it is meant that sustainable products or services are being sold in order to make profit. Sustainable products are described as products

that represent a significant achievement in reducing environmental impacts (D'Souza, Taghian & Khosla, 2007:70). On top, sustainable products must incorporate an environmental and social friendly production process as well as a responsible product usage (Hartmann & Ibanez, 2006).

Legitimacy

Building up on the previous literature reviews, enterprises are capable of influencing the behaviour of a consumer and having a great effect on consumer's environmental impact, which involves purchasing sustainable products instead of unsustainable ones. In order for a company to enact their values and beliefs and hope to make a difference (O'Neil & Ucbasaran, 2016: 1), as well as to operate in a profitable manner and sell its' products successfully to consumers, there is an important aspect that has to be taken into account: Legitimacy (Suchman, 1995).

There are two definitions of legitimacy that were highlighted by Suchman (1995) of which one describes legitimacy as an evaluative dimension: "legitimation is the process whereby an organization justifies to a peer or superordinate system its right to exist." (Maurer, 1971: 361 as cited in Suchman 1995). The second definition has a cognitive focus and describes legitimacy as "congruence between the social values associated with or implied by [organizational] activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975: 122; Parsons, 1960: 175 as cited in Suchman 1995), meaning that organizations are seen as legitimate „when they are understandable, rather than they are desirable" (Suchman, 1995: 573). Suchman combines those definitions and defines legitimacy as „a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). In short, the definition includes gaining acceptance amongst other parties, for example customers, which is highlighted by Suddaby, Bitekine & Haack (2017). According to Table 1, legitimacy may occur between an organization and its external environment and also between multiple actors, especially those seeking or opposing change (cf. table 1 by Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 61). This could be e.g. a sustainable business or entrepreneur wanting to change a market and/or consumer's awareness in order to sell products. And exactly there lies an issue,

since it is an effort to gain legitimacy for sustainable entrepreneurs (Pinkse & Groot, 2015). To the question how legitimacy occurs, legitimacy may be seen as a process or as a perception, according to Suddaby, Bitekine & Haack (2017). The former describes agency as playing a major role in explaining how legitimacy is socially constructed. By that a conscious and deliberate actor (e.g. a business or entrepreneur) becomes the prominent variable. The latter (legitimacy as perception) focuses on legitimacy being coined by individual and collective cognition (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 4). This indicates gaining legitimacy is

Table 1

Three Streams of Legitimacy Research

	Property	Process	Perception
What is Legitimacy	▪ A property ▪ A resource ▪ An asset ▪ A capacity ▪ A thing	▪ An interactive process of social construction	▪ A social judgment ▪ An evaluation ▪ A sociocognitive construction
Where does legitimacy occur?	▪ Between the legitimacy object (e.g. an organization) and its external environment ▪ Mostly at the organization and field levels	▪ Between multiple social actors, particularly those seeking or opposing change ▪ Mostly at the field level, also at organization (group) levels	▪ Between individual and collective evaluators (groups, organizations, society) ▪ Multi-level, but leaning towards the micro
How does legitimacy occur?	*Contingency view:* Through "fit" between attributes of an organization and external audiences' expectations	*Agency view:* Through purposive efforts of change agents and other social actors	*Judgment view:* Through perceptions, judgments and actions of individuals under the influence of collective-level institutionalized judgments

Figure 1: Three streams of Legitimacy Research, Source: Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017: 61

important for the acceptance on a consumer's market. Going a step further, legitimacy is needed to survive on the market (Delmar &Shane, 2007) as well as to compete successfully on it (Morse & Keohane, 2014; Zelli, 2018).

For this report legitimacy, in the context of sustainable entrepreneurship, is important to understand, because it acts as a logical element of Marketing and SA, since marketing is a tool to reach legitimacy (Kover, 1971) by influencing consumer's minds and thus justifying a company's and its product's existence on the market. In the case of SA, the focus may be to delegitimize by creating negative feelings in a consumer's mind, e.g. when NGOs disclose disturbing and cruel images of specific issues.

Marketing

As outlined in the last paragraphs, companies are able to influence consumers heavily (Young, Russell, Robinson & Barkemeyer, 2017) and their marketing tools play a major role when effecting consumer behaviour (Shrum, McCarty, Lowrey, 1995). So, a company's effective marketing strategy is capable of influencing the behaviour of a consumer and at the same time encouraging a shift towards a more sustainable mindset, while having a great effect on one's environmental impact through driving sales of sustainable products. Connecting to this, marketing can be used as a tool to reach legitimacy (Kover, 1971) by bringing changes to a

consumer's mind and through this legitimize an enterprises' products or services, resulting in legitimizing the whole company (Rai & Choudhury, 2014). Additionally, it is said that marketing and sustainability are inextricably intertwined (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019), which makes it an inevitable part of this report. Following up on this, I claim marketing to be key for companies promoting the urgency of sustainability and the need for a shift towards green products contributing to a solution for wicked sustainability problems.

Marketing affects consumer behaviour directly by influencing the psychological dimensions (Dewsnap & Jobber, 2002). Moreover, the psychological factor has the highest correlation towards consumer behaviour compared to the other factors such as social, cultural, personal and economic (Furaiji, Łatuszyńska & Wawrzyniak, 2012). This makes marketing an effective organizational tool when wanting to create a sustainable mindset at consumer's level. Another important task of marketing is to satisfy the customer on the market (Furaiji, Łatuszyńska & Wawrzyniak, 2012), by pushing consumerism (Berry, 1972; Kotler, Jain, Jain & Maesincee 2002), which indicates "managing profitable customer relationships" (Kotler, Armstrong, Harker & Brennan, 1990: 36). Swinging back and connecting to sustainability, "the sustainability notion explicitly incorporates both the satisfaction of human needs and the need of conserving the natural environment" (Tapia-Fonllem, Corral-Verdugo, Fraijo-Sing & Durón-Ramos, 2013: 711). That's why an approach towards green marketing is more suitable than the classical marketing approach within this context. In comparison to the marketing definition of Kotler, Harker & Brennan (1990) mentioned in the last paragraph, green marketing is defined as following: "building and maintaining sustainable relationships with customers, the social environment and the natural environment" (Belz & Peattie, 2009: 3). In comparison to classical marketing, the focus is evenly distributed among the consumers and the environment by including commercial marketing of green products and social marketing of pro-environmental behaviours (Rettie, Burchell & Riley, 2012: 422).
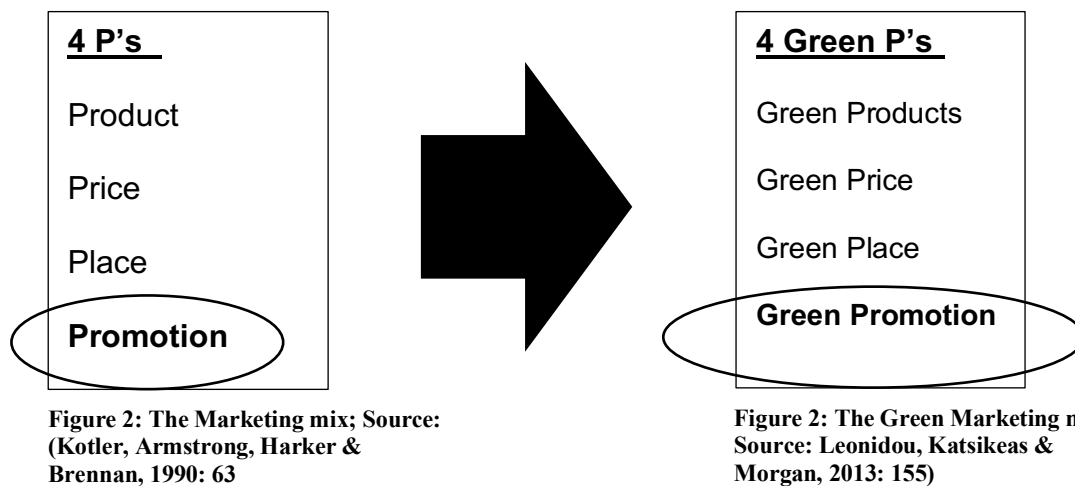
Advertisement

This paper will focus on advertisement, as being the most visible form of marketing (Goldsmith, 1999). Advertisement is a part of the marketing mix, also known as the 4P's, the ground base of marketing and it belongs to the category "Promotion", which incorporates "activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade customers to buy it" (Kotler, Armstrong, Harker & Brennan, 1990: 63). So, I propose that through promotion, sustainable products can

be communicated towards consumers, which at last leads to a reduction in their environmental impact as explained previously.

Figure 2 shows the marketing mix. But since this report has a focus on sustainability by creating a competitive marketing tactic for sustainable entrepreneurs, it is more appropriate to look on the "Green Marketing Mix" in figure 3 by Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan (2013). An approach towards green promotion takes into account the communication of environmental benefits of a company's products and services (Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013).

4 P's

Product

Price

Place

Promotion

Figure 2: The Marketing mix; Source: (Kotler, Armstrong, Harker & Brennan, 1990: 63

4 Green P's

Green Products

Green Price

Green Place

Green Promotion

Figure 2: The Green Marketing mix; Source: Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013: 155)

"Green promotion may include the advertisement of environmental appeals and claims as well as publicizing environmental efforts" (Banerjee, 2002; Menon, Menon, Chowdhury & Jankovich, 1999 as cited in Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013: 154).

Important is the way how products are promoted, since the competition in product-related markets is very high (Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013). The right product promotion strategy communicates products to a consumer and persuades one of buying it (Kotler, Armstrong, Harker & Brennan, 1990). This also includes gaining legitimacy, which gives a company the possibility to compete on the market (Morse & Keohane, 2014; Zelli, 2018). In order to measure the effect of advertisements, the parameters "Attention" and "Attitude" are often used. Attention makes up the base, examining whether the advert stands out compared to the norm (Raab, Unger & Unger, 2010). The possibility of purchasing a product is attached to

the Attitude, explaining that a more positive attitude towards a product increases the possibility of a purchase (Kroeber-Riel, & Weinberg, 2003). Since there is a need for "classic marketing models to be future-fitted, marketing must be deconstructed, redefined, and stretched. Marketing is not going to work if its only charge is to pump up the sales of existing goods, i.e. traditional make-and-sell marketing" (Kotler, Jain, Jain & Maesincee, 2002). That's why new and disruptive marketing and advertisement approaches are needed, especially for sustainable entrepreneurs, having to prove themselves on the market in order to gain legitimacy, while competing against unsustainable and/or greenwashing companies (Parida, V., Wincent, 2019; Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013; Brennan & Binney, 2008; Peattie and Peattie, 2009).

Shock Advertising

"Creating meaningful progress towards sustainability requires more radical solutions than just the development of new products and product substitutions amongst consumers"
(Peattie & Peattie, 2009: 261)

Peattie & Peattie said that Green Marketing has been ineffective until now and claim the need of radical solutions and also White, Habib & Hardisty (2019) claim that broader marketing strategies may be useful, but green marketers need unique ones (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019: 24). As it is businesses having great influence on consumer behaviour by using marketing and advertisement, it makes sense to look for possible innovative and disruptive methods to improve the effectiveness of their promotion strategies. For this reason, I am focusing on SA as a radical marketing tool to promote sustainable products.

SA is known to be used by NGOs already by raising awareness on sustainable and/or social issues e.g. by showing shocking images of social and environmental catastrophes expressing agony and death (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013; West & Sargeant, 2004). In other cases, its use is gaining attention, "particularly when introducing a new product or brand" (Parry, Jones, Stern& Robinson, 2013:113). Since consumers are flooded with all kinds of information from marketing campaigns and advertisements, SA is being used to set oneself apart by triggering surprise and emotions within the viewer's mind (Parry, Jones, Stern& Robinson, 2013; Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003:269) "by deliberately violating norms for societal values and personal ideals" (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003:269). This report will mention psychological effects of SA but does not function as a detailed psychological framework, since it would exceed this reports scope by far. Another aim of SA

is gaining media attention, since Media can serve as a free multiplier effect when an advertisement is published also leading to increased mouth-to-mouth propaganda among viewers (Jones 2002:9; Vezina&Paul 1997:178).

Emotions and thoughts triggered by SA

SA functions as an impulse to create fear in the viewer as being the emotional reaction to the advert (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019; Hastings, Stead & Webb,2004). "Thus, if executed correctly, SA can successfully challenge consumer attitudes" (Parry, Jones, Stern& Robinson, 2013:119). Another stimulus of SA that can influence sustainable ambitions and behaviours is guilt (Onwezen, Antonides & Bartels, 2013; Parry, Jones, Stern& Robinson, 2013). This is because consumers start adopting individual responsibility for unsustainable outcomes (Lerner and Keltner, 2000 cited in White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019: 29), which invokes the feeling of moral responsibility for the environment (Kaiser & Shimoda 1999). An additional driver for a shift towards a sustainable mindset and behaviour is sadness, which has been examined by Sevillano, Aragon´es & Schultz (2007). Coming back to "fear" as an emotional response to a shock, it can lead to the perception of helplessness in the consumers mind not knowing how to overcome the shocking issue, resulting in rejection (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Due to this, it is examined to combine the fear appeals with a solution for the problem shown in the SA (Li 2014; Osbaldiston & Sheldon, 2002 as cited in White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019: 29).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWRORK

In this report I want to examine how SA can be used as a tool to legitimize oneself by delegitimizing others (e.g. unsustainable or greenwashing competitors), instead of using SA solely as a gimmicky tool to promote one's brand image, or to use shock to create a negative image around a topic e.g. smoking or alcoholism. The following model is assumed to be a way how SA can be used leading to a successful establishment of a sustainable product and product image by legitimizing one's own products, while delegitimizing competitor's products.
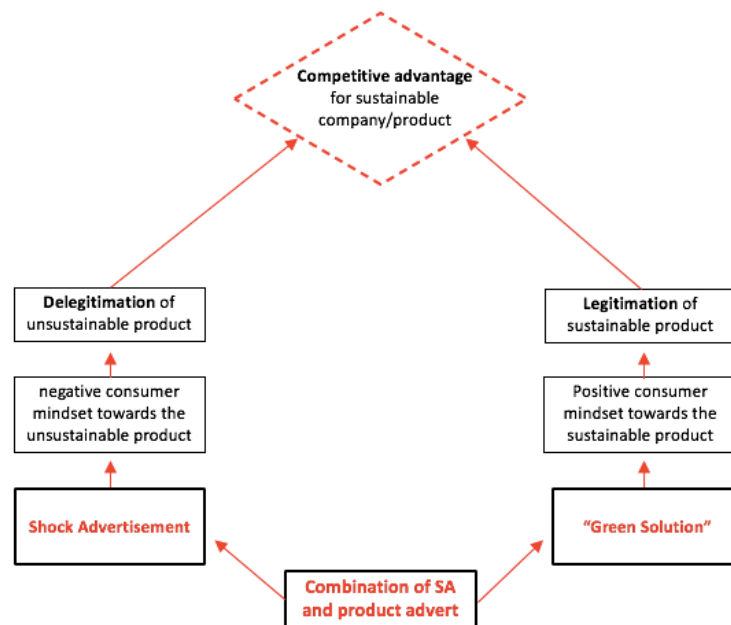
Figure 3: sustainable shock tactics (source: own representation)

I propose that sustainable companies should show actions, processes or products of unsustainable competitors in order to disclose their negative consequences and impacts on the environment and/or society to create a shock, which is illustrated as **"Shock Advertisement"** in the following framework. Subsequently, the sustainable company should offer their own sustainable product as the **"green solution"**, presented as the solution for the negative shock created by the SA. In the following framework these two processes are merged into **"Combination of SA and product advert"**. Showing the "Shock Advertisement" results in a negative consumer mindset towards the unsustainable product presented in the SA, whereby the "green solution" that follows the SA results in a positive consumer mindset towards the sustainable product, since it sets itself apart by showing all positive characteristics the unsustainable product didn't have. Thus, a positive consumer mindset towards a product may lead to the legitimation of the product, resulting in a competitive advantage for the company. Additionally, delegitimizing a competitor's products, shall benefit the competitive advantage of the sustainable company, resulting in a successful establishment of product or brand/company image.

Gifford & Nilson (2014) state that if a consumer is not informed about the problem, potential positive actions to take and possible consequences, a consumer would not be able to encounter a behavioural change towards sustainability (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). This is why such an advertisement highlighting a sustainable products' characteristics by disclosing and

downgrading the characteristics of unsustainable ones, can be an initial step towards a sustainable mindset (Sussmann & O'Brien,2016; Peattie &Peattie, 2009). It is claimed to be effective because the solution to the issue is given in form of necessary knowledge for the consumer regarding actions and consequences (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019). Adding up to the literature review, shock tactics and threat appeals are frequently used in order to facilitate large-scale changes in behaviour and attitudes (Sutton, 1992) and it has been found out that SA may cause "Shitsorms" and negative attitudes and decreased sales of a brand (Sabri and Obermiller, 2012). But until now "there is little consideration of the use of these tactics in different organizational contexts and the effect on the consumer" and there has only been research on the effect of SA when used for own products in order to capture attention (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013:1).

The question is: Can SA be used as a trigger to rethink or even reorient purchase decisions of a consumer towards unsustainable products? Simply promoting a sustainable product to people may not be enough when the overall goal is to gain a competitive advantage and promote sustainability!

METHODS

Research Approach

As described by Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019) an inductive research approach focuses on already existing theory and thereby formulates new hypotheses, which are consequently examined within a research in a "data-driven manner", using qualitative data. That's why for this research an inductive approach has been chosen.

Research strategy

A qualitative research approach incorporates a direct, usually face-to-face, interaction with participants of a study leading to a detailed examination and understanding of a specific topic (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Through this, a qualitative approach may help to gain a wider knowledge of already existing theories, while at the same time new ideas are added to the researched topic (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019)

This study aims to find out how Shock Advertisement influences consumers to the favour of sustainable entrepreneurs and their products or enterprises. That's why it is crucial to get detailed and extensive information from participants of an experiment or a study. Hence, since this topic hasn't been researched on much, it makes sense to use a qualitative research approach to gain detailed information and be able to deep-dive into the researched topic.

Research Design

Taking into account Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019), it is a very trustworthy and effective method to use an experimental research design method, especially because it may be tested in a chosen and set environment (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019) and the researcher mostly has control over the process (Creswell, 2013). Experimental research design is more often to be used in combination with quantitive research approaches, since results base on numbers and usually leave less room for interpretation (Cresswell, 2013). Qualitative experiments on the other hand offer the researcher the possibility to deep dive into a specific topic by very detailed and flexible interviewing within a pre-selected environment (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012), which secures collection of unique, relevant and extensive data on the researched theme (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Since this topic within the field of sustainable entrepreneurship hasn't been researched on much, meaning there is a lack of useful and appropriate secondary data, it makes sense to use a qualitative approach in form of a semi-structured interview combined with a quasi-experiment. This shall lead to the generation of new base-knowledge and by this give incentives for future research on SA within the field of sustainable entrepreneurship. Adding up to this, qualitative research anyhow is not seen as theory testing, but more as theory generation and elaboration (Rowley, 2012; Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

A quasi-experiment, compared to other experimental research approaches, indicates that groups are not randomly pre-selected, but the characteristics are intentionally chosen and set. Through this the researcher controls the assignment to the treatment condition. In addition, this means time and resources for the experiment can be reduced, since extensive pre-screening is unnecessary (DiNardo, 2010). Also, unlike in natural experiments where manipulations occur on their own without having any control over them, in quasi-experiments the researcher may control and choose any manipulations wanted (DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, & Workman, 2012). This may be very useful in areas or situations where it is not possible to set up an

experiment or randomized control trial, as Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002) have found out. Important to mention is that in this research there has been no control group, which may reduce the credibility of the outcomes, since different environments or different research designs may lead to different outcomes. Still, combined with other research approaches, quasi-experiments may provide valuable information, which cannot be attained by solely using experimental methods. That's why Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002) highlight that researchers shouldn't stick to traditional experimental designs, but use the potential coming from quasi-experimental designs, especially when working on applied research questions, as it is in this case (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). Additionally, quasi-experiments lead to an increased internal and external validity since manipulated variables and measured variables may be included within, which is the reason why they are picked up by researchers (DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, & Workman, 2012). Overall, a quasi-experiment is combined with a qualitative research approach, because of the previously mentioned advantages leading to more flexibility and attention towards the participants, while staying focused on addressing the different theories listed in the theory section (Galletta, 2013).

Sampling

For this research purposive sampling is seen as most effective, because sampling is conducted with an absolute focus on the research goal, meaning that participants are selected in terms of criteria that will allow answering the research question (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019:391). "The researcher does not seek to sample research participants on a random basis" (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019: 389), which is important because shock advertisement should be used target group specific, since it is unsuitable for the broad mass of recipients (Dimofte, Forehand & Deshpande, 2003: 7). Even Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda (2003) found out that it "was important to centre the communication within a population in which the…message had relevance and application" (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003: 271). For the present research it was important that no participant has seen the video before in order to make a surprise and shock effect more probable. Also, the participants are aged between 24-29 years, since this age group is victim of an environment that is over-saturated through adverts and marketing campaigns. This represents a challenging environment for the marketing activities of any entrepreneur. The number of participants is evenly divided into males and females in order to exclude any effect that the respective genders could have on the experiment. The most relevant criterion is that all participants drink milk at least at a regular basis (once a week). These criteria are seen as enough, whereby any additional criteria are not seen as relevant since

they are incapable of influencing or manipulating the outcome of the experiment. A short list with the characteristics of all 6 participants is presented below:

Participant	Age	Gender
P1	24	Female
P2	26	Male
P3	28	Female
P4	29	Female
P5	26	Male
P6	25	Male

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

Regarding sample size, it may be difficult to clarify the appropriate sample size when taking into account all opinions from different authors (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). What can be said is that sample sizes in qualitative research should be big enough to achieve data saturation and small enough not to get lost in the mass of information and data (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007: 289 as cited in Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019: 397). It is said to be any sample size that can be seen as appropriate as long it can be justified; "If data saturation is the criterion of sample size, specifying minimum or maximum sample size is pointless" (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019: 398). In this research I have chosen 6 participants with the possibility to interview more people afterwards when no data saturation is reached, and answers may vary completely from each other. During the coding process I have noticed that hardly any new codes were generated after the third interview already. When finished coding it was detected that answers were overlapping and were very similar for each interviewee, which made it unnecessary to interview more people.

Quasi experiment

The interviewees were told to ride 5 stations with me on the tram to get to the place where the experiment will occur. While sitting on the tram I pretended I came across a video on YouTube in that moment and asked the participant to join me watching it. The video shows the shocking circumstances on conventional milk farms for big dairy producers. Information about the content of the experiment was concealed so the interviewee did not know the video was already part of the experiment, which has just started, because disclosure would've falsified the results. For this reason, an oral consent leaving out some information was valid (Tai,2012: 220) and later on replaced by a written one. "Occasionally, it is necessary to mislead the participants who are subjects of a study in order to obtain unbiased information", especially in psychological

experiments (Tai, 2012:218). That's why, until we arrived at the destination, I have been doing small talk with the participant on other topics than the video and started interviewing him after both of us took a seat in an empty room with one table and 2 chairs. Also, by this I was able to ensure the interviewees participated in the first part of the experiment in a normal daily situation with all the distractions and stimuli they already know. This kind of experiment is called a laboratory experiment, which indicates that an experiment takes place in a highly controlled or organised environment but does not have to be a real laboratory per se (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Each participant was interviewed on their opinion on the video for about 10 minutes. Then they were shown a website of a sustainable dairy producer and were asked to read the "About Us" section and scan through the product list the company offers. This was followed by a second short interview. The interview was conducted in German, in order to make sure the participants were able to answer questions in depth and in their native language without any language barrier, which could have led to simple, mistaken and uninvolved answers. The setup of the interview, including questions can be found in the appendix. The timeline below illustrates the course of events every interviewee went through:

Data Analysis

The results section will be divided into "post shock video presentation" (after seeing the shocking video) and "post sustainable product presentation" (after seeing the sustainable products) and the data will be assigned to the respective part, since this was the structure of the interview. Also, the data will be coded and divided into 3 different parts mirrored in the results section. The first part represents **(1) impact on emotions**, which is linked to the last two theory sections on SA. The second part **(2) effect on legitimacy** is clearly linked to the theory on legitimacy and **(3) impact on purchase behaviour** is linked to the theory sections on companies' obligations, sustainable products, Marketing and advertisement. Finally, findings and conclusions will be incorporated into a new framework that will assess the capability of SA as a way to gain a competitive advantage in the market.

Results

Post shock video presentation

Impact on emotions

By showing the shock-video, it has been found out the video creates negative emotions within every interviewee. Conspicuous emotions named, were **sympathy** or **pity**, **hate** or **anger** and

also **sadness**. Every interviewee mentioned feeling pity or sympathy for the abused animals such as P1: "I can emphasize with the animals and every animal has the right to live a happy life. These animals are suffering, and they don't know anything else than that and they have to suffer every day…". Additionally, P4 said: "I feel hate and I am very sad. Hate and pity is what I feel!". Connecting to both statements, it is not only sympathy and pity they feel, but also sadness and anger or hate. Anger and hate are what P1, P2, P3 and P4 have mentioned. Sadness has been mentioned by 4 Interviewees too, in all cases connected to either anger, hate or pity, such as P5 mentioned very precise: "I am angry, sad and I can't understand this". Either the **lack of comprehension** towards the animal abuse, **helplessness** or **desperation** were other feelings that have been mentioned by all interviewees, such as P3 replied to question 3: "my feelings are affected, because I feel pity and cannot understand the way they keep the animals". P6 has summarized the findings by answering "It triggers desperation, sadness and helplessness" and "when I see how the animals are abused…I feel pity". Also, P6 says he is **overwhelmed** now and doesn't know whether this problem could be solved, since many people consume dairy and eventually don't want to give up on their habit. Adding up on this P1 and P4 both directly said they are overwhelmed and feel **guilty**, because they haven't realized the problem earlier, "I was living in my glossy varnished little world" (P4). So, in these cases the bad emotions are projected directly on to the consumer.

Effect on legitimacy

It has been found out the video has a **negative effect on the legitimacy** of conventional dairy products and the companies producing them. The interviewees mentioned the video made them **sceptical, aware and considerate** about conventional dairy products. P1 has mentioned "I will make some research on companies now, but I think in most cases it will be as shown in the video, since I know their prior goal is to make money". Also, P3 said: "I will immediately check on my products I have in my fridge" and P6 says: "Now, before I buy any dairy product, I will get information on its background". Additionally, it has been mentioned that milk now will only be purchased from the local farmers treating their animals properly, or from organic shops (P1 and P6). For every interviewee there is no reason anymore consuming milk and dairy products the way they have consumed it before, which means there is a loss of dairy product's legitimacy, as P5 clearly said: "why should I keep on buying these products? I see no reason for this anymore!". One interviewee also goes as far as that he says "these products sold by big supermarkets should be prohibited by law, so they go bankrupt. I will stop buying those products, so supermarkets see there is no reason for the supermarkets to keep them in their

assortment" (P3, Question 6). This is another indication for **losing legitimacy**, since there is **no justification** for the products to exist on the market. On top, all interviewees stated to inform others on their experience and share their opinions with them.

Impact on purchase behaviour

As P5 clearly says in the last paragraph, she sees no reason in buying conventional dairy products anymore, it indicates a change in her purchase behaviour. Also, every interviewee answered question 4 stating that the shock video has an effect on their purchase behaviour. P1 and P4 are willing to stop their milk consumption and search for plant-based alternatives: "I will either stop consuming milk or find alternatives" (P1). P2 and P3 explain they were going to consume milk and dairy products from highly transparent producers to make sure the products they consume are cruelty free and good quality. P5 and P6 both stated they will not support the conventional dairy industry anymore, by consuming milk consciously: "I will decrease my milk consumption, but still drink milk from time to time from good suppliers" (P5). P6 adds up saying "I will consume milk with greater awareness. For example, organic milk or from a small private owned farm". Answering question 6, P6 mentioned that a solution for the issue is either to stop drinking milk, to consume organic milk or to switch to plant-based alternatives, which he will take into account too.

Post sustainable product presentation

Impact on emotions

Each interviewee connected positive feelings to the sustainable company and its products, such as P1: "I feel positive and it makes me happy". So, **happiness** and **positivity** are emotions that came up after showing the sustainable alternative to conventional dairy products. **Relief** and **hope** were additional emotions that were mentioned directly by P6 saying, "I feel relief and hope", as an answer to question 7. Connecting to this, every interviewee mentioned to have a **clear conscience** as they buy the sustainable alternative. P2 said "I would be happy and have no guilty conscience" and P4 said "I feel relieved and I'd have a clear conscience".

Effect on legitimacy

As stated in the previous paragraph, the interviewees have positive thoughts on the sustainable products. It has been found out they **see a good reason for the company and products to exist** as e.g. P3 says, "I love the transparency of the company. I know where the products come from and I know why they are produced". P5 says she is happy supporting a good organisation and

contributing to a good cause, meaning the production of high-quality goods and proper living conditions for animals. Taking the higher price of the products into account, all interviewees find the price **justified**. P2 said: "of course such a production method costs more as the cows have more space, get better food etc. So, the price is more than justified". Also, P6 said: "I think when one takes care in doing something the right way, then it always has its fair price". Additionally, every interviewee sees a necessity to share the information on the new product with others.

Impact on purchase behaviour

It has been found out that all interviewees are willing to change their purchase behaviour regarding conventional milk. After showing them the sustainable alternatives, each interviewee agreed on buying the products. Even after stating to ban milk from their diet and switch to plant-based alternatives, the answer whether they would buy the sustainable products (including milk) was answered with a yes by each one of them. The reasons for this are the facts that the milk is **cruelty free**, **fair**, **organic** and produced by **high-quality** standards, which makes it **healthier** to consume too, and gives them a clear conscience, as the interviewees said.

Discussion

This research aimed to generate knowledge on a possibility of using shock tactics as a marketing strategy to strengthen sustainable product's position on a highly competitive and unsustainable market. In this case it is done by legitimizing sustainable products, while delegitimizing competing unsustainable products and through this gaining a competitive advantage on the market.

The findings of this research differ from previous theory on SA and the emotions created by it, whereby theory also seems to miss out major emotions, which could be tested throughout the experiment. This may be because, the SA dealt with in the theory by e.g. White, Habib & Hardisty (2019) or Hastings, Stead & Webb (2004) illustrates issues directly affecting the viewer (AIDS or smoking). In contrast, the SA in this research focuses on agony of animals, caused by us and the industry we support. Fear has been depicted as an emotional reaction towards SA by White, Habib and Hardisty (2019), whereby in this research, aside from helplessness, desperation and guilt, emotional reactions were sympathy, pity, hate and anger. These findings may be

important in so far that SA lacks a clear definition as it is anyhow a topic that hasn't been researched on much yet. Also, the difference is that the feelings by the interviewees in this research were channelled towards the farmers and conventional milk producers or brands, leading to their delegitimization in the interviewee's minds. Whereby, the SAs explained in the theory section mainly focus on creating bad feelings towards one's own behaviour (e.g. smoking). So, the SA used in this research may be compared to SA by NGOs showing shocking images expressing agony and death (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013) as e.g. done by the organisation PETA (see appendix) Unfortunately, it is the SA's content having influence on creating different emotions within the viewer that may be channelled in different directions as well. What both of the SAs have in common, is their goal, which is to delegitimate a process, product or an action of a single person or a whole industry. Coming back to theory, although none of the interviewees mentioned fear as a response to the SA, such as observed in the study of O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole (2009), the feeling of helplessness still came up by all of them followed by scepticism, awareness, consideration and rejection towards conventional dairy products: "why should I keep on buying these products? I see no reason for this anymore!" (P5). These feelings can be seen as part of a delegitimating process, resulting in less or no reason to purchase these products anymore. According to White, Habib & Hardisty (2019), it is necessary to combine fear appeals with a solution for the problem, so the viewer is not left alone helpless and desperate. Also, if a consumer is not informed about the problem and potential positive actions to take, a consumer would not be able to encounter a behavioural change towards sustainability, as said by Gifford&Nilson (2014). For this reason, in this research the interviewees were shown a second product after the SA, which is titled as "green solution" in figure 3. The resulting emotions were happiness, relief and hope, leading to a positive attitude towards purchasing the sustainable products. Also, the sustainable products were immediately accepted by the interviewees and seen as a "very good solution for the issue…" (P6). They see a good reason for the company and its products to exist, meaning the sustainable products gained legitimacy, as Suchman (1995:574) says. So, a shift towards a sustainable mindset, including a sustainable purchase behaviour, were reached through this experiment. Additional emotions observed, influencing the sustainable ambitions, were guilt and sadness. Participants in this research felt sad and even guilty, because they haven't realized the problem earlier. According to White, Habib & Hardisty (2019), the interviewees started adopting individual responsibility for the unsustainable outcomes, which invokes the feeling of moral responsibility for the environment (Kaiser & Shimoda 1999).

So, what happens within this process when combining a SA and a "Green Solution" is illustrated in the following figure, taken and updated from the "conceptual framework" section.
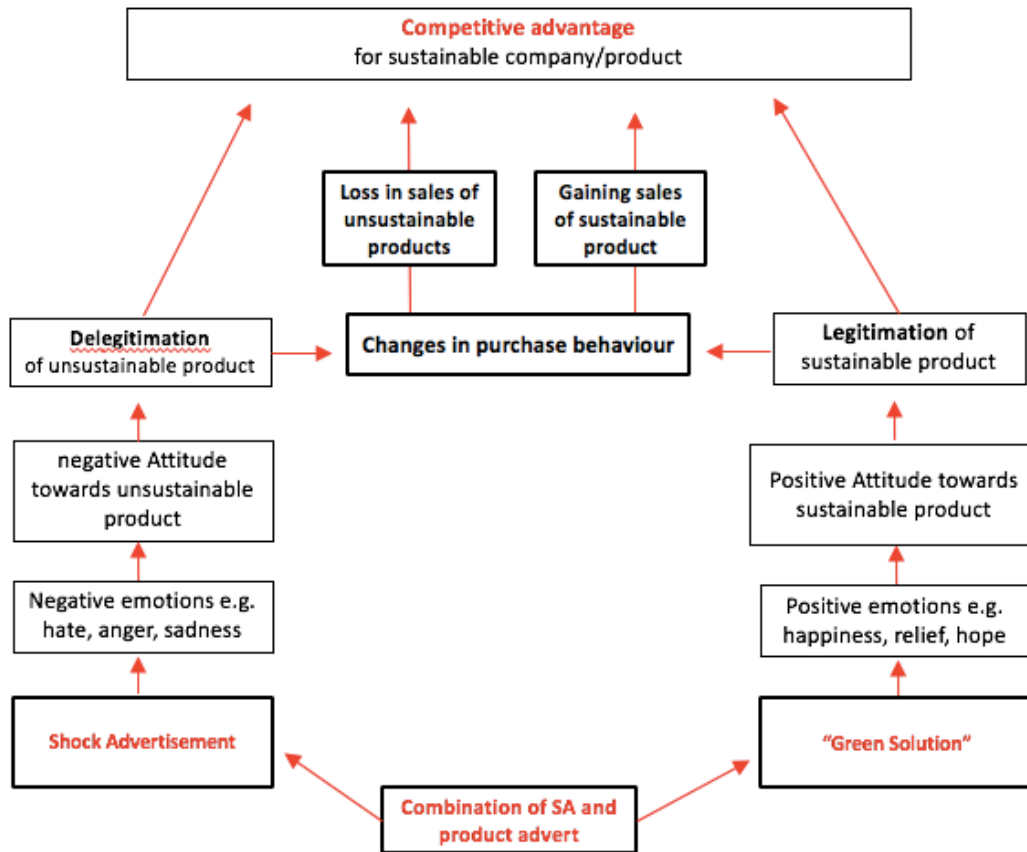

Figure 4: sustainable shock tactics updated (source: own representation)

Conventional dairy products are rejected and delegitimized through negative emotions created by the SA, whereas the sustainable products are accepted and gain legitimacy through positive emotions created by the "green solution" leading to a positive "Attitude". This positive attitude towards the sustainable products increases the possibility of a purchase (Kroeber-Riel, & Weinberg, 2003). But not only profit, also legitimacy is needed to survive on the market (Delmar&Shane, 2007), which may represent a problem for the existence of conventional dairy-products and a benefit for the sustainable ones, also because through this sustainable dairy-products have an advantage in competing on the market, according to Morse & Koehane (2014) and Zelli (2018). On top of this, all interviewees are willing to inform others about the SA as well as the "Green Solution". This is seen as a benefit for the sustainable product, since there is a chance of causing a "shitstorm", negative attitudes and decreased sales for the conventional dairy-producers (Sabri and Obermiller, 2012). At the same time positive promotion on the

sustainable product is spread, leading to a positive and free multiplier effect (Jones 2002:9; Vezina&Paul 1997:178) and creating another advantage, also in terms of legitimacy.

Adding up on this, in theory researchers don't differentiate between different kinds of SAs. One is, as previously mentioned, NGOs or governments way of shocking (e.g. PETA, in appendix). The other one focuses on gaining attention, "particularly when introducing a new product or brand" (Parry, Jones, Stern& Robinson, 2013:113), such as the fashion brands do (Benetton, in appendix). Since the 2 ways of shocking have different goals, I would define them as "delegitimizing SA" and "promotional SA". If the promotional SA would use fear or sadness as a main element, as it is done by "delegitimizing SA", customers would connect the related brand to the emotions, which in return create a negative brand image.

Implications

Since there is little consideration in the use of SA in different organizational contexts and the effect on the consumer, this thesis may motivate researchers to dive deeper into the usage of SA in the context of sustainable entrepreneurship. For the practical side, in order to reach a moderate sustainable level on earth, sustainable entrepreneurs may think more disruptive on the marketing side. Disruptive marketing tools such as this, when tested properly and approved, may create big change, especially in markets dominated by unsustainable behaviour and companies focused only on profit. "The use of shock advertising was perceived to be justifiable in the NFP sector but much less so in the FP sector" (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013:111) By combining SA, and seeing the overall goal of reaching sustainability, shock tactics may gain more justification of being used. Another positive effect could be that companies may shift towards sustainable behaviour, because of the influence of emerging, disclosing and disrupting sustainable shock-tactics.

Conclusion

Since there is a need for "classic marketing models to be future-fitted, marketing must be deconstructed, redefined, and stretched. Marketing is not going to work if its only charge is to pump up the sales of existing goods (Kotler, Jain, Jain & Maesincee, 2002). Therefore, this approach is seen as being an innovative and disruptive marketing solution benefiting

sustainable entrepreneurs. SA combined with a Green Solution may legitimize green products while delegitimizing and "swiping away" unsustainable ones.

Limitations

This research may have reached data saturation, but since it was only conducted in Germany and only tested with one product (dairy), transferability cannot be guaranteed. Also there may be differences when having samples in different ages, since younger generations may observe a stimulus differently.

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Appendix
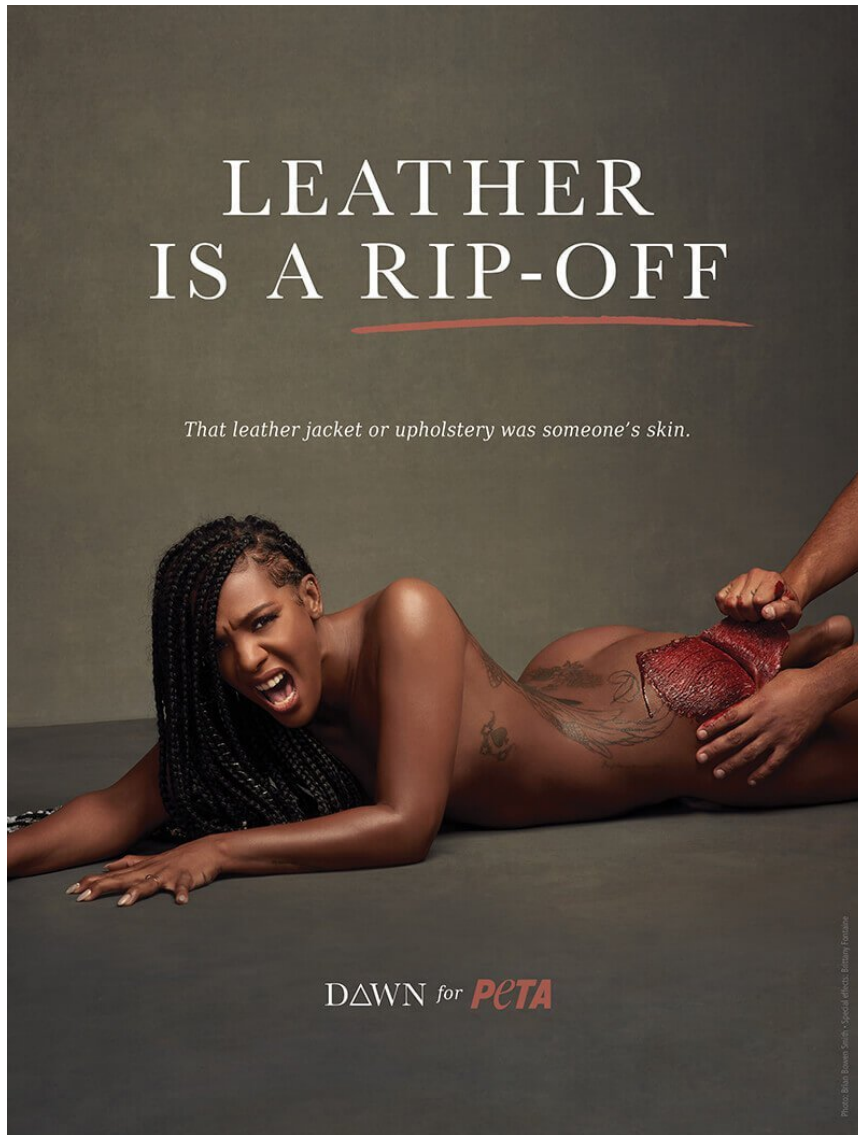

Figure 5: PETA Shock Advertisement (source: https://realfacesofanimalrights.com/peta/3145)

Figure 6: United Colours of Benetton Shock Advertising (source:
https://www.thedrum.com/news/2016/07/27/how-benetton-moved-shockvertising-be-never-shocking)