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# Predicting Consumers' Intention to Shop Online in an Emerging Market: A COVID-19 Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

As an emerging economy, Bangladesh has witnessed a remarkable development in adopting information and communication technologies over the last decade. Hence, the field of e-commerce is expanding rapidly and consumers are now using the internet as an alternative channel for buying. The fundamental purpose of this study is to predict consumers' intention to purchase online during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study attempts to explore certain factors (attitude towards online shopping, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control) affecting consumers' online buying intention. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect the primary data through the CAWI survey method. A total of 157 respondents have participated in this study from different universities in Sylhet city, Bangladesh. This study employed multiple regression analysis to test the proposed research model. The findings indicate that all the predictors have a significant impact on consumers' behavioral intention to do online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, any developing country like Bangladesh has a genuine need for more research works on the e-commerce field. This study provides some valuable insights into the adoption of the online shopping system in an emerging economy which helps the e-commerce industry to understand online consumers' behavior to develop various marketing strategies accordingly. The study also contributes to the body of knowledge both at the academic and practical levels.

JEL classification: M30, M31, M37

Keywords: online shopping, purchase intention, theory of planned behaviour (TPB), consumers, emerging market, COVID-19.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The advancements of internet technologies have brought a revolutionary impact on business operations (Albarq, 2006). Worldwide e-commerce is facilitating and rapidly transforming conventional retailing into a progressively growing online trading platform. Most modern organizations are going online while maintaining their offline business as well (Hathiramani, 2013; Santos & Ribeiro, 2012; Trenwith, 2011). Such market dynamism has shaped the consumption pattern and purchasing habits of customers (Dennis et al., 2008). Nowadays, consumers are purchasing different products and services online using the internet and related technologies (Olson & Olson, 2000; Levy & Weitz, 2001). Thus, online shopping is playing a significant role in the purchase behavior of people around the world (Rehman et al., 2019). The popularity of online shopping is growing because people perceive it as a more convenient, time-saving, and seemingly cheaper method than traditional shopping (Bhatti et al., 2020; Alagoz & Hekimoglu, 2012; Hartono et al., 2014). It allows consumers to purchase from home or wherever they are located at any point in time (Liu et al., 2012).

It also offers consumers more information about a product with a high level of transparency enabling them to make comparisons among many online retailers in terms of price or quality of products (Delafruz et al., 2011). But online shopping has disadvantages too. Consumers cannot touch or smell items and there is also the risk of dissimilarity between the actual product and the products visible on the website. Consumers are sometimes unwilling to shop online because of their insecurity about retailer honesty as well as all other risk associated with online shopping (Bhatti et al., 2020). However, an individual's online purchase intention is influenced by his or her motivation, perception, belief, and attitude. Favorable attitudes towards online shopping are positively associated with consumers' online shopping intention and actual use (O'Cass & Fenech, 2002; Ahn et al., 2004; Ratten & Ratten, 2007; Nasri & Charfeddine, 2012; Kitchen et al., 2014; Mansour et al., 2016; Jaffar & Musa, 2016; Hasbullah et al., 2018).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has a wide-reaching effect on the online shopping behaviors of consumers (Pandey & Parmar, 2019). After the active outbreak of COVID-19, various infection control measures such as social distancing, quarantine, and lockdown are taken around the world (Andrienko, 2020). People have been asked to stay at home to slow down the pandemic (Hasanat et al., 2020). During the lockdown, buying and selling goods or services online become a convenient option to fulfill the needs for daily necessities as well as other items (Lufkin, 2020). Online purchasing channels are considered convenient shopping venues eliminating consumers' risk of getting infected in crowds in stores. Thus, e-commerce businesses have gained greater acceptance for their contribution during the COVID-19 outbreak (Yao, 2020; Jones, 2020). Many regular businesses also made substantial transformations and went virtual enabling customers to shop online. So, consumers' willingness to do online shopping has accelerated during the pandemic and led to new consumer behavior in determining purchasing patterns (Lufkin, 2020).

However, to develop an effective platform to facilitate online shopping, it is important to understand the consumers' perspectives (Liao & Shi, 2009). Hence, several theories have been proposed to predict consumers' online behavior (Goldsmith, 2001). Over the past decade, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has become a widely accepted model for addressing consumers' behavior. The purpose of this paper is to investigate consumers' intention to shop online during the outbreak of COVID-19 with the help of the Theory of Planned Behavior in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. The outcomes of the study will surely make a meaningful contribution to e-commerce research, particularly to predict the customers' online shopping intention, and will benefit the e-commerce industry to design and develop an effective online buying system to attract consumers.

## 2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Consumers' purchase intention is an important predictor of online shopping behavior which ultimately leads to the actual behavior of consumers (Gregoire, 2013). Besides, the perceived risks and benefits associated with online purchases influence the buying intentions of consumers (Hidayanto et al., 2012; Bhatti et al., 2020). In this aspect, the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a trigger to induce the majority of people who were reluctant to shop online to pursue the new mode of shopping because it provides a relatively safe way to shop during the pandemic and there is also no alternative when staying or being locked at home (Pandey & Parmar, 2019). However, consumers with different characteristics may react to online shopping in different ways (Goldsmith & Flynn, 2004). Consumers' characteristics such as personality or demographic factors have a remarkable influence on their online shopping behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2003; Al-Maghrabi et al., 2011). This study attempts to predict the online purchase intention of consumers from Bangladesh. It is to be noted that Bangladesh is an emerging economy and the concept of online shopping has just gained the attention of the population here. While the consumers of Bangladesh were just shifting from traditional to modern channels, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the change. This study particularly tries to measure the Bangladeshi consumers' intention to shop online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there is a lack of research concerning the consumers of this specific market. Though the concept of online shopping is very familiar, no previous studies have been found regarding the purchase intention of consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. Hence, these issues indicate the significance and rationality of the current study.

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB is one of the most influential theories in determining the human behavioral intention developed by Ajzen (1991). TPB has been the basis for several studies and the predictive power of this theoretical model has been established in a large number of online purchasing behavior research works (Ha, 2020; Wen et al., 2020; Rana & Islam, 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Al-Jabari et al., 2012; George, 2004; Khalifa & Limayem, 2003; Pavlou & Chai 2002; Suh & Han, 2003; Song & Zahedi, 2001; Tan & Teo, 2000; Battacherjee, 2000). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) to predict consumers' behavior. According to TRA, behavioral intentions are the main predictors of actual behavior and are based on attitude and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, TPB added a factor – perceived behavioral control – to the TRA model to recognize that human behavior is guided not only by behavioral and normative beliefs but also by control beliefs (Ajzen, 2002). The addition of perceived behavioral control has improved the prediction of intention as well as actual behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001). In the TPB model, a person's intention is a function of three basic determinants – Attitudes (ATD), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1991, 1985). According to TPB, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm concerning behavior and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger a person's intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991).

### 3.2. TPB and Online Shopping Behavior

The three factors (Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control) of TPB can influence consumers' online purchase intention which leads to the actual action of adopting

online shopping behavior (Singh, 2015; Turan, 2012; Khare & Rakesh, 2011; Orapin, 2009). Moreover, prior research studies have found that attitude has a significant impact on the intention to purchase as well as the actual use of online shopping (Gakobo et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Turan, 2012; Behjati et al., 2012; Yulihastri et al., 2011; Khare & Rakesh, 2011). Similarly, the subjective norms of an individual positively influence his or her intention to purchase online (Lim et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Sentosa & Mat, 2012; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012). Additionally, perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on consumers' online shopping intention and leads to the actual use of online channels (Gakobo et al., 2016; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Behjati et al., 2012).

### ***Attitude (AT)***

Attitude is a person's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a particular behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the context of online shopping, an attitude refers to consumers' positive or negative feelings towards the use of online shopping (Pavlou & Chai, 2002). Attitude positively influences consumers' intention; thus, the linkage between attitude and intention is important to predict the final behavior of an individual (Ajzen, 1991). In various emerging economies, it was found that consumers' attitude is one of the strongest predictors to measure their online purchase behavioral intention (see, e.g., Table 1). Moreover, prior studies in developed economies have made similar findings as in emerging economies of the world (Troise et al., 2020; Dharmesti et al., 2019; Chiu et al., 2018; Han et al., 2018). From the above discussion, the following hypothesis can be made:

**H1:** Attitude towards online shopping has a positive and significant impact on consumers' online purchase behavioral intention.

### ***Subjective Norms (SN)***

Subjective norm is an individual's stimulus to perform or not to perform a behavior according to the opinion of others who are most important to them (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It is a function of normative beliefs which represents a person's perception of what other people (family, friends, and co-workers) may think if he or she performs a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of online shopping, the subjective norm is considered to be the consumer perceptions regarding the use of online shopping in line with the opinions of the referent group (such as friends or colleagues). Social pressure plays a major role in the purchase decision of consumers (Choi & Geistfeld, 2004). SN has a positive and significant impact on the intentions of consumers in numerous emerging economies like Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Saudi Arabia (see, e.g., Table 1). On the other hand, the findings of these studies have similarities with the various prior studies in developed countries (Troise et al., 2020; Dharmesti et al., 2019; Chiu et al., 2018). Based on the above statement, the following hypothesis can be made:

**H2:** Subjective norms have a positive and significant impact on consumers' online purchase behavioral intention.

### ***Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)***

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of his or her ability to perform a behavior (Ahn et al., 2004). Ajzen (1991) compares PBC to Bandura's concept of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) which is the beliefs of an individual in his or her ability and can be influenced by his or her thought patterns and emotional reactions. According to Ajzen (1991), three factors determine perceived behavioral control, namely ability, resource, and opportunity. When people perceive that they have the ability, resources, and opportunities to perform a certain behavior, they will perceive themselves as more in control and their behavioral intention will increase (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). TPB incorporates PBC together with attitude and subjective

norm as a direct predictor of behavioral intention. The greater the prevalence of internet shopping within one's social network and the greater one's own belief that purchasing online has a substantial positive outcome, the more he or she engages in the online buying process (Blake et al., 2003). Many prior studies in emerging economies have proved that perceived behavioral control has a positive and significant relationship with consumers' online shopping intention (see, e.g., Table 1). Besides that, the following studies in the various developed economies have revealed the same findings as in emerging economies (Troise et al., 2020; Dharmesti et al., 2019; Chiu et al., 2018). From the above discussion, we can make the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Perceived behavioral control has a positive and significant effect on consumers' online purchase behavioral intention.

The summary of the supporting literature on online shopping adoption intention in emerging markets based on TPB constructs is given below in Table 1.

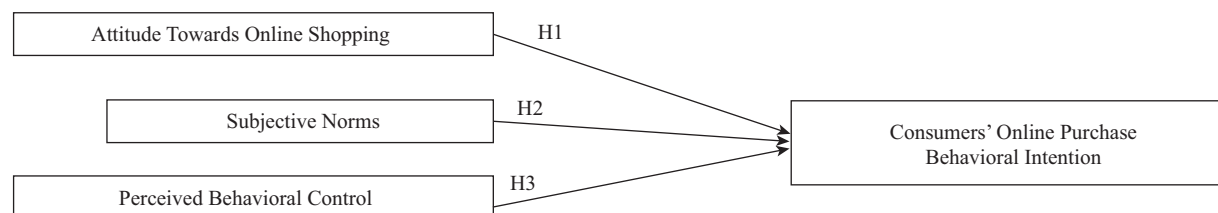
**Table 1**  
Supporting Literature

Title	Source
Attitude	Ha et al., 2021; Naseri et al., 2020; Wang & Zhang, 2020; Wen et al., 2020; Ha, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019; Rana & Islam, 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Turan, 2012; Behjati et al., 2012; Yulihastri et al., 2011; Khare & Rakesh, 2011.
Subjective Norms	Ha et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2020; Ha, 2020; Rana & Islam, 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Sentosa & Mat, 2012; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012.
Perceived Behavioral Control	Ha et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2020; Salem & Nor, 2020; Rehman et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Behjati et al., 2012.
Behavioral Intention	Ha et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2020; Salem & Nor, 2020; Ha, 2020; Rehman et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Othman et al., 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012; Turan, 2012; Khare & Rakesh, 2011; Yulihastri et al., 2011.

## Proposed Research Model

The proposed research model based on TPB is shown below.

**Figure 1**  
Proposed Research Model



## 4. RESEARCH METHODS

To test the hypotheses and to validate the proposed research model of this study, the researchers used the quantitative research method in the form of a Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey questionnaire. The CAWI survey method has become popular over the last decade for collecting data and importantly, this study was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic.



So, ideally, to gather a larger amount of data from the respondents in the pandemic situation, the CAWI survey questionnaire method seems the safest and best-fitted method for collecting data during COVID-19. That is why the researchers chose the CAWI method for this study.

#### 4.1. Research Sample

The sample of this study consists of 157 academics from different universities in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. The academics have been selected as the research sample because they are highly educated and sophisticated buyers, they have expert knowledge about computing, they are referral marketers and in many cases, academics are the initiators as well as early adopters for accepting any innovations or new technologies as well as online shopping in emerging markets. The distribution of the survey respondents' profiles is given below in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Respondents' Profile

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	128	81.53
	Female	29	18.47
Age	Less than 30 years	21	13.36
	31–35 years	63	40.14
	36–40 years	46	29.29
	41–45 years	18	11.47
	46 years or more	09	5.74
	Level of Education	PhD	16
	Post-Graduation	113	71.97
	Graduation	28	17.84
Faculty Designation	Lecturer	19	12.10
	Senior Lecturer	23	14.65
	Assistant Professor	63	40.13
	Associate Professor	39	28.84
	Professor	13	8.28
Monthly Income	Up to 35 thousand	22	14.01
	36–45 thousand	58	36.94
	46–55 thousand	39	24.84
	56–65 thousand	26	16.56
	66 thousand or more	12	7.64
Marital Status	Single	23	14.65
	Widow(er)/Divorced	4	2.54
	Married without children	38	24.20
	Married with children	92	58.60
Prior Experience	Yes	89	56.69
	No	68	43.31

continued Table 2

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Frequency of Online Purchase (Monthly)	Less than 5 times	63	40.12
	6–10 times	58	36.94
	11–15 times	23	14.65
	16 times or more	13	8.28
Preferred online site for shopping	Daraz.com.bd	51	32.48
	Othoba.com	33	21.01
	Chaldal.com	41	26.11
	Shwapno.com	14	8.92
	Others	18	11.46
Mostly Purchased Items	Health and safety products	46	29.30
	Food and beverage	21	13.37
	Personal and fashion accessories	13	8.28
	Grocery items	56	35.67
	Electronics and others	21	13.37

## 4.2. Development of Measures

In this study, a structured questionnaire was developed based on a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was divided into two segments. The first section of the questionnaire denoted the demographic questions of the respondents and the second segment represented the constructs (Attitude towards Online Shopping, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Online Purchase Behavioral Intention) related questions. All the items related to TPB constructs of this study have been picked up from Lee and Ngoc (2010) whereas attitude towards online shopping has 4 items, subjective norm has 5 items, perceived behavioral control has 3 items and finally online purchase behavioral intention has 3 items. Due to the pandemic situation, a Google survey form was used to collect the data from the respondents through email. However, the researchers also used personal and social network sites to collect data throughout the data collection process. It took two and a half months (mid-October 2020 to the end of December 2020) to gather the respondents' data. The study employed a convenience sampling technique for collecting data from the academics of the various universities in Sylhet City, Bangladesh.

In this study, four sets of reliability tests were run to get the Cronbach's alpha value of each construct as well as the number of items was used for each construct to get the standard alpha value ( $> 0.70$ ). The Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value for Attitude towards Online Shopping was ( $\alpha = .827$ ), for Subjective Norm it was ( $\alpha = .859$ ), for Perceived Behavioral Control it was ( $\alpha = .834$ ) and for Online Purchase Intention it was ( $\alpha = .777$ ). All the alpha values of this study were higher than 0.70, which ensures that the survey questions are acceptable for this study.

**Table 3**  
Reliability Test (Summary of Cronbach's Alpha)

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Attitude Towards Online Shopping	4	.827
Subjective Norms	5	.859
Perceived Behavioral Control	3	.834
Online Purchase Behavioral Intention	3	.777

### Constructs Validity

The study employed the Pearson correlation analysis which shows the internal consistency among all the research variables. Table 4 reveals that online purchase behavioral intention and attitude towards online shopping are positively correlated with each other: (.457\*\*) or 45.7% at 99 percent confidence interval, and significant at the 0.01 level (.000). Moreover, behavioral intention has also been found to be positively correlated with subjective norms (.775\*\* or 77.5%, .000) and perceived behavioral control (.723\*\* or 72.3%, .000). On the other hand, attitude towards online shopping has been found to be positively correlated with subjective norms (.509\*\* or 50.9%, .000) and perceived behavioral control (.520\*\* or 52.0%, .000). Besides that, the subjective norm reveals a positive association with perceived behavioral control (.775\*\* or 77.5%, .000). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the correlation coefficient of no pair exceeded the criterion of 0.9. It does indicate that the value of discriminant validity of all the constructs is satisfactory in this study and the scale has sufficient validity.

**Table 4**  
Pearson Correlation Analysis

Constructs	BI	AT	SN	PBC
BI	1			
AT	.457 **	1		
SN	.775 **	.509 **	1	
PBC	.723 **	.520 **	.775 **	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## 5. RESULTS

Table 5 represents the model summary of this study. The regression model shows a good fit with the F value of 78.879 ( $p < .05$ ) and the R-squared value of .609 indicating 60.9% of the variation in the online purchase behavioral intention by the independent variables (attitude towards online shopping, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control).

**Table 5**  
Regression Analysis

Model Summary										
Model	R	R-Squared	Adjusted R-Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R-Squared Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.78	<b>.609</b>	.601	.41061	.609	78.879	3	152	<b>.000</b>	1.713

Predictors: (Constant) Attitude Towards Online Shopping, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control

Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Behavioral Intention

Table 6 demonstrates the ANOVA test that indicates the general significance of the studied model whereas the studied model's p-value (0.000) is much smaller than the 0.05 or 5% level of significance. So, the proposed research model of this study has passed the test of model fit or the level of significance.

**Table 6**  
ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.897	3	13.299	78.879	<b>.000</b>
	Residual	25.628	152	.169		
	Total	65.525	155			

Table 7 depicts the summary of the coefficients of this study. The output of the study revealed that the consumers' attitude towards online shopping is statistically significantly correlated with the online purchase behavioral intention ( $\beta = .282$ ,  $t = 2.930$ ,  $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, H1 is accepted. Furthermore, this study also confirmed that there is a positive significant relationship between subjective norms and online purchase behavioral intention ( $\beta = .338$ ,  $t = 3.917$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). Based on this, H2 is confirmed.

**Table 7**  
Summary of Coefficients

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.058	.185		5.707	.000	
	Attitude	.274	.094	.282	2.930	<b>.004</b>	.272
	Subjective Norms	.304	.078	.338	3.917	<b>.000</b>	.338
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.211	.077	.241	2.724	<b>.007</b>	.323

Dependent Variable: Online Purchase Behavioral Intention

Additionally, the study results also reported that perceived behavioral control has a positive and statistically significant relationship with the consumers' online purchase behavioral intention ( $\beta = .241$ ,  $t = 2.724$ ,  $p = .007 < 0.05$ ). Consequently, H3 is supported.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This study attempts to explore consumers' behavioral intention to accept online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sylhet City, Bangladesh, with the help of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This study tried to examine the three constructs (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) of the theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the effect of these constructs on the online purchase behavioral intention of consumers in the emerging market during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study supported all the hypotheses. The results of this study reported that attitude towards online shopping has a positive and significant effect on the online purchase behavioral intention of consumers in Bangladesh in the COVID-19 situation. Prior research has made similar findings in the various emerging economies (Ha et al., 2021; Naseri et al., 2020; Wang & Zhang, 2020; Wen et al., 2020; Peña-García et al., 2020; Ha, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019; Rana & Islam, 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Redda, 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Azam and Qiang, 2014; Turan, 2012; Behjati et al., 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012; Hsu and Bayarsaikhan, 2012; Javadi et al., 2012; Yuliharsi et al., 2011; Khare & Rakesh, 2011). Furthermore, this study also confirmed that subjective norms have a significant impact on the online purchase behavioral intention of consumers in the emerging economy. This result is consistent with the following previous research results in other emerging markets (Ha et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2020; Ha, 2020; Rana & Islam, 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Redda, 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2016; Singh, 2015; Azam and Qiang, 2014; Sentosa & Mat, 2012; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012; Javadi et al., 2012). Besides that, it was found that perceived behavioral control has a significant relationship with the online purchase behavioral intention of consumers in the emerging market of Bangladesh. This result is consistent with many prior research works in numerous emerging economies of the world (Ha et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2020; Salem & Nor, 2020; Rehman et al., 2019; Redda, 2019; Yang et al., 2018; Gakobo et al., 2016; Azam and Qiang, 2014; Turan, 2012; Othman et al., 2012; Behjati et al., 2012). Among the three constructs of the TPB model (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control), this study confirms that subjective norms have the highest significant impact of attitude and perceived behavioral control on consumers' online purchase behavioral intention. Many previous studies have shown a similar result in other emerging markets like Malaysia (Sentosa & Mat, 2012; Al-Jabari et al., 2012). On the other hand, this specific result is also found to be contradictory with many prior studies in other emerging economies like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia etc. (Tan et al., 2020; Salem & Nor, 2020; Lim et al., 2016; Behjati et al., 2012).

### Managerial Implications

The study has significant managerial implications for online retailers or e-marketers. The success of any business depends upon making and sustaining the closest relationships with existing and potential customers. Thus, this study could help the e-commerce industry to gain better knowledge about the online purchase behavior of online shoppers. The study will also help online sellers to develop successful marketing strategies to satisfy consumers during a new normal situation in other emerging markets like Bangladesh. Online retailers of Bangladesh could boost their business by following the findings of this study. Moreover, not only the existing online retailers but also other firms which may have the intention to start an online business soon can use the results of this study. Among the three constructs of the TPB model (attitude, subjective

norms, and perceived behavioral control), this study confirmed subjective norms have the highest significant impact over attitude and perceived behavioral control, and thus on online purchase intention of consumers in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. Therefore, policy-makers can use subjective norms as a prime tool for their marketing strategy. As the Bangladeshi consumers' behavior is highly influenced by their near and dear ones, they can use buzz marketing or referral marketing to advance their business in this pandemic situation.

This study also confirmed online shoppers' positive attitudes towards consumers' online shopping adoption intention. As we know, during the pandemic, the majority of people are staying at home and spending their time using various social and communication media. So, marketers can stimulate consumers' attitudes by using digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, or other social media to promote their goods or services offerings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, online platforms can be used as a medium to spread their brands and expand the goodwill of the company (Sheth & Sharma 2005; Chaffey et al., 2009). Hence, online retailers have an opportunity to make the best use of the digital environments for marketing as well as the growth of the business (Hutchings, 2012). Additionally, this study also found that perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on the intention of online shoppers. Thus, e-marketers can use this finding to promote the benefits of online shopping and let everyone know that there are fewer difficulties in shopping online rather than offline. This is because customers use online shopping particularly to save their time, physical and mental effort, energy, and money. So, promoting these benefits could help e-retailers to attract more customers in an emerging market like Bangladesh and increase their sales specifically during the present COVID-19 pandemic.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study examines consumers' online purchase intention during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. So, it contributes to a better understanding of the online purchasing intention of consumers in the emerging market, particularly at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employed the original TPB model as the background theory to explore the online behavior of consumers in the emerging economy of Bangladesh and confirms that there is a positive and significant impact of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on online shoppers' purchase intention. All the established hypotheses are confirmed and, surprisingly, subjective norms have been found to have the highest level of significance for consumers' online purchase behavioral intention. The findings of the study also stated the robustness of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within an emerging e-commerce context.

### Limitations and Future Research Direction

This study consists of several limitations. Firstly, this study focuses only on academics as a studied sample. So, there is a scope to conduct a further study on other groups of the population. Secondly, the sample of this study seems very small or unrepresentative and could be increased in later studies. Thirdly, the study has a geographical limitation as it is only based on respondents of Sylhet City, Bangladesh. Thus, future studies could be conducted throughout the nation or other geographical areas, or other emerging economies of the world like Bangladesh. Finally, this study employed the original Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine the purchase intention of consumers' behavior. Therefore, further research work may focus on other behavioral factors affecting online consumers' purchase intention or use the Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (DTPB) or a combination of the TPB and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or other behavioral theories to measure consumers' behavioral intention in another emerging e-commerce context.

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# The Impact of Advertising Appeals on Purchase Intention for Women's Fashion Products in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is mainly focused on analyzing the impact of four advertising appeals, namely love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal and excitement appeal on purchase intention for women fashion products in Malaysia. Primary data were collected from 303 respondents using self-administered online questionnaire that was distributed among social media users in Malaysia. The collected data went through an extensive process of screening and sorting to prepare for the analyses. Several important tests were conducted using analytical tools, namely IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and its added module, AMOS to reach the findings. Among them are a descriptive analysis, reliability tests, an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and hypothesis testing. In addition, two-stage structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test for the fitness of the proposed model. The findings from the study revealed that two out of four advertising appeals, namely excitement appeal and love appeal, had significant positive impacts on consumers' purchase intention. Meanwhile, humor appeal and happiness appeal were found to have insignificant impacts. This research provides invaluable insights for marketers, especially those in women's fashion industry in Malaysia, in creating effective advertising campaign to promote their fashion products to consumers in Malaysia. A unique attempt to investigate the individual impact of love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal, and excitement appeal on purchase intention is the strength of this research. Further, this study is also invaluable because of its main consideration, which was women's fashion products.

JEL classification: D1, M1, M3

Keywords: Advertising appeals, fashion products, purchase intention, Malaysia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fashion is a dominant socio-cultural term (Mahfuzur et al., 2018) that has grown to become the most significant component of everyday consumption choices and a central part for everyday

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occurrences (Ahuvia & Wong, 2002). In an online article written by Ruth and Katrina (2019), fashion and beauty are the second most purchased items online in Malaysia after electronics items. According to Čiarnienė and Vienažindienė (2014), fashion can simply be described as the styles of clothing and accessories worn by certain groups of people at any given time. In addition, Jan and Kalthom (2015) explained fashion as a means of self-expression and beautification that can help people to enhance their social status and to be more accepted in a certain class of society (Mahfuzur et al., 2018). Furthermore, fashion products can be defined as all components of dressing from underwear to outerwear, shoes, bags, hats, belts, gloves, and other accessories, jewellery and makeup, fragrance, and bath products, sports gear and adventure wear as well as work and military gear (Anguelov, 2016).

In present days, there are numerous women's fashion brands competing in the Malaysian market ranging from the luxurious haute couture and designer fashion to ordinary everyday wear fashion or the mass fashion; be it local or international brands. This situation has led customers to a more complex decision-making process since they are exposed to various forms of advertisement. Besides, with abundant choices and explosion of advertisements, customers are becoming indifferent towards the brand and almost immune to advertisements. In the classic consumer decision-making process, there are five stages which customers follow in making a buying decision. The stages following the sequence are problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions and post-purchase decisions. Advertising is a promotional tool which involves the information search stage in which understanding how consumers search for product information and the way they evaluate the information can help marketers to design effective marketing messages (Clow & Baack, 2018). Effective advertising can be designed by selecting appropriate advertising appeals or themes of advertising (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012) based on rational or emotional arguments which aims to build a direct relationship between the product or service and the consumer's needs or wants (Yeshin, 1998).

In theory, there are six stages in the hierarchy of effects model that a consumer will go through upon seeing an advertisement. The stages following the sequence are awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase (Clow & Baack, 2018). The authors also explained that the hierarchy of effects model highlights a similar basis with theories regarding attitudes and attitudinal change, including the theories of cognitive, affective, and conative elements. According to the authors, "the cognitive component refers to the person's mental images, understanding, and interpretations of the person, object, or issue while the affective component contains the feelings or emotions a person has about the object, topic, or idea and the conative component consists of the individual's intentions, actions, or behavior" (Clow & Baack, 2018, p. 145). Besides, there are many sequences in which attitude is formed for instance by the sequence of affective, conative and cognitive components. In this sequence, the advertising appeals are expected to prompt positive emotions or feelings of the consumers in the affective phase, which will lead them to the conative phase where an intention or action occurs. The understanding of the product or the cognitive phase comes after the purchase.

In addition, the current COVID-19 pandemic has brought a change to the landscape of consumer behavior in Malaysia. According to a summary of the Fashion E-Commerce Global Market Report 2020–30: COVID-19 Growth and Change (2020), the global fashion e-commerce market is predicted to decline from \$531.25 billion in 2019 to \$485.62 billion in 2020 due to several constraints imposed on the daily activities such as social distancing and remote working as well as the closure of industries and other commercial activities. These measures have impacted the entire supply chain from production to international trade. Fashion brands in Malaysia have also reported to suffer from the pandemic (Syahirah, 2020). Since a fashion product is known as a type of shopping good, this can probably mean that it will not be in the priority list of goods for consumers to buy in the time of the pandemic. In this situation, marketers must be clever to

design an effective advertising message that will attract the right target group of consumers to buy fashion products by selecting the right advertising appeal.

However, selecting the appropriate theme for an advertisement is not as straightforward since there are variations of advertising appeals which can have different influence on customers in making purchase decision. In this study, the attitude model of cognition, affection and conation has become the inspiration for the researchers to analyze how affective or emotional advertising appeals impact the purchase intention of consumers when buying fashion products. The current study intends to investigate the impact of several emotional advertising appeals, namely, love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal and excitement appeal, on customers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia based on a quantitative approach. This study hoped to provide vital information for marketers of women's fashion products in Malaysia to help them create an effective advertising campaign.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of the study are to extract the factors from the literature that are related to advertising appeals, to develop a hypothetical linkage based on the literature and to propose a conceptual model combining all the factors with their impacts on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the impact of love appeal in advertising on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.
2. To analyze the impact of humor appeal in advertising on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.
3. To analyze the impact of happiness appeal in advertising on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.
4. To analyze the impact of excitement appeal in advertising on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

In the following sections, a hypothetical linkage based on the literature is put forward for empirical investigation followed by presenting the proposed model of the study, the research methodology, findings, and conclusion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Purchase Intention and Advertising Appeals

According to Azjen and Fishbein (1975), purchase intention is a critical factor to predict consumer behavior. Tee et al. (2015) described purchase intention as the driving force for consumers to purchase a product from a certain brand (Tee et al., 2015). In addition, Priatna (2018) explained purchase intention as the desire of an individual who seems to make purchases of goods or services to meet their needs. Moreover, Azjen and Fishbein (1975) further explained that the intention or behavior of a person is determined by their attitude, which is influenced by their belief. In an article written by Jovanović et al. (2016), there are three ways in which a belief is formed, namely, experience and observation, an external source of information and processes of inference. Advertising appeals can be perceived as an external source of information that can influence the formation of belief and attitude of the consumers, which will eventually lead them to the product purchase intention. This theory is in line with the opinion of Lee and Hong (2016), who stated that advertising appeal can lead individuals towards the adoption of an attitude or behavior. Moreover, Nguyen (2014) also opined that advertising appeals can lead individuals towards positive evaluation of a certain product or service. Also, Wardhani and Alif (2018) found

in their study that advertising appeals, especially emotional appeals, shaped a positive attitude among the consumers towards the advertisement and the brand and hence have a greater influence on driving purchase intentions of consumers.

## 2.2. Love Appeal

Love appeal is an advertising appeal that focuses on a positive relationship or emotional bond between people. This appeal can be in the form of friendship, family bond and romantic relationship between two people. The emotion of love in an advertisement can capture viewers' attention, induce nice feelings, enhance liking for the brand and create a positive association with the brand (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). According to Khanna (2016), love appeal focuses on nurturing strong feelings that are inspiring to and admired by the audience. Moreover, love appeal is expected to work effectively to influence customers to purchase the product if the perceived value and quality of the brand advertised are extremely high (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). According to the study by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019) on the impact of emotional advertising on consumer buying behavior for home appliances in Pakistan, love appeal in an emotional advertisement is found to strongly influence customer buying behavior. Khanna (2016) also found in the study of content analysis of emotional and rational appeals in selected products advertising that love appeal used in a commercial is likely to affect consumers' buying decision. Thus, hypothesis one ( $H_1$ ) of this study is proposed as follows:

**$H_1$ :** Love appeal will have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

## 2.3. Humor Appeal

Humor appeal has been proven to be one of the best advertising approaches to breaking through clutter, grabbing the attention of viewers and maintaining it (Clow & Baack, 2018). Additionally, Clow and Baack (2018) opined that a successful humor ad contains these three elements; product attributes, a customer's benefit, or the personal value obtained from the product. Hameed et al. (2020) states that humor appeal can impact the viewers' thoughts and convictions toward the product or service that is being advertised. The study also found that there is a direct relationship between humor and purchase intention in which purchase intention is positively related with perceived humor (Hameed et al., 2020). Another recent study by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019) reveals that humor elements in home appliances advertisements in Pakistan are successful in cultivating a positive image of a brand and influence the customer to make purchase and even repurchase of the product. Moreover, in an earlier study done by Diaa (2017) on guerrilla marketing and purchase intention, the result showed that humor has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention. Another study by Mehmood and Masood (2016) on the impact of humor in advertising on consumer purchase intention towards the network telecommunication sector in Pakistan also found that humor is very effective in changing the mind of consumers towards a certain product and drives purchase intention. Thus, hypothesis two ( $H_2$ ) of this study is proposed as follows:

**$H_2$ :** Humor appeal will have a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

## 2.4. Happiness Appeal

According to Shaver et al. (1987), happiness appeal is considered as positive messages and is often implied by characters with smiling or laughing faces or images and portrayals of pleasant and happy sceneries. Kamran and Siddiqui (2019) explained happiness appeal as a means to connect

with people and create loyal customers by displaying a theme that touches the heart of customers and nurtures happy responses from them. Besides, the emotion of happiness in an advertisement also induces positivity towards a product, creates happy customers, helps to build memories of the brand and also induces customers to make a purchase (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). Moreover, Mogilner et al. (2012) stated that happiness can have a powerful influence on choice. The study by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019) also found that happiness appeal in an advertisement positively influences customers' buying behavior for home appliances in Pakistan. Hussain et al. (2020) in a study of the impact of emotional and rational advertising appeals on customers' purchase intention found that emotional advertising appeals are more effective in influencing consumer buying intention than rational appeal. Happiness is one of positive emotional advertising appeals and is related to the feeling of joy and hence it can be inferred that happiness appeal has a positive impact on customers' purchase intention. Thus, hypothesis three ( $H_3$ ) of this study is proposed as follows:

**$H_3$ :** Happiness appeal will have a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

## 2.5. Excitement Appeal

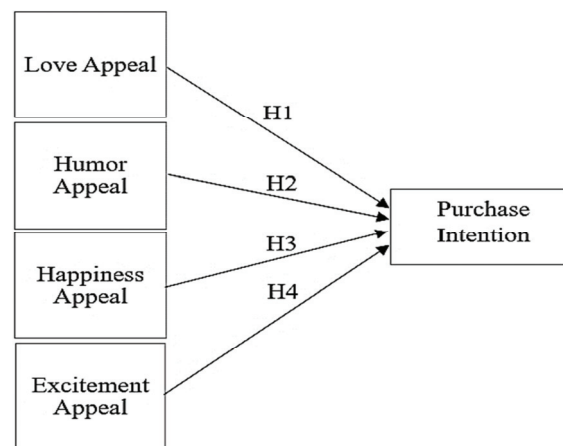
Excitement appeal in fashion advertisement in Malaysia can be seen in many forms, for example, making a 'teaser' poster or video or social media post to introduce a new line of product. Maslow (1970) described excitement as an eager state or circumstance. Moreover, according to Muhamad Fazil (2015), among the associative terms that help to describe excitement are exciting, cool, awesome, imaginative, unique, up-to-date, independent and contemporary. Muhamad Izzuddin et al. (2019) in a study of Halal brand personality and brand loyalty among millennial modest fashion consumers in Malaysia stated that excitement has a significant relationship with brand loyalty. It can be inferred from the study that since excitement appeal in a brand leads to brand loyalty, it means that excitement has a positive influence on customers to repeat the purchase, which also means that the appeal has a positive impact on customers' purchase intention. Furthermore, according to Kamran and Siddiqui (2019), excitement appeal in an advertisement can motivate customers to buy the product from the brand to feel something unique and stirring. Thus, hypothesis four ( $H_4$ ) of this study is proposed as follows:

**$H_4$ :** Excitement appeal will have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

## 2.6. Proposed Model

The framework of this study as illustrated in Figure 1 is inspired by the attitude theory of cognitive, affective and conative components. The advertising appeals chosen in this study are expected to prompt positive emotions or feelings of the consumers which will lead them to have the intention to purchase and eventually make the purchase. Each of these independent variables, which are the advertising appeals, represent the affective advertising appeals that will have an impact on the dependent variable, i.e. customers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

**Figure 1**  
Proposed Model



### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Sample of the Study and Data Collection

This study is quantitative in nature. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically the convenience sampling method, was employed in the study. The target respondents for this study are people who have seen women's fashion advertising or those who follow women's fashion brands on social media. Although it was expected that the main target would be female, there was a possibility that a minority of men would also be included in the sample. A self-administered online questionnaire in the form of Google Form was distributed among social media users in Malaysia. Screening questions had been imposed to screen out the respondents only to the target respondents. The minimum sample size was calculated following the normal distribution theory or 'rule of 10' (10 observations per parameter) as suggested by Bentler and Chou (1987). Given that there are 20 questionnaire items (excluding demographic questions) in the study, the minimum target sample size needed was 200. Overall, 316 responses were collected and out of them, 312 are target respondents. From 312 data, 9 responses were identified as outlier and not useful for the study since they were giving the same answers (either all neutral or all disagree) to all questions.

#### 3.2. Measurement Development

A set of structured closed-ended questionnaires was adapted from previous studies and a 5-points Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree) was used as a standard benchmark to measure the items (Maichum et al., 2017). The questionnaire mainly contains three parts which are screening questions, questions on the variables of the study and the demographic profile of respondents. The questionnaire items can be found in the Appendix.

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data went through an extensive process of screening and sorting to prepare for the analyses. After the cleaning process, only data from 303 respondents were found useful for the study. In this study, the analyses that were conducted in SPSS software were a descriptive analysis, a reliability analysis and an exploratory factor analysis. Meanwhile, a confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were run in AMOS software.



## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

In this study, primary data were collected from 303 respondents representing people who have seen advertisements of women's fashion products in Malaysia or those who follow any fashion brands of women's fashion products on social media. As expected, the majority of the sample are women, making up 94.1 percent of the total respondents. Furthermore, the largest group of respondents are from the age group of 18 to 27 and the majority are Malay. Moreover, the analysis also reveals that among the respondents, a total of 83.6 percent of respondents come from the B40 income group with the monthly income of less than RM 1,000 to RM 5,000. This conclusion is roughly estimated based on the Household Income & Basic Amenities Survey Report 2019 by Department of Statistics Malaysia, which gives the guideline of the monthly income tiers for people in Malaysia. According to the report, the B40 group have a monthly income of less than RM 4,850 while for the M40 group, the income range is between RM 4,850 and RM 10,959 and on the other hand, the T20 group have an income of RM 10,960 and above. A detailed descriptive analysis is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables		Research sample (n = 303)	
		Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	285	94.1
	Male	18	5.9
Age Group	18–27	212	70
	28–37	42	13.9
	38–47	17	5.6
	48–57	32	10.6
Race	Malay	288	95
	Chinese	2	0.7
	Indian	5	1.7
	Others	8	2.6
Monthly Income	Below RM	126	41.6
	RM 1,000 – RM 3,000	82	27.1
	RM 3,000 – RM 5,000	45	14.9
	RM 5,000 – RM 10,000	46	15.2
	RM 10,000 and above	4	1.3
Fashion Product	Clothing	107	35.3
	Hijab	22	7.3
	Shoes, bags and other accessories	49	16.2
	Jewelry	14	4.6
	Skincare, makeup, fragrance and bath products	95	31.4
	Sportswear/Activewear	16	5.3

Besides, an additional question was asked to find out the type of women's fashion products that the respondents are most likely to spend more money on. It is found that 107 respondents responded that they were most likely to spend more money on clothing while 95 people revealed that they were most likely to spend more money on skincare, makeup, fragrance, and bath products. The third most popular women's fashion products are shoes, bags, and other accessories with 49 responses. The fourth choice of women's fashion products are hijab, followed by sportswear or activewear and the least popular choice is jewelry.

## 4.2. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha reliability test was performed to assess the stability and consistency of the research instruments. A total of 20 items were assessed for the internal consistency. Nunnally (1978) introduced a general rule of thumb which stated that the value of Cronbach's alpha closer to 1 indicates greater stability and consistency. However, for social science research studies, the threshold value is generally acceptable in the range of 0.60 to 0.70 (George & Mallery, 2003). In this study, the reliability tests for the items in each construct resulted in Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.80, which can be translated as having good stability and consistency. This result is depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Reliability Statistics for Research Instruments in Each Construct

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of items
Love Appeal	.832	.833	4
Humor Appeal	.824	.827	4
Happiness Appeal	.872	.874	4
Excitement Appeal	.833	.834	4
Purchase Intention	.831	.830	4

## 4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor analysis includes the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. This test was run based on the principal component analysis (PCA). The analysis was conducted to investigate the underlying factors related with the items for each independent and dependent variable in the study. In other words, the aim of factor analysis is to reduce a large number of variables to extract the core variables known as factors (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). In order to analyze the strength of association among variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was employed. The KMO test was performed to determine which factor had to be taken out from the construct due to multicollinearity. Generally, the KMO value ranges from 0 to 1 and the rule of thumb says that it needs to be higher than 0.60 to be eligible for confirmatory factor analysis. Meanwhile, Bartlett's test of sphericity was run to see if there was a redundancy between the variables that could be grouped together under fewer factors. Bartlett's test is considered significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Based on Table 3, both KMO value and Bartlett's test are significant at 0.839 and  $p$ -value of 0.000, respectively.

**Table 3**  
KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.839	
	Approx. Chi-Square	2900.705
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Next, the criterion of an eigenvalue greater than 1 was used as the basis of factor extraction. Any factor needs to have an initial eigenvalue greater than 1, which indicates enough total variance explained to represent a unique factor. In other words, any factor that has an eigenvalue less than 1 was disregarded in this study. Based on the output, five factors were found to have eigenvalues greater than 1 resulting in a clean five-factor structure. The result of five extracted factors accounted for 68.638 percent of the total variance. Moreover, rotated component matrix was developed based on the Varimax orthogonal rotation method, which minimizes the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. A higher loading means that the item is strongly related with the factor. Generally, the factor loading should be 0.50 and above to be considered as very significant. In this study, it can be seen from the result of the analysis that the factor loading for each item indicates a strong relationship with the underlying construct. Each item has a factor loading higher than 0.6. Besides, it is found that all four items for all five factors also remain under the same construct as before the extraction. In other words, no cross-loading of items happened in this study. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
Factor Loading Matrices and Total Variance Explained

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
<b>Love Appeal</b>					
Create association	84				
Enhance liking	81				
Induce nice feelings	78				
Retain information	67				
<b>Humor Appeal</b>					
Recognize brand		87			
Increase brand recall		85			
Prompt word of mouth		73			
Increase recommendation		70			
<b>Happiness Appeal</b>					
Create happy customer			84		
Positive association			83		
Build memories of brand			80		
Appeal to senses			79		
<b>Excitement Appeal</b>					
Achieve communication goal				83	

continued Table 4

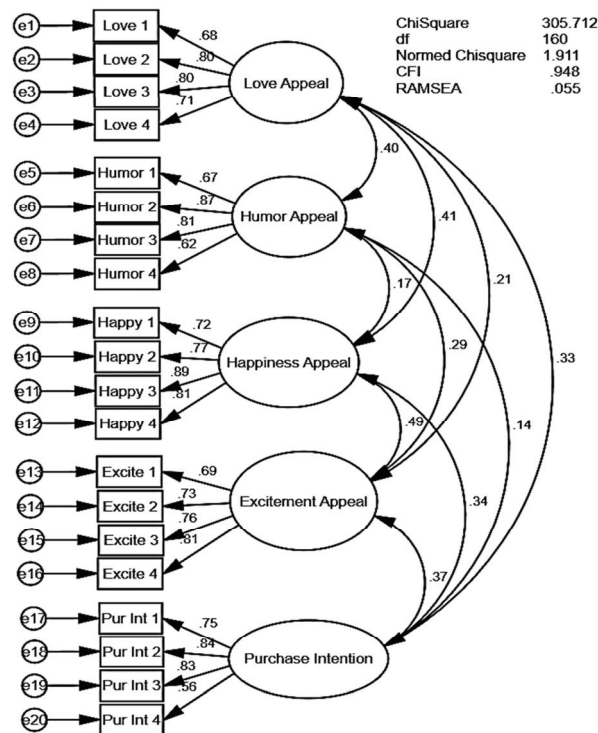
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Trigger excitement				79	
Enhance message comprehension				76	
Grab attention				75	
<b>Purchase Intention</b>					
Will purchase					86
Plan to purchase					84
Intend to purchase					80
Likely to purchase					64
<b>Initial Eigenvalues</b>	5.804	2.629	2.091	1.963	1.241
<b>% Variance</b>	29.022	13.143	10.453	9.817	6.203
<b>Cumulative %</b>	29.022	42.165	52.618	62.435	68.638

Notes: Extraction method: principal component analysis. Based on eigenvalue > 1. Rotation method: oblique (oblimin – SPSS) with Kaiser normalization. All numbers in the table are magnitudes of the factor loadings rounded to two decimal places and multiplied by 100.

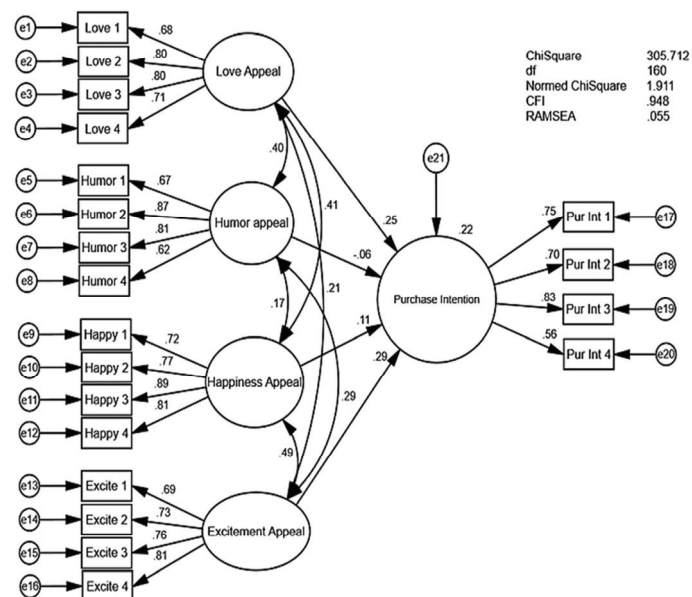
#### 4.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In this study, the same data were split into two sets where the first set was used to conduct the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the second set was used to perform the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In EFA, the main purpose was to see if the collected data resulted in the same number of constructs, as envisaged, and the items loaded on the same constructs (factors) as planned. CFA was conducted to confirm the factors extracted in EFA. The fitness of the measurement model was tested using CFA by adopting maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). According to Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen (2008), in order to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis, a few indices need to be taken into consideration which are chi-square, normed chi-square (CMIN/DF), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Due to the limitation in using chi-square as a means to interpret the model fit, in this study, the chi-square value is interpreted by using normed chi-square following the recommendation of Wheaton et al. (1977) where the value of chi-square was divided by the degree of freedom value. The result of the analysis resulted in the CMIN/DF value of 1.911, which is closer to the recommended value of at least 2. The comparative fit index (CFI) in the study is 0.948, which is a good value since it is closer to the recommended value of 0.95. Besides, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is lesser than 0.06 at 0.055, which also signifies a good model fit. Meanwhile, the factor loading of each item resulted in a range of 0.56 to 0.89, which signifies a reasonable to strong relationship of the underlying factors. The results are depicted in Table 5 and Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
Confirmatory Factor Analysis



**Figure 3**  
Full Structural Model



**Table 5**  
Measurement Model Fitness

Model Fit	Resultant Value	Threshold	Reference
CMIN/DF	1.911	2 to 1	Tabachnick and Fidell (2007)
CFI	0.948	0.95 and above	Hu and Bentler (1999)
RMSEA	0.055	< 0.06	Hu and Bentler (1999)

#### 4.5. Full Structural Modeling

The fitness of the full structural model as illustrated in Figure 3 above was evaluated based on similar parameters in the CFA. As indicated in the figure, the CMIN/DF value resulted in the value of 1.911, which is less than 2. This value indicates a good model fit. The comparative fit index (CFI) in the study point up a good fit value of 0.948, which is closer to 0.95. Besides, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is lesser than 0.06 at 0.055, which signifies a good model fit. Next, four hypotheses were tested in this study based on the regression weight outputs. The important parameters that were used as the basis to evaluate the hypotheses are the estimate value or beta coefficient, critical ratio and p-value. Each independent factor results in an unstandardized and standardized beta coefficient which predicts the positive or negative impact of each variable (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). Meanwhile, the p-value estimates the significance of data at 95 percent confidence interval. In addition, a critical ratio (CR) greater than 1.96 indicates that a path is significant at the 0.05 level. In other words, a path or a hypothesis is significant if it fulfills the criteria of CR greater than 1.96 and p-value less than 0.05 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992) while the estimate value or beta coefficient value determines whether a path has a positive or negative impact. Table 6 illustrates the impact of advertising appeals on consumers' purchase intention for fashion products, specifically women's fashion products in Malaysia.

**Table 6**  
Regression Weights (Hypotheses Testing)

Hypotheses	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Result
Purchase Intention←Love	.253	.051	3.267	0.001	H1 Supported
Purchase Intention←Humor	-.065	.047	-.906	0.365	H2 Not Supported
Purchase Intention←Happiness	.106	.052	1.335	0.182	H3 Not Supported
Purchase Intention←Excitement	.286	.051	3.650	***	H4 Supported

\*\*\* indicates  $p < 0.001$

**Testing H<sub>1</sub>:** The estimate value for H<sub>1</sub> resulted in a positive value of 0.253, which indicates a positive impact of love appeal on purchase intention. Furthermore, the critical ratio also resulted in a positive value of 3.267, which signifies a significant path. Besides, the p-value resulted in a significant value of 0.001. Hence, it can be concluded that love appeal has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Thus, H<sub>1</sub> is supported. This result is coherent with a previous study by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019), who found that love appeal in an emotional advertisement strongly influences customer buying behavior. Moreover, Khanna (2016) in the study of content analysis of emotional and rational appeals in selected products advertising also revealed that love appeal used in a commercial is likely to affect consumers' buying decision.

**Testing H<sub>2</sub>:** The estimate value for H<sub>2</sub> resulted in a negative value of 0.065, which indicates a negative impact of humor appeal on purchase intention. Furthermore, the critical ratio also resulted in a negative value of 0.906, which implies a non-significant path. Besides, the p-value is 0.365, which signifies a non-significant value greater than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that humor appeal does not has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Thus, H<sub>2</sub> is not supported. According to Clow and Baack (2018), a successful humor ad contains these three elements: product attributes, a customer benefit, or the personal value obtained from the product. It is also found that humor appeal can impact the viewers' thoughts and convictions about the product or service that is being advertised, hence there is a positive relationship between humor and purchase intention (Hameed et al., 2020). However, in this study, humor appeal proves to have no significant impact on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia.

**Testing H<sub>3</sub>:** The estimate value for H<sub>3</sub> resulted in a positive value of 0.106, which indicates a positive impact of happiness appeal on purchase intention. However, although the critical ratio also resulted in a positive value of 1.335, it does not meet the threshold value greater than 1.96, which signifies a non-significant path. Besides, the p-value resulted in a non-significant value of 0.182. Hence, it can be concluded that happiness appeal does not have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Thus, H<sub>3</sub> is not supported. This result is contradictory with a study by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019) which found that happiness appeal in an advertisement positively influences customers' buying behavior for home appliances in Pakistan. Moreover, Mogilner et al. (2012) also stated that happiness can have a powerful influence on choice. However, in the case of fashion products, happiness appeal in an advertisement does not influence the purchase intention nor does it affect the choice of customers in Malaysia. Hussain et al. (2020) in a study of the impact of emotional and rational advertising appeals on customers' purchase intention found that emotional advertising appeals are more effective in influencing consumer buying intention than rational appeal. Although happiness appeal does not yield a significant result, it was discovered from the survey analysis that happiness appeal can create happy customers, helps build memories of the brand, appeals to the consumers' senses and generates a positive association with the brand.

**Testing H<sub>4</sub>:** The estimate value for H<sub>4</sub> resulted in a positive value of 0.286, which indicates a positive impact of excitement appeal on purchase intention. Furthermore, the critical ratio also resulted in a positive value of 3.650, which implies a significant path. Besides, the p-value is less than 0.001, which signifies a very significant value. Hence, it can be concluded that excitement appeal has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Thus, H<sub>4</sub> is supported. This result is supported by Muhamad Izzuddin et al. (2019), who in a study of Halal brand personality and brand loyalty among millennial modest fashion consumers in Malaysia discovered that excitement has a significant relationship with brand loyalty. It was inferred from the study that since excitement appeal in a brand leads to brand loyalty, it means that excitement has a positive influence on customers to repeat the purchase, which also means that the appeal has a positive impact on customers' purchase intention. The result of this study is also validated by Kamran and Siddiqui (2019), who revealed that excitement appeal in an advertisement can motivate customers to buy the product from the brand to feel something unique and stirring.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In present days, there are numerous women's fashion brands competing in Malaysia market ranging from the luxurious haute couture and designer fashion to ordinary everyday wear fashion or the mass fashion; be it local or international brands. This situation has led customers to a more complex decision-making process since they are exposed to various forms of advertisement. Besides, with abundant choices and explosion of advertisements, customers are becoming indifferent towards the brand and almost immune to advertisements. Besides, the current COVID-19 pandemic has also brought changes to the landscape of consumer behavior in Malaysia. Since fashion products are known as a type of shopping goods, this can probably mean that they will not be in the priority list of goods for consumers to buy in the time of the pandemic. Thus, marketers must be clever to design an effective advertising message that will attract the right target group of consumers to buy fashion products by selecting the right advertising appeal. However, selecting the appropriate theme for an advertisement is not straightforward since there are variations of advertising appeals. This study has been conducted to help marketers to select effective advertising appeals that can influence consumers to purchase women's fashion products in Malaysia.

The objective of the study, which was to analyze the impact of advertising appeals, namely, love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal and excitement appeal on consumers' purchase intention for women's fashion products in Malaysia, has been fully achieved. In this study, it was found that excitement is the most prominent advertising appeal that has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Consumers need to feel "something unique and stirring" to influence them to buy fashion products. This appeal can be implemented in ads, for example, by making a 'teaser' poster or video or social media post to introduce a new line of product. Maslow (1970) described excitement as an eager state or circumstance. Moreover, according to Muhamad Fazil (2015), exciting, cool, awesome, imaginative, unique, up-to-date, independent, and contemporary are among the phrases that help to illustrate excitement. In addition, it was found in the study that excitement appeal can achieve the communication goal, trigger excitement, enhance message comprehension and grab the attention of consumers to see women's fashion advertisements in Malaysia.

The next effective advertising appeal is love appeal, which focuses on a positive relationship or emotional bond between people in the form of friendship, family bond and romantic relationship between two people (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2019). In this research, it was discovered that love appeal in an advertisement of women's fashion products is memorable, can create a pleasant association between consumers and fashion brands, and helps customers to remember and retain the information contained in ads for a longer time. Besides, it was also found that love appeal can induce a nice feeling towards the ads.

On the other hand, happiness appeal was discovered to have a non-significant positive impact as it does not influence customers in Malaysia to purchase women's fashion products. However, the results from this study revealed that happiness can increase liking for the ads, help build memories of the brand and create a positive association with the brand. Happiness appeal can be injected in an advertisement through focusing on positive messages and portraying characters with smiling or laughing faces or images and portrayals of pleasant and happy sceneries (Shaver et al., 1987).

Similarly, although it was found that humor appeal is effective in helping consumers to distinguish the brand from the competing brands, increases brand recall, encourages people to recommend fashion products from the brands that show humorous ads or, in other words, prompts word of mouth among consumers, in the case of women's fashion products in Malaysia, it was found to have no significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. According to Clow and Baack (2018), a successful humorous ad contains these three elements: product attributes, a customer benefit, or the personal value obtained from the product. This could mean that humor in an advertisement brings no benefit or value to consumers in Malaysia with regard to the purchase of women's fashion products. In other words, humorous fashion ads may be likeable and are effective in grabbing the attention of consumers as well as increase brand recall; however, these criteria do not have any influence on persuading consumers to purchase fashion products.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal and excitement appeal on consumers' purchase intention of women's fashion products in Malaysia. The results from the study revealed that among four advertising appeals tested and analyzed, excitement is the most prominent advertising appeal that has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Consumers need to feel "something unique and stirring" when buying fashion products and this kind of appeal can be implemented in the form of teaser or preview ads. The next effective advertising appeal is love appeal, which focuses on a positive relationship or emotional bond between people in the form of friendship, family



bond and romantic relationship between two people. Apart from enhancing consumers' liking and inducing a nice feeling towards an ad, love appeal was found to be most memorable, and consumers tend to retain information from the ads that portrays love appeal. However, happiness appeal was discovered to have a non-significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention although it can influence them to feel happy, increase liking for the ads, help build memories of the brand and create a positive association with the brand through portraying happy smiling faces or pleasant moment in the ads. Similarly, humor appeal, although it was found to be effective in breaking through clutter and increasing brand recall, in the case of women's fashion products in Malaysia, it was also found to have no significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. It is hoped that marketers of women's fashion products in Malaysia can make use of this information to help them create effective advertising campaigns to promote their fashion products among consumers in Malaysia.

In the academic world, this study presents new insights in the field of advertising through analyzing the impact of love appeal, humor appeal, happiness appeal and excitement appeal on consumers' purchase intention of fashion products, specifically women's fashion products in the context of Malaysia. The knowledge on how to grab the attention of consumers and motivate them to purchase proved to be a valuable insight for both marketers and academicians. This study adds value in the academic field by analyzing the impact of advertising appeals through the quantitative method. Besides, this study also provides a structural model which is developed through structural equation modeling in AMOS. However, there are gaps in the present study. This study only focused on the quantitative examination of the impact of four emotional appeals on purchase intention of consumers in Malaysia as regards buying women's fashion products in general. The results of the present research mainly represent the view of Malay young women in the B40 income group in Malaysia. Potential research can be done in the same downstream of fashion industry with different scopes of study. Researchers can adopt or adapt the model in the present study to research a particular fashion product such as clothing, skincare, makeup and fragrance, accessories and so on. Future researchers may also focus on a particular fashion market such as luxury fashion, modest fashion, fast fashion, and sustainable fashion. Besides, researchers can also segment the market by demographic profiles such as gender, age, race, and income. Another interesting area of study would be to investigate the interrelationship of culture, religion, and lifestyle with advertising appeals. In other words, culture, religion, and lifestyle can be studied as a moderating or mediating effect between advertising appeals and purchase intention. On the other hand, in terms of advertising appeals, there are variations of advertising appeals and in this regard researchers can choose to study a particular product or service in a particular market and industry. In addition, researchers may also consider another method of study such as a qualitative approach to obtain more in-depth information about the types of advertising appeals and their impact on consumer purchase intention or buying behavior.

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## APPENDIX

### SCREENING QUESTIONS

Note: Only those who answer yes to either one of these two questions can proceed to answer the questionnaire.

1. Have you seen any advertisement of women's fashion products in Malaysia?
2. Do you follow any fashion brand of women's fashion products on social media?

Adapted Questionnaire Items:

Variable	Questions	Source
Love Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fashion advertisement showing love and relationships put me in a good mood and I immediately have a nice feeling about the ad.</li> <li>2. Love appeal in an advertisement enhances my liking of the fashion product advertised.</li> <li>3. Ads with love emotion are the most memorable and create a pleasant association with fashion brands.</li> <li>4. I remember and retain the information contained in ads with love appeal for a long time.</li> </ol>	Kamran & Siddiqui (2019)
Humor Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I strongly recommend buying fashion products from the brands that show humorous ads.</li> <li>2. Humorous ads make me recognize particular brands among competing brands.</li> <li>3. Fashion brands with humorous ads help me to recall the brands before shopping.</li> <li>4. I discuss the variety of products offered by the fashion brands that show humorous ads with others.</li> </ol>	Kamran & Siddiqui (2019)
Happiness Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fashion ads focusing on happy images of people appeal to my senses.</li> <li>2. Fashion ads showing a positive connection and engagement of people give me a positive feeling about the brands.</li> <li>3. Fashion ads that express a tone of joy and happy moments makes me a happy customer.</li> <li>4. I can easily relate happy memories with fashion ads that use happiness appeal.</li> </ol>	Kamran & Siddiqui (2019)
Excitement Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exciting fashion ads are entertaining and manage to grab my attention.</li> <li>2. Fashion ads with excitement appeal enhance my understanding of the message the brands intend to deliver.</li> <li>3. I usually pay attention to the ads that trigger feelings of excitement in me.</li> <li>4. Excitement appeal is a more successful way of communication between brands and customers.</li> </ol>	Kamran & Siddiqui (2019)
Purchase Intention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I intend to purchase women's fashion products that I see in advertisements in the near future.</li> <li>2. I plan to purchase women's fashion products that I see in advertisements next time.</li> <li>3. I will purchase women's fashion products that I see in advertisements in the future.</li> <li>4. I am more likely to purchase women's fashion products that I see in advertisements someday.</li> </ol>	Hong & Rhee (2016)

# The Environmentalist Movement in the World and Environmental Studies in the Marketing Literature

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## ABSTRACT

Problems such as environmental pollution, the depletion of the ozone layer, the melting of glaciers due to global warming, the decline in clean resources and the extinction of some species have prompted people to consider the idea of a more sustainable world. In this process, humanity is going through a mental transformation and gaining some awareness. As emphasized in this study, all crises (accidents, fires, outbreaks, etc.) experienced worldwide have been the driving forces for environmental transformations. Environmentalist movements emerging from this orientation have also found their place in the world of science and therefore in the marketing literature. From this point of view, the aim of this study is to explain the scientific publications inspired by the environmental transformations experienced chronologically and to reveal the part that is present in the marketing literature. In this study, it has been shown with which intensity environmental studies have been included in the marketing literature. In addition, it was determined which marketing journals were discussed intensely. This study points to potential academic fields of study. Finally, this study emphasizes that while trying to explain green consumer profiles, attention should be paid to macro factors (lifestyle, sociological variables, etc.) in addition to micro factors such as values and norms. National and corporate green policies can be more successful if handled in this context.

JEL classification: M30; M31

Keywords: environmental studies, green marketing, sustainability, green consumption

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Problems such as global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, air and soil pollution, soil erosion and deforestation, which came into being with industrialization, are seen nowadays as serious threats to human life. Humanity, being aware of these threats, began to gain consciousness and to strive in order to prevent these threats in the name of saving both its own future and that of the next generations. From these attempts, increasingly environmentalist thinking systems and green movements originated.

It can be said that environmental volunteering in the world began with the industrialization in Europe. The first environmentalist group was founded in Britain in 1865 (Ayvaz & Tekalan,

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1992). Environmental awareness, sensitivity to the environment and environmentalist movements continued to expand. Many researchers see Rachel Carson's book "*Silent Spring*", which was published in 1962, as the beginning of the trend related to the environment (Yılmaz & Arslan, 2011). In this work, the harms of synthetic chemical combatting medicines (pesticides and insecticides) are mentioned. In addition, it is emphasized that the results of the active and fast lifestyle are a disaster for the world.

A new environmentalist trend began to take form in 1970s. In this environmentalist trend, it is seen that societies and individuals united around green sensitivity and they even formed political parties. For instance, the first green parties were formed in New Zealand in 1972, and then in England in 1973. In addition, green parties achieved significant successes in countries like Belgium and Germany.

Environmental consciousness and respect for nature-oriented trends began to impact the consumption habits of individuals as of the 1970s. "*April 22 Earth Day*", which was celebrated in 1972 for the first time, is seen as one of these steps taken in this regard. From all these developments, corporate and marketing strategies of enterprises began to be included in the environmental transformation (Ayvaz & Tekalan, 1992).

According to Ayvaz and Tekalan (1992), there are three main books on the grounds of the new environmentalist movement: "*The Limits to Growth*", which is one of these books, states that provided that the current consumption trend of the world continues, production systems are going to collapse rapidly (see Meadows et al., 1972). In "*A Blue Print for Survival*", another book published in England in 1972 (see Goldsmith & Prescott-Allen, 1972), it is emphasized that a sustainable society can only be achieved through minimum ecological damage and maximum energy protection and it is mentioned that the system of the Earth is going to collapse in our children's future in case the current course of events continues. In parallel with these works, in "*Small is Beautiful*" (Schumacher, 1973), a book published in 1973, the system of values related with the environmentalist movement is analyzed.

In the 1980s, the focus was on the protection of the Earth and resources in the western societies. Industrial accidents helped to carry the relation between pollution, green tendency, growth and environment to the dimension of sustainability. Besides, the Bhopal gas disaster, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the Exxon Valdez oil spill, which took place in 1980s, drew the attention of the public opinion to the environmental worries and efforts to protect the environment. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was founded by the United Nations in 1982 and this commission published a report under the title "*Our Common Future*" in 1987 (see WCED, 1987).

Green awareness, which started to come into existence with the published books, social and political processes, began to develop. Significant environmental problems such as global warming, acid rains, depletion of the ozone layer enabled the gathering of the 1972 Stockholm Conference as the first international activity. At this conference, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was constituted. In addition, in 1987 the Montreal Protocol, in 1988 the NOx Protocol and in 1989 the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes were signed; in 1992 the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit was gathered (Ayvaz & Tekalan, 1992). These steps have increasingly continued to date. Common awareness that took shape anew enabled the steps in this field and the steps in this field enabled the formation of awareness.

However, giant economies such as China (the country with the fastest growth rate in consumption of households in the last 30 years) still seem considerably weak at environmentalist awareness, which is set to form the basis for building an environment-friendly society. For instance, according to the China Environmental Performance Index (CEAP Office, 2008), it is established that the environmental awareness score of the Chinese is 44.5 out of 100; the environment-oriented behavior score is 37 out of 100 (Wang et al., 2013). This situation is the indicator that the awareness of the protection of the environment along with the rising environment

awareness could not materialize its full potential globally yet. Still, developments are experienced in a positive direction and are extremely fast.

Despite all these advancements, environmental disasters have not unfortunately ceased to take place since the 1970s to date; they cause an increasingly more reaction of individuals and societies.

After the explosion that took place on April 20, 2010 at the deepwater platform belonging to BP in Mexican Gulf, a massive oil leakage occurred; the leakage could only be stopped on July 15, 2010. After this event that appeared immensely in the media, many protests were organized also with the contribution of environmental awareness and were on the rise among individuals and societies (Cronin et al., 2011). In addition, the fires which broke out in New South Wales in Australia in July 2019 and which could not be taken under control could only be put out after 240 days. The fire cost the lives of 28 persons, more than 3,000 damaged homes and the lives of more than 1 billion species (NTV, 2020). The tragic images of koalas and other species which ran away from the fire occupied the headlines for days. All these developments reveal that humankind harms the natural environment and the habitats of other living species.

All these accidents, concerns, the transformation of thinking systems, the tendency to take into account the next generations and the decrease of natural resources provided the basis for the environmentalist movement.

Environmentalism can be defined as the interest of the public opinion that comprises the issues related to the protection of natural resources, prevention of pollution and harmful dangerous wastes, protection of historical and cultural resource legacy, prevention of extinction of plant and animal species, avoidance of air, water and noise pollution with a view to protecting, supporting and improving the nature (AMA, 2014).

The environmentalist movement has nowadays become a comprehensive scientific, societal, social and political movement. Fundamental objectives of the environmentalist movement are that the natural resources should become sustainable and that changes should be made in individual behaviors, public and corporation policies with a view to improving and protecting the environment (Alnıaçık & Yılmaz, 2008).

While these changes take place on the globe, certainly the academic literature has also been affected by this tendency. Journals related to the environment have started to emerge and publications have started to focus on this issue. The environment is at the spot where many branches of science intersect. In addition, the marketing field has been affected by the environmentalist tendency and it has begun the mental transformation that constitutes its part.

The aim of this study is to explain in a chronological order the scientific publications where the environmental transformations that appear in people's minds and actions with the stimulation of various crises are seen and to reveal the realized part in the marketing literature. In the study, it has been determined where environmental studies in marketing are among all environmental studies. Then, the years when the environmental studies appear in marketing literature and the intensity of these studies in the marketing journals have been indicated. In addition, the pioneering publications related to the environment in the field of marketing have been examined and it is attempted to draw the frame where the issue of the environment is discussed.

The study is significant since it emphasizes the position of marketing publications in terms of environmental literature. In this regard, marketing journals fall into the middle of environmentalist discussions. Since environmentalist and green transformations accommodate transformations of lifestyle and values in them, marketing studies that are common in these three fields (green, value and lifestyle) have been checked and it is concluded that it is a field which has not been studied much yet. In the study, the distribution of the concepts related to green marketing in marketing journals and the leading subjects that green marketing articles focus on are presented in the context of a systematic literature review.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES IN THE MARKETING LITERATURE

The environmentalist movement needs some changes in lifestyles of individuals and societies. While these changes take place, some changes happen in the individuals' inner worlds, value and belief systems. Briefly, a shift from micro changes (changes in personal values and norms) to macro changes (changes of lifestyles and societal transformations) takes place.

Mentioning a green movement in the field of marketing can only be completely explained through dealing with the transformation of values of individuals and changes of lifestyles in societies. Therefore, it is necessary to refer to these three fields of study (value, lifestyle and green studies). Before focusing on publications related to the environment, it is essential to emphasize the tendency of lifestyles and values of being sensitive to the environment which are therefore the fundamental issues that affect the tendency of green consumption.

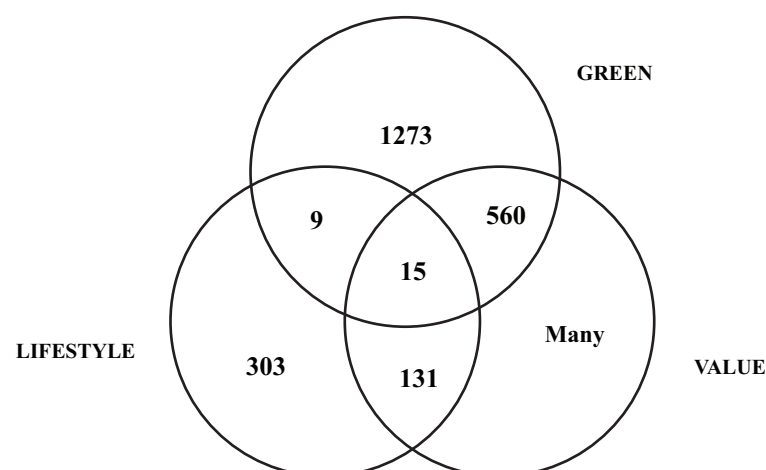
Lifestyle can be defined as observable patterns in the individual's obvious behavior and cognitive style. The cognitive patterns comprise values, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and interests. The other kind of such patterns on the other hand designates concrete practices (for instance, spending practices, good/service usage, family life, media, and political, cultural and organizational activities). Cultural preferences and practices such as letters, music, art and consumer brands are grouped by measuring (Petev, 2013). Lifestyles are affected by race, ethnicity, religion, sex and age. Social classes are formed under the influence of factors such as lifestyles, cultural characteristics and education level.

Value on the other hand is defined as the belief when one situation is preferable to another situation. Approaches such as Rokeach Value Survey and List of Values (LOV) are used in order to measure the values. Every culture has fundamental values that affect the consumers in it. An Italian and an American might have different thinking systems and values from each other. For instance, the trend of sustainability that foresees being more sensitive to the environment in the United States of America can be considered as a newly forming value (Solomon, 2009). In the light of these values, sun houses, hybrid vehicles, recycling mechanisms, even organic product markets (e.g. organic food and organic textile) are coming into existence; it is obviously seen how values give a direction to consumers and lifestyles.

From here, a scan has been conducted on “*lifestyle*”, “*value*” and “*green consumption*” which constitute the main body and publications on these issues have been classified in their intersecting diagrams (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

Lifestyle and value intersection in green studies





458 publications were downloaded as a result of the selection of journals of “marketing”, “business administration”, “management” and after the necessary filtering out of 51,867 results for keyword “lifestyle” on the Web of Science.

More than one million articles that we encountered in searches for “Value” were reduced to 22,481 again with the same filtering system. Since the values in the field of marketing were studied in a very wide frame, the results were refined centering on green consumption and the number was reduced to 706.

Of the scan related to “Green”, 111,831 publications in total were refined with the same methodology in the form of 1,857 articles. Then, the primary keywords under the title “green” were searched. Originating from the readings that were made, the concepts that are used most often and relate to marketing studies in environmental issues have been explained below.

## 2.1. Environmental Marketing

If we examine the green trend in the field of marketing in more detail, with the concepts of “ecological marketing” that emerged in the 70s, with the concepts of “green marketing” and “environmental marketing” that emerged in the 80s, with the concept of “enviropreneurial marketing” (Menon & Menon, 1997) and “sustainable marketing” (Fuller, 1999) that emerged in the 90s, the thought of reducing consumption and transforming emerged (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). After the first half of the 1990s, a wider sustainable movement began (see Van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996; Kilbourne, 1998; Peattie, 1999). The difference in this new approach is a holistic view which focuses on sustainability related to the environment and in which the real value of nature is appreciated rather than economic efficiency (Heath & Chatzidakis, 2012).

Ecological marketing which was conceptualized in the 1970s comprises approaches that appear on the basis of consumers’ concerns related to the environment. Later, environmentalist tendencies which intersect with the organizational marketing’s responsible consumer side come into play. This approach was effective in a small number of sectors (automotive, chemistry) and in more limited consumer behavior (recycling, fuel saving). As long as the number of sectors affected by this tendency increased, green marketing and environmental marketing concepts were born. Consumers’ awareness related to the environment and their level of knowledge increased in time. With enviropreneurial marketing, being an institutional environmentalist is the efforts of institutions to transform into environmental enterprises. Finally, industrial ecology principles and consumption decreasing approaches appeared with sustainable marketing (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). The transformation of environmentalist tendencies in years is shown in Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, environmental marketing and green marketing entered the literature at the same time and turned into concepts that can be used interchangeably. For this reason, both concepts were used as keywords in the later stages of the research. These two concepts are considered to be the concepts with the most widespread use when expressing environmentally sensitive practices in marketing.

**Table 1**

Marketing concepts about the environment

Marketing Tendencies Related to Environment				
Years	1970s	1980s	1990s	Currently
Concepts	Ecological Marketing	Green Marketing Environmental Marketing	Enviropreneurial Marketing	Sustainable Marketing

Source: Prepared from Peattie and Peattie (2009).

## 2.2. Sustainability

Considered from the point of view of the environment, sustainability aims to use our resources effectively. It aims to prevent excessive consumption and to reduce the negative effects that consumption creates. Sustainability argues that environmental objectives can meet at a common point with economic wealth. Along with being a systematic approach in doing the right thing, it is the view that doing the right thing and economic success can be reconciled.

The sustainability concept focuses on the possibility of legating to the next generations more or at least the same resources as the resources that are owned now. It is considered today that it is an unconscious behavior to keep consumption at the maximum and to transmit less resources to the next generations. Some global enterprises realize these realities and they conducted studies on this matter: Unilever, General Electric, DuPont, Wal-Mart are some of those enterprises (Kotler, 2011). The number of these enterprises is increasing every day.

## 2.3. Green Marketing

When marketing sensitive to environment is in question, it is “*green marketing*” which is the most encountered concept that appeared in the 1980s. Green marketing is defined as marketing activities that aim to reduce negative social and environmental effects of the existing products and production systems, to release goods and services which damage less (Peattie, 2001). Besides, green marketing is considered as the marketing form which fulfills the duty of directing the consumer demand to environment-friendly products. Briefly, green marketing is to meet the consumer demands and needs in a way to cause the least damage to the environment (Polonsky, 1994).

Studies conducted in green marketing are generally in the following themes (Heath & Chatzidakis, 2012): pro-environment consumption (see Anderson & Cunningham 1972; Kinnear et al., 1974), recycling, sustainable tourism (see Budeanu, 2007), transportation (see Guy, 2009), energy consumption (see Press & Arnould, 2009; Geppert & Stamminger, 2010), purchase of green products (see Follows & Jobber, 2000).

## 2.4. Green Consumer

Green consumer is the consumer who plays a part voluntarily and actively in the protection of nature/environment, can steer the production and consumption and assess whether waste after consumption causes damage to the environment (Odabaşı, 2013). 75% of consumers define themselves as green consumers and prefer environment-friendly goods (Saad, 2013). From here, in our study the concept of green consumer is used due to the fact that it is a more comprehensive concept.

It is possible to consider green consumers in two groups: green consumers who are accepted socially (consumers who are aware of their own choices and results, accurately informed and aware of their social role) and volunteer pure green consumers (consumers who reject the capitalist values and mechanisms and who have the potential of an environmental activist) (Moisander & Pesonen, 2002).

Persons inclined to be green consumer see themselves as opinion leaders. According to this, their interest levels are high, they are open to product information and changes. Therefore, they do not have any brand loyalty. They do research on products and they talk about these products with others. They carry out effective communication from mouth to mouth. As soon as seeing, they do not have the tendency to buy at once. They do shopping cautiously and they are price-sensitive (Shrum et al., 1995).

## 2.5. Green Product

Green product is considered as the fundamental factor of the green marketing mix because it has been stated that the processes of design and production of the product comprise 70% of the damage that the product causes to the environment (Hussein & Cankül, 2010). In this respect, related to protecting the environment, green product is an important concept that must be evaluated with all its processes.

Green product is an environment-friendly product and it is sensitive to nature. In general, it does not contain poison, it does not cause pollution, it can be reused and it can be recycled. Green product generally defines products that protect or improve the natural environment, ensure the conservation of energy and the reduction or elimination of toxic substances, pollution and waste (Ottman et al., 2006).

In this respect, it is essential that the green product satisfies the demands and needs of the consumers, ensures the continuity of energy resources, is socially considered as not causing damage to nature and to the ones living in it. It does not endanger people's health either (Duru & Şua, 2013).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

In the research, the following steps were followed in order to be able to take the leading journals in the field of marketing as a basis and to progress systematically. First, in order to draw a general framework, the basic concepts related to the subject were determined as stated above. These are defined as “environmental marketing”, “sustainability”, “green marketing”, “green consumer”, “green product”. The journals in which these concepts are studied were researched. The searches are important in terms of showing the participation level of marketing journals in the environmental studies literature. Accordingly, journals such as “Sustainability” and “Journal of Cleaner Production” were identified as the journals with the most research on the subject. The main green discussions are not held in marketing journals. Marketing journals rank in the middle of the general environmental literature. In this context, it is possible to come across many academic journals other than marketing journals in literary environments where environmental studies are conducted.

While planning the literature review, a systematic approach was adopted in order to make a similar study feasible by other researchers in the future, and in this way, the study was tried to be reliable. It is important that the steps of the process are expressed clearly in order to allow repeatability. The steps that should be in a systematic literature review (Briner & Walshe, 2014) were carried out in 8 steps as follows.

1. In this context, the research questions were determined as follows: How much has the marketing literature been affected by the environmentalist movement emerging around the world? Which basic issues and concepts are publications within the scope of green marketing shaped around? Does green marketing tend to handle the issue in a micro form in terms of consumers' perceptions of values, behaviors, intentions, etc., or in a macro way in terms of lifestyle, culture, etc. that bring about a social transformation? Does marketing make more use of the science of psychology or the science of sociology while addressing the green issue?
2. In order to obtain the answers to the above questions, all SSCI and ESCI articles from 1980 to 2021 were analyzed through the Web of Science, regardless of qualitative and quantitative distinction. An attempt was made to ensure that all studies related to the subject in the field could be addressed.
3. The Web of Science was preferred because it provides easy access to the widespread database network and citation numbers, has many sorting methods such as articles according to the

most relevant, according to the highest citation rate, according to the source title, according to the most recent, and provides detailed graphs and analyses.

4. The study was carried out over 8 keywords (green consumption, sustainability, environmental marketing, green marketing, recycling, green consumer, green energy, green product) that are frequently discussed in environmental and green marketing studies. In addition, lifestyle and value keywords were also searched in these studies. At this point, it was determined that the studies concentrated around 5 keywords and the field of study was narrowed to refine the results. In addition, it was found that green marketing mostly concerns studies from the perspective of the consumer, based on psychology. The results of these keywords, which were searched for in 20 marketing journals with the highest h-5 index, show that the publications are concentrated around 10 main journals. It was observed that the number of citations became more concentrated after a certain number (50 and more citations). All studies were included in the process from the beginning of the concentration in order to determine which subjects were studied the most and attracted attention.
5. At the end of all these eliminations, the results were refined by focusing on the main studies guiding the field. The purpose of the elimination achieved in this way is to detect the mainstream approach and cluster.
6. All these articles were examined one by one according to the citation rate and 9 articles with more than 300 citations were tabulated.
7. The study systematically included a flow from wide to narrow. Highly cited studies in the field of green marketing were synthesized.
8. In the last step, the potential impacts and limitations of the study were evaluated.

**Table 2**

Marketing journals according to index ranking

	Name of the Journal	h5-index*	h5-median value
1.	Journal of Business Research	96	131
2.	Journal of Marketing	67	99
3.	Industrial Marketing Management	66	94
4.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	64	85
5.	Journal of Consumer Research	61	91
6.	Journal of Marketing Research	58	97
7.	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	49	93
8.	Journal of Retailing	44	83
9.	Marketing Science	42	61
10.	Psychology & Marketing	41	54
11.	Journal of Service Research	40	67
12.	Journal of Consumer Psychology	39	87
13.	Journal of Advertising	39	63
14.	Journal of Marketing Management	39	57
15.	European Journal of Marketing	39	54
16.	International Journal of Research in Marketing	37	56
17.	International Journal of Bank Marketing	36	49
18.	International Journal of Consumer Studies	36	49
19.	Journal of Services Marketing	36	49
20.	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	35	59

\* The h-index, put forward by the physicist named Hirsch (2005), is concerned with how many publications are cited above a certain value while evaluating science. The two variables that need to be known when calculating the H-index are the number of publications and the number of citations made to these publications. The H-5 index shows, on the other hand, data for the last 5 years.

Source: [https://scholar.google.com.tr/citations?view\\_op=top\\_venues&hl=tr&vq=bus\\_marketing](https://scholar.google.com.tr/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=tr&vq=bus_marketing), Access date 30.03.2020.

**Figure 2**

Four-phase flow chart of data extraction and filtration process (adapted from Saleem et al., 2021)

Identification	Research Keywords: “Lifestyle” and “Value” and “Green”		
	Studies identified in the field “Topic”		
Screening	<b>Lifestyle</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Green</b>
	n = 51,867	n = More than 1 million	n = 111,831
Eligibility	Studies refined “Research Areas: Business”		
	n = 616	n = 39,931	n = 2,992
	Studies refined “Source Titles: Marketing and Business Journals”		
	n = 458	n = 22,481	n = 1,857
		Studies refined: “Lifestyle” or “Green”	Studies refined: Over 50 citations, 5 concepts in 10 journals.
		n = 706	n = 1,396
Schematized		Duplicates are refined	
Included	n = 1,010		
	Examined		
	Studies refined: Over 300 citations		
	n = 9		
	Tabulated		

The literature review was narrowed down to focus on leading marketing journals. While determining these journals, the Google Scholar search engine was used. The classification of journals according to the h-5 index was preferred because it is extremely up-to-date and practical in Google Scholar. The leading journals in the field are classified similarly in many databases. While accessing the articles, the Web of Science was preferred in terms of providing comprehensive data access. The list of journals related to marketing, ranked according to the h-5 index, was developed in line with the Google Scholar criteria. This list is shown in Table 2. Also, there is a four-phase flow chart in Figure 2 to show the methodological functioning, selection and elimination process at different steps.

#### 4. FINDINGS

In the research, the concepts such as green consumption, sustainability, environmental marketing, green marketing, recycling, green consumer, green energy, green product were scanned as keywords in the journals above. In addition, based on the 3 concepts mentioned at the beginning of the study, publications containing the keywords “green consumer and value” and “green consumer and lifestyle” were also scanned.

After scanning the keywords in the above-mentioned journals, 1,857 studies were obtained. Of the 1,857 publications found as a result of the screening, the field of the research was narrowed as “journals with more than 50 publications in total and the 5 most studied concepts”. Thus, the studies that were the subject of the research were reduced to 1,396 publications. Publications are clustered in maximum 10 journals. These established journals are: International Journal of Consumer Studies, Journal of Business Research, Industrial Marketing Management, European Journal of Marketing, Psychology & Marketing, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Journal of Marketing, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Marketing Management. Focused concepts are Sustainability (S), Environmental Marketing (EM), Green Marketing (GM), Green Consumer (GC) and Green Product (GP) as explained before (Table 3). The purpose of this narrowing is to focus on the main articles guiding the field. It has been noticed that articles with 50 or fewer citations are sparse in number and the years of publication are in the recent past. The distribution of 1,396 articles in terms of journals and keywords is shown below (Table 3). Rows are abbreviations of journal names, columns are abbreviations of keywords.

**Table 3**

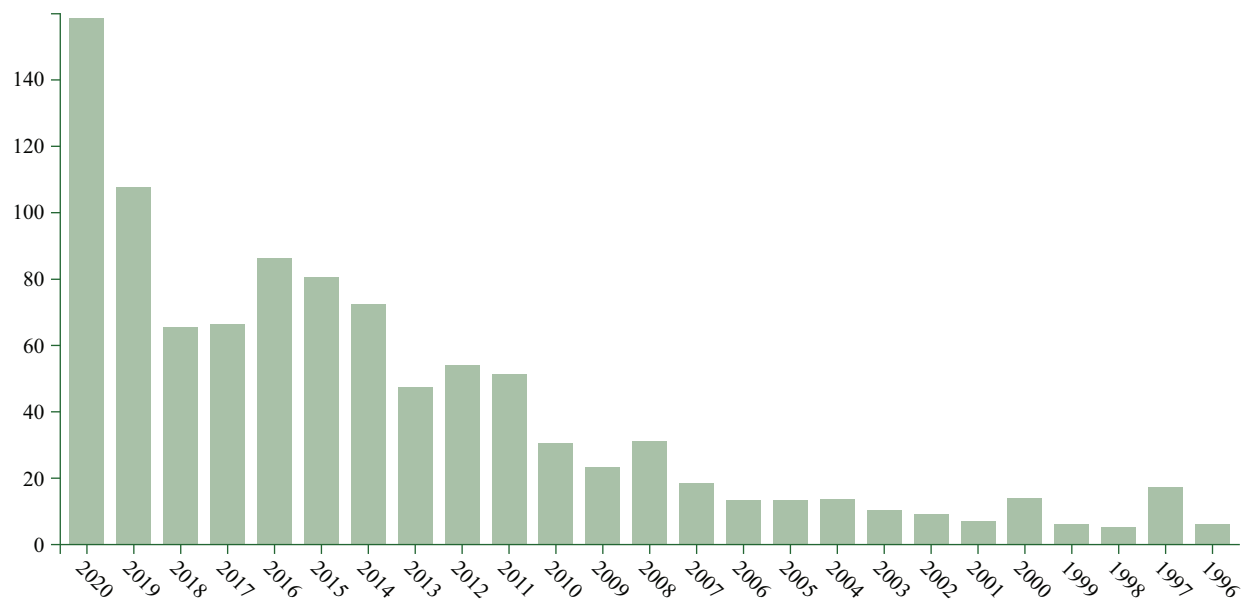
Distribution of publications directly related to the subject

Journals	S	EM	GM	GC	GP	Total
I.J.C.S.	101	48	39	86	47	321
J.B.R.	94	132	33	52	36	347
I.M.M.	46	78	23	8	15	170
E.J.M.	19	48	9	15	14	105
P.M.	22	22	7	27	17	95
J.R.C.S.	19	9	11	22	15	76
J.M.	13	37	11	13	10	84
J.A.M.S.	19	33	10	6	6	74
J.A.	2	9	9	28	19	67
J.M.M.	22	14	9	8	4	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>1396</b>

While refining the articles in Table 3, the articles found in duplicate in more than one keyword were identified with the Endnote program and placed in a keyword that was most appropriate by looking at the content of the articles in question. Of these 1,396 publications, when the publications that were re-found in different concepts during scanning and recorded as duplicates were eliminated, 1,010 publications remained. The distribution and numbers of these publications over time are as in Graph 1 and Table 4. The mentioned 1,010 publications are shown in Table 4 according to their publication times in 10-year periods. Graph 1 presents the distribution of the publications by years. This chart was created during the detailed analysis process in the Web of Science and shows the last 25 years. Graph 1 and Table 4 are important in terms of showing that the tendency to research areas related to the subject is increasing.

**Graph 1**

Distribution of publications by years

**Table 4**

Publication numbers by years

Journals	Time Period					Total
	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2009	2010–2019	2020	
JBR	0	26	45	174	67	312
IJCS	0	0	18	145	19	182
IMM	0	9	21	90	22	142
EJM	1	0	24	50	14	89
P&M	0	2	11	37	12	62
JRCS	0	0	0	38	13	51
JM	3	12	12	23	1	51
JAMS	0	2	15	30	4	51
JA	0	8	1	24	2	35
JMM	0	0	0	32	3	35
<b>Total Articles</b>	4	59	147	643	157	1010

As can be seen, although publications have fluctuated in recent years, they have been studied with increasing momentum from the past to the present. Based on Table 4, issues based on environmentally sensitive consumption were among the areas of interest of marketing science in the 90s and this interest has continued to increase. These results show how rapidly the environmentally-oriented thinking system has spread over time.

Finally, among a total of 1,010 articles in 10 selected marketing journals, all articles with minimum 300 citations were examined. These pioneering studies are classified in detail in terms of the theory used, the focus of the publication (business or consumer), sample, method and concepts used. All of these studies are shown in Table 5. Table 5 aims to reveal the contents and focal points of green studies that are highly cited in marketing journals.

**Table 5**

Major studies in selected marketing journals

Article	Theory/Construct	Focus	Method	Sample	Concepts/Findings
Diamantopoulos et al., 2003	Environmental consciousness Socio-demographics	Consumer	Qualitative- Quantitative	Interview Focus group, Survey 1,697 consumers U.K.	Environmental attitude: Gender +* Number of Children + Education Level + Social Class +
Roberts, 1996	Ecologically conscious consumer behavior	Consumer	Quantitative	582 Consumers	ECCB: Perceived consumer effectiveness, environmental concern, demographics and liberalism attitude-behavior gap
Menon and Menon, 1997	Corporate social performance theory Environmentally-based marketing	Business	General assessment	---	Performance-based and business environment perspective
Luchs et al., 2010	Ethics – product preference Ethics – gentleness Sustainability liability Implicit preference	Consumer	Quantitative- Qualitative	582 participants in a total of 5 studies	Ethical Attributes 1–Social issues 2–Environmental Issues Corporate social responsibility Sustainability
Walsh and Beatty, 2007	Customer-based cor. reputation 1-Customer orientation 2-Good employer 3-Reliable, financially strong company 4-Product and service quality 5-Social and environ. responsibility	Customer	Scale Development Qualitative Quantitative	504 and 698 participants	Results of corporate reputation in customers 1-Customer satisfaction 2-Loyalty 3-Trust 4-Word of mouth
Sheth et al., 2011	MC: Caring for self/community/nature MB:Acquisitive/repetitive/aspirational consumption, stakeholder perspective. Economic/environmental/social sustainability dimensions	Consumer	Framework development	---	Mindful consumption, Mindful behavior Customer centric sustainability Excessive vs. temperate consumption Caring vs. non-caring mindset
Drumwright, 1994	Preconditions for success of social campaigns	Business	Qualitative	Interviews with 10 enterprises on 35 purchasing processes (63 people)	Degrees of freedom Company-cause compatibility Economic, noneconomic, mixed campaigns Organizational, interorganizational identification
Tanner and Wölfling Kast, 2003	Environmental behavior categories Personal factors (attitude, personal norm, knowledge, perceived behavior barrier) Contextual factors (socio-economic characteristics, living conditions)	Consumer	Quantitative	547 adult Swiss	Environmental protection + Fair trade + Local products + Action-related knowledge + Perceived time barrier - Shopping frequency -
Chan, 2001	Chinese cultural values, eco-centric orientation, collectivism Determinants of ecofriendly behav. Ecological knowledge Ecological affect Attitude towards green purchases Green purchase intention Man-nature orientation The Theory of Reasoned Action	Consumer	Quantitative	549 consumers	Man-nature orientation, attitude + Socialism and attitude + Ecological knowledge + Ecological affect ++

\* The “+” signs refers to other variables that are found to be related to the concepts researched in the articles.



Based on all the articles reviewed, we can say that environmental research in leading marketing journals has the most quantitative studies and the majority of publications are consumer-focused. The studies are formed around environmental concerns, demographic characteristics, consumption habits, attitudes and intentions of the consumer, as they are important in environmental awareness. The green marketing strategy for businesses is discussed in terms of determining the green advertising strategy, new product development, social responsibility, corporate performance, market share and profitability. In parallel with these findings, Kilbourne and Beckmann (1998) examined 12 important journals in the field of marketing and found that environmental problems, green attitude and defining the characteristics of green consumers were the subjects that were studied the most on the subjects related to green issues. As stated before, transformations of values and lifestyles and the effects of these variables on green purchasing are among the topics studied. In addition, concepts such as sustainability, social responsibility, corporate performance, ethical consumption are frequently used in studies. Another concept that stands out in the studies is the concept of environmental concern. The concepts and theories used in the examined articles are shown in detail in Table 6 and Table 7.

**Table 6**

Concepts used in studies

Consumer-Based Concepts		Corporate-Based Concepts
Environmental concern	Green consumer profile	Competitive advantage
Environmental consciousness	Ecological affect	Green marketing efforts
Organic foods–food safety concern	Ecological knowledge	Business resources efficiency
Mindful consumption	Greenwash–green trust	Corporate social responsibility
Environmentally/ecologically responsible consumption	Skepticism to green products, green processes and green ads	Biodegradable, disposable, recyclable product development
Ecofriendly behavior	Willingness to pay a premium	Corporate image
Green buying behavior	Green hotels	Green marketing mix
Ecologically conscious consumer behavior	Customer centric sustainability	Corporate performance
Environmentally oriented behavior	Anti-consumption, downshifting, voluntary simplicity	Corporate reputation
Ethical behavior	LOHAS (Sustainable lifestyle)	Top management support
Green attitude	Personal values (egoistic/ altruistic/biospheric)	
Green intention	Adopting recycling	
Attitude-behavior gap		

**Table 7**

Theories used in studies

Theory of responsible consumption	Corporate social performance theory
Pro-social behavior theory	Stakeholder theory
Signalization theory	New environmental paradigm
Theory of reasoned action	Dominant social paradigm
Theory of planned behavior	Social cognition theory
Natural resource based view	Grounded theory

The environmental awareness trend shows itself as green studies increasingly over the years in terms of marketing. However, marketing generally addresses the issue in terms of consumer behavior, intention to buy green products, intention to participate in recycling, willingness to pay extra fees, values and psychographic structures that encourage green consumption.

The study includes an in-depth look at environmental studies in marketing. The process within the scope of green marketing has been evaluated and it has been seen that the studies dealt with the entire environmental issue within a limited framework. Marketing seems to be interested in the processes that take place in the minds of consumers, benefiting more from the science of psychology. Considering that the behavioral transformations of consumers and businesses are also affected by sociological factors, it will be realized that marketing should be directed towards more holistic studies.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Environmental concerns arising from environmental damage caused by environmental accidents and other reasons have formed the basis of the green marketing concept. These situation is reflected in the academic literature as an environmental consciousness effect.

Environmental studies cover a broad range of fields such as sustainability, recycling, urban regional planning, environmental studies, public administration, international foreign policy, nuclear energy, sustainable energy, marketing, advertising, cultural studies, sociology, media theories, behavioral science, management, anthropology. This wide field is limited within the boundaries of marketing science. Based on this, it was determined that the main green discussions were not conducted in marketing journals and that journals were included in the general environmental literature in the middle. In this context, it is possible to come across many academic journals other than marketing journals in literary circles where environmental studies are conducted.

As a result of the systematic literature review, it has been seen that all these publications have been studied with increasing momentum from the past to the present, although they have fluctuated in recent years. In addition, it is seen that in environmental studies in leading marketing journals, quantitative studies constitute the majority, and consumers are studied the most as the focus. In other words, environmental trends appear as consumer- or business-centered in marketing literature. While consumer-centered ones mostly address areas such as green consumers and green product use, business-centered ones mostly cover areas such as the effects of this consumption pattern on corporate performance, social responsibility, and recyclable production processes.

Based on all these findings, it has been concluded that environmental issues have started to be studied intensively in the field of marketing, especially in the context of green consumption, and are among the trending topics.

In this study, it is important to determine the location of all environmental studies in the marketing literature, to specify the years of environmental studies in the marketing literature and the intensity of these studies according to marketing journals, and to examine the leading environmental publications in the field of marketing and to draw the framework of the handling of the environment as a subject. It has been concluded that marketing issues common to these three areas are not studied much yet, since environmental transformations also include lifestyle and value transformations. In addition, the study is significant also since it reveals the widely discussed environmental concepts in marketing publications. These concepts have been explained one by one. It is shown in the tables, which reveal that some subjects are studied more intensively.

This study shows in which aspects the green paradigm is addressed in the field of marketing. Therefore, it can guide researchers in terms of pointing out areas that have not yet been studied. It also emphasizes that while trying to explain green consumer profiles, attention should be paid to macro factors (lifestyle, sociological variables, etc.) in addition to values and norms (micro

factors) that express personal sensitivity such as environmental concern. All influencing factors should be taken into account in order to make green marketing more inclusive.

In the context of green studies, literature reviews were made on the following topics: consumption ethics (Carrington et al., 2021), green consumer preference for purchase intention (Mishra & Devakumar, 2018), sustainability focused generation (Dabija et al., 2019), green innovation (Oduro et al., 2021), green marketing (Saleem et al., 2021), shifting consumers to behave sustainably (White et al., 2019). In these literature reviews concerning green marketing, it is seen that a consumer-centered approach is predominant. In addition, there are studies where publications are classified according to countries, journals and citation numbers. There is no study that classifies the concepts of the studies from the consumer and business perspectives by focusing on the contents of the studies. In addition, the theories used in the publications examined in this study were determined. It has been stated to which disciplines these theories belong. It is emphasized that marketing deals with the subject in a multidisciplinary framework based on these theories. Based on this, it has been determined that green studies in the field of marketing are heavily shaped on the basis of psychology, then sociology and social psychology. These features are thought to add a unique value to the study.

It can be said that green marketing studies are consumer- and consumption-centered. A small number of business-focused studies have been shaped by focusing on competitive advantage, business performance and reputation. In other words, it is aimed to encourage green consumption of the consumer and to increase profitability for the business. Although, as emphasized at the beginning of the article, green transformations have accelerated as a result of some social disturbances, marketing does not seem to focus on consumption problems that can further trigger these environmental problems. It can be said that green marketing studies continue the classical marketing approach and focus on restructuring consumption through the green trend. It is important for marketing to market the idea of sociological and lifestyle transformation in addition to its efforts to market green products and green processes. It is thought that business managers and marketing practitioners need to be a guide rather than follow this trend, in other words, to support practices parallel to the ideology of green processes.

Businesses and marketing practitioners should not be indifferent to environmental transformations. Detailed studies should be done on how businesses can adapt to this change. Sustainability of the world's resources can only be achieved with the cooperation of consumers and corporations. It is not enough for marketing to continue green marketing activities by shaping only marketing mix elements in the future. Marketing should market the idea of a sustainable world along with responsive consumption patterns and levels. In addition to marketing new products, technologies and services, social marketing of many new ideas is also seen as a requirement to make our economies more sustainable. These should include recycling, fair trade, product-service substitutes, composting, thrift, energy efficiency, and less materialistic lifestyles. Perhaps, with the effect of slow food, slow city (*cittaslow*), sustainable development, marketing can also mediate the transformation of people who become simpler while consuming towards a slower and higher quality life.

The current review has a limitation due to the fact that it covers 10 journals with the highest h-5 index in the marketing literature, 5 keywords and articles with most cited references and that the published studies are considered only within the context of certain criteria. In addition, areas such as communication and tourism, which can include green paradigm transformation studies and which have common working areas with marketing, were excluded from the scope of the research. It would be appropriate to study these areas in further research. In the future, new searches may be made with more different keywords. Only recent studies can be focused on. In addition, green marketing in sociological processes that has a small number of studies can be examined. New studies can be carried out on shaping and social marketing of new consumption and new lifestyle ideas. Such studies would expand marketing from the level of micro-analysis that includes the consumer perspective in which it is stuck and would enrich the literature.

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# Femvertising and Its Perception by Polish Female Consumers

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## ABSTRACT

The world is constantly undergoing socio-economic and cultural changes, but the existence of patriarchy and the related gender inequality remain unchanged. In response to this state of affairs, a feminist movement emerged and influenced society. Companies recognize the changes taking place in society and decide to include the feminist movement in their cause-related marketing campaigns. This is how a relatively new form of marketing communication, called femvertising, was born. This paper aims to analyze this form of marketing communication and the effect of both hostile and benevolent sexism on the perception of advertising. The research method employed in this study was a quantitative survey on a sample of 321 Polish women. The results of the survey showed that women rate advertisements portraying females in an unconventional way higher than traditional advertisements. Moreover, the perception of advertisements is influenced by the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism. The higher the level of sexism, the more negative the evaluation of pro-women advertising becomes. This is a suggestion for advertisers that diversifying an advertising message can be an effective marketing strategy.

JEL classification: M31, M37

Keywords: advertising, femvertising, feminism, ambivalent sexism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The feminist movement continues to be one of the most important trends in the contemporary world in the fight for social justice. The emancipation movement can be defined as a socio-cultural phenomenon that goes beyond the framework of political movements (Janiak-Jasińska et al., 2008). The feminist movement in advertising got its name thanks to the combination of two words – *feminism* and *advertising*. The term is defined as a type of advertising aimed at breaking down stereotypes and challenging women to break gender norms (SheKnows Media, 2018). An important element of such advertisements is their impact on emotions – they are not only intended to reach consumers with a given product, but also leave an emotional mark on women (Mamuric, 2019). Over the years, more and more companies have included feminism in their cause-related marketing campaigns.

The aim of this study is to analyze this trend in marketing communication and its perception by Polish female consumers. Its purpose is to examine women's expectations of the creation

of the world presented in advertisements, and thus show the direction of advertisers in terms of diversifying the advertising message. The hypotheses set out in the article were verified by a survey researching Polish women's perception of femvertising and the influence of the level of ambivalent sexism on it.

The paper is constructed as follows: a literature review on the impact of advertising on society, the image of women in advertising over the years, as well as the impact of both hostile and benevolent sexism on the perception of advertisements, research methods, research results and, lastly, discussion, study limitations and directions for further research.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, HYPOTHESES, RESEARCH MODEL, EMPIRICAL RESULTS

### 2.1. Literature Review

#### 2.1.1. *The influence of advertising on society*

Over the years, advertisers have tried to reach the widest possible range of female consumers. Their efforts entered the 20th century and from the very beginning had an impact on creating and defining femininity, showing women primarily as wives and mothers (Ciochetto, 2008). Advertisements not only presented women in a stereotypical way, referring to the social roles imposed on them and the necessity to conform to the beauty standards (e.g. Kelloggs' "The harder a wife works, the cuter she looks", Virginia Slims' "You've come a long way, baby") but also repeatedly referred to the activities of the feminist movement – usually unfavorably (e.g. The Shredded Wheat's "Her Declaration of Independence"). The portrayal of women in advertising has not changed in the following decades, as research has shown. Compared to men, women were more often presented as unemployed or performing jobs with lower income (Lundstrom & Sciglimpaglia, 1977). Moreover, the depiction of women practicing sports has become less frequent and varied over the years (Kerin et al., 1979). Furthermore, the liberalization of sex life in the 1970s was reflected in advertising – over 30% of advertisements used sex appeal or various kinds of sexual references with the participation of women (Ciochetto, 2008). It was similar at the end of the last century – advertising campaigns did not show the diversity of characters, passions, and lives of women, but continually perpetuated their image as mothers, people focused on their appearance, sexual objects (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002).

When it comes to advertising nowadays, the image of women portrayed in advertisements has not changed significantly. In the current media, women are 48% more likely to be represented in the kitchen than the opposite sex (UNESCO, 2021). Advertisements often show women performing household duties – they present them as people whose only concern is an insufficiently cleaned house (Leszczuk-Fiedziukiewicz, 2009). Interestingly, the description of the product's operation and effectiveness is usually presented by a man (Dziewanowska, 2004). The role of experts is played by men in 82% (UNESCO, 2021). Women are also shown as mothers, but their image has not changed either. Advertisers still present the purpose of women's consumption as caring for the family and strengthening their feminine, maternal side (Davis et al., 2019). If advertisements show modern and independent women, they portray them only as focused on their appearance – makeup or hair removal are meant to be a solution to their problems and their source of confidence (Dziewanowska, 2004; Lin & Yeh, 2009).

The discussion on the impact of advertising on society has been present for years. Two opposite ways of perceiving it have become the most popular and were often discussed: the "mirror" versus the "mold" argument (Holbrook, 1987; Pollay, 1986, 1987). The first one describes advertising as a mirror image of society, which shows dominant values in a cultural context (Holbrook, 1987) and the second is derived from the theory that the way society perceives reality is created by the



media (Pollay, 1986; Baudrillard, 1998). It can be said that the two perspectives complement each other – advertising shows the dominant behavior in society, refers to the imposed gender norms, and thus influences the behavior of its viewers, who are susceptible to its influence and unconsciously perpetuate the stereotypes depicted in it. The topic of the impact of advertising on society is particularly discussed when it comes to perpetuating gender roles (Tuchman, 1979; Eisend, 2009). The influence of advertising on the perception of gender identity, women's self-esteem has been repeatedly proven by research (Doliński, 2003).

### ***2.1.2. Feminism in advertising***

Advertisements affect how people perceive the society they live in. Human beings constantly observe the images that are present in advertisements, which contributes to their acceptance of certain behaviors and the perpetuation of specific beliefs about specific groups.

Research shows that constant exposure to unattainable beauty standards can have a negative impact on women's body image and self-confidence (Romo, 2010; Halliwell et al., 2005). Given that the global prevalence of eating disorders increased from 3.5% to 7.8% between 2000 and 2018 (Galmiche et al., 2019), this is a suggestion to include the body positivity movement more frequently in marketing campaigns.

In addition, advertising can strengthen gender stereotypes. Teaching stereotypically male or female behavior from an early age influences the behavior in the future – interpersonal relations, the direction of education (Mihalčová et al., 2015; Graff, 2001). The belief that women are emotional and lack scientific minds stifles their professional potential. This translates into reality: women are underrepresented in STEM fields both in education and careers (Christie et al., 2017).

Advertisements still create an artificial reality that does not reveal the true female nature. Even though menstruation is an integral part of most women's lives, social research shows that it is one of the taboos that is also somewhat omitted in advertising (Merskin, 1999). Many advertisements describe period as “that time of the month” and use a blue liquid to demonstrate the absorbency of a sanitary napkin or tampon (Tingle, 2018). Advertising spots featuring hair removal products also deepen the taboo on the natural female body – they do not show hair on women's bodies. This exacerbates the pressure and taboos associated with shaving. Data shows that 99% of American women voluntarily remove body hair, while over 85% of them do it regularly, sometimes even daily. These habits do not differ between groups of different ethnic or geographical backgrounds (Smelik, 2015).

Considering everything mentioned above, changes in advertising should be gradually introduced. Feminism tries to bring positive changes in all the presented spheres. Its influence is visible in many areas of social life, and it has been gaining strength over the years – it shapes the attitudes of society and thus affects its expectations towards the creation of the world presented in advertisements. These needs are met by the new marketing communication trend aimed at women, known as femvertising (Mamuric, 2019). It is also an effective way to encourage customers to buy a given product. According to the research, more than half of women had a positive attitude towards advertisements containing a pro-female message and therefore purchased the advertised product (SheKnows Media, 2015). This is an important fact because over the years women are continuously responsible for more purchasing decisions (Chopra, 2014; Silverstein & Sayre, 2009; Lawson & Gilman, 2009).

Feminism in advertising manifests itself in different ways. We can distinguish several types of femvertising. The first relates to the body positivity movement – an example of such advertising is Sport England's “This Girl Can”. This advertisement stands in stark contrast to the other advertisements presenting women exercising because the female characters do not have typically athletic bodies. The campaign shows a realistic image of the human body and includes slogans such as “Sweating like a pig, feeling like a fox” and “I jiggle therefore I am”. Other pro-women advertisements show femininity as something that goes beyond physicality. An example of this

is L'oreal's "Being a Woman Transcends the Body" advertisement, which shows a transgender woman getting ready to take a photo for a new ID card, showing her pride in being a woman. This was an extremely important step towards increasing representation in advertising campaigns, as transgender women are usually excluded from the narrative when it comes to advertising for cosmetic brands, despite constituting a large group of consumers. Another advertisement that shows different images of beauty is Dove's "Beauty on your own terms #MyBeautyMySay" one. Advertisements of this kind confront narrow Western beauty ideals, which are represented mainly by white, slim, cis-gender, and able-bodied women. It aims to show that each body, regardless of whether it fits into the narrow canon, is beautiful, and also to increase the representation of people with different appearance in the media (Leboeuf, 2019).

Femvertising can also manifest a rebellion against gender-stereotyped behavior (e.g. H&M's "She's a lady") and character traits (e.g. Bumble's "The Ball is in Her Court"). Feminism in advertisement sometimes tries to draw attention to the problem of linguistic sexism that is present in our society. Always' "#LikeAGirl" advertisement refers to the title phrase that occurs in many languages and is used to insult someone, emphasize someone's weakness. At the beginning of the video, adults and little boys are asked what it means to run like a girl – in response, they demonstrate running carelessly. However, when younger girls hear the same question, they show a committed run. The situation is similar when asked to throw a ball or fight like a girl. The creators of the campaign want to redefine the phrase "like a girl" and help young girls build self-confidence. It fights the narrative about the delicacy, innocence, and indecisiveness of women. Moreover, femvertising mentions a lack of female scientists in education. In Microsoft's "#MakeWhatsNext" advertisement, young girls are asked to name any inventors, which they do not have much trouble with. When they are asked to name women inventors, they do not remember a single person. They realize that they are only taught about male inventors at school. Another advertisement shows how seemingly innocuous words leave an imprint on young girls' career choices. In Verizon's "Inspire Her Mind" advertisement, little girls, when they want to explore the world, build models of planets or rockets, are constantly told not to get dirty, make a mess or give their tools to their male siblings. As a result, girls give up developing their interests in science.

Feminism in advertising also tries to break the silence about taboo topics. Addressing period shame, femvertising can demonstrate an authentic picture of menstruation, ranging from a variety of emotions, through portraying real-life situations, to using red fluid to present menstrual blood (e.g. Bodyform's "#bloodnormal"). Furthermore, other advertisements break the unspoken rule of showing only smooth skin in advertisements of women's body hair removal products and show hairy legs, armpits, and bikini area. An example of this is Billie's "Project Body Hair" advertisement, where hairy female legs are being shown in the first seconds of the clip. Some scenes show characters in everyday situations that many people can identify with, like one with a woman shaving only some parts of her knees and thighs, which are exposed by cut-outs in jeans.

There are no specific requirements for advertising to be considered femvertising, but the criteria for Femvertising Awards by SheKnows Media allow to define some framework for pro-women advertising. Femvertising can be attributed to long-lasting advertising campaigns aimed at women who continually set an example for other brands, as well as campaigns that took place recently, albeit they were groundbreaking. It is also worth mentioning that a given campaign does not have to refer to a specific product or service, but should focus on building awareness of the problems faced by adult women and girls (SheKnows Media, 2018).

### ***2.1.3. The influence of ambivalent sexism on the perception of advertising***

Sexism is undeniably present in our society. It can be defined as individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs, as well as institutional and cultural practices that reflect negative evaluations about someone based on their gender, and thus reinforce gender inequalities (Swim

& Hyers, 2009, p. 407). Sexist ideologies are full of myths that try to justify gender inequalities (Sidanius & Prato, 1999). The fact that there is male structural power and female power stemming from dependencies in interpersonal relationships creates ambivalent sexist ideologies composed of hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism seeks to justify traditional gender roles, sexualization of women's body and male dominance. Benevolent sexism, in contrast, encompasses feelings of protectiveness and affection toward women, and therefore its harmfulness is hard to notice. This type of sexism relies on gentler justifications of gender roles and male power (Glick & Fiske, 1997). It describes women as innocent creatures who should be protected and whose love is necessary to make a man's life complete (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Benevolent sexism reinforces the adoption of traditional gender roles and offers prosocial treatment of women who fulfill them (Fiske & North, 2015). Its higher level correlates with the presence of conservative views (Christopher & Mull, 2006), which are more often represented by the elderly. Similarly, in the case of the place of residence, the level of liberalism increases in inhabitants with the size of the city (CBOS, 2007). Additionally, research shows that marital status also influences the level of sexism (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2010). Moreover, studies show a positive correlation between the level of benevolent and hostile sexism in both women and men (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Society uses stereotypes to simplify and systematize information and understand an ever-changing world (Fedor, 2014). This becomes particularly problematic at a time when these stereotypes lead to the emergence of various types of expectations regarding one social category, which are difficult to oppose or contribute to limiting the possibilities of a given group. While hostile sexism is associated with a negative attitude towards behaviors that do not fit into the stereotypical gender roles, benevolent sexism praises women that fit into them (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sexism is related to gender stereotypes and thus affects our perception of reality. Ambivalent sexism contributes to gender disparities that manifest in the workplace (Jones et al., 2014) and may limit women's ascent to senior positions (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Furthermore, it plays a role in perceptions of the quality of one's romantic relationship (Lachance-Grzela et al., 2021).

There is still a lack of research that would analyze women's attitude to femvertising or the connection between ambivalent sexism and the perception of advertising. However, several studies address similar issues. One study was conducted on Chinese students in 2020. It showed that there is a relationship between the level of one type of sexism and the response to femvertising. The study confirmed that people with different levels of hostile sexism responded to female advertising differently – people with lower levels of sexism were more positive towards them. Interestingly, benevolent sexism was not predictive of consumer responses toward femvertising (Teng et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a study conducted on Polish students aged 18 to 25 concerned the perception of advertisements presenting traditional and non-traditional images of men. It showed that the non-traditional advertising message was more effective than the one based on the portrait of a man who conformed to the patriarchal gender norms. The ad with a man shown as a householder was rated higher than the one presenting a man in the role of a businessman (Zawisza et al., 2006).

To reach the widest possible audience, advertising creates a mixture of appropriate values, cultural context and reflects the needs of individuals, but refers to the most typical case (Lin & Yeh, 2009). However, recent research shows that women are more favorably disposed towards advertisements showing female representatives in a non-stereotypical way (Um, 2020). Female consumers pay attention to a pro-women message in advertising, which causes a better rating of both the ad and the brand (Åkestam et al., 2017).

As a result of the literature review presented above, three hypotheses were established as follows:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Femvertising is perceived more positively than traditional advertising.

- **Hypothesis 2a:** The level of benevolent sexism is positively related to the perception of traditional advertisements.
- **Hypothesis 2b:** The level of benevolent sexism is negatively related to the perception of femvertising.
- **Hypothesis 3a:** The level of hostile sexism is positively related to the perception of traditional advertisements.
- **Hypothesis 3b:** The level of hostile sexism is negatively related to the perception of femvertising.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

To verify the hypotheses, a quantitative study in a form of an online survey was conducted. The questionnaire was completed by 321 Polish women.

The research questionnaire was divided into six sections. The first four concerned the evaluation of viewed advertisements. The first two commercials featured different portraits of female body hair. Gillette's "Venus Breeze" commercial shows a smiling, slim woman hanging out on the beach. Her body is hairless. The operation of a razor is also shown on hairless armpits and legs. Billie's "Project Body Hair" advertisement shows hair on different parts of the female body – under armpits, in the bikini area, on legs. Subtitles say that the world pretends that female body hair does not exist, which is not true. The advertisement also reminds its viewers that shaving is not a necessity, but only a woman's own choice. The next two advertisements presented different images of the female body and exercise. Nike Women's Commercial presents a slim, athletic woman who runs and does boxing. Despite being tired, she does not give up and keeps practicing. Sport England's "This Girl Can" commercial features women with different body types practicing all kinds of sports. It shows scenes where characters are completely focused on exercise, as well as moments when women enjoy exercises and widely smile. It also shows moments of fatigue – women stop for a moment to catch a breath and then return to training. This advertisement depicts a realistic image of the female body and exercise.

Some of the statements from the scale created by C. Puto and W. Wells called "Informational and Transformational Ad Content" (ITAC) (1984) were used for the assessment. The fifth part contained questions about views on women and men – to analyze the level of both hostile and benevolent sexism, a part of the scale constructed by P. Glick and S. T. Fiske called "The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory" (ASI) (1996) was used. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale. The last part included demographic data. The reliability statistics (coefficient alphas) for all three scales are presented in Table 1 and all are above the threshold of 0.7.

**Table 1**

Reliability of the scales

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha
The rating of advertisement	Alpha = 0.836
The level of benevolent sexism	Alpha = 0.738
The level of hostile sexism	Alpha = 0.709

Source: own research.

The linear regression was employed for hypotheses testing. For linear regression assumptions testing, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity were tested for each of the three models. The analysis of P-P plots and scatter plots of the residuals

in each case show that the residuals follow the normal distribution and are equally distributed. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values are below 1.5, which points to no multicollinearity issues.

The study used a non-probability sampling method – convenience sampling. This decision was motivated by the convenience of access, however, it limits the possibility of interpreting the obtained results to draw conclusions for the entire population. Therefore, the research sample cannot be defined as representative.

321 women born between 1966 and 2003 participated in the study. Most of the respondents were women born between 1996 and 2003, and they accounted for 60.4% of the respondents. 75.7% of the respondents live in cities – 24.3% of the surveyed women live in the countryside. The vast majority of women who completed the questionnaire have higher (53.3%) or secondary (41.4%) education. When it comes to marital status, 65.7% of the respondents are in a relationship, 31.8% are single, and 2.5% are divorced (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Characteristics of survey respondents

		N	Percentage
<b>Year of birth</b>	1966–1979	31	9.66%
	1980–1995	96	29.91%
	1996–2003	194	60.44%
<b>Level of education</b>	primary	2	0.62%
	lower secondary	4	1.25%
	vocational	11	3.43%
	secondary	133	41.43%
	higher	171	53.27%
<b>Marital status</b>	single	102	31.78%
	in an informal relationship	146	45.48%
	in a formal relationship	65	20.25%
	divorced	8	2.49%
<b>Place of residence</b>	village	78	24.30%
	city with fewer than 50,000 residents	52	16.20%
	city with 50,000–100,000 residents	19	5.92%
	city with 100,000–500,000 residents	45	14.02%
	city with over 500,000 residents	127	39.56%

Source: own research.

## 4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

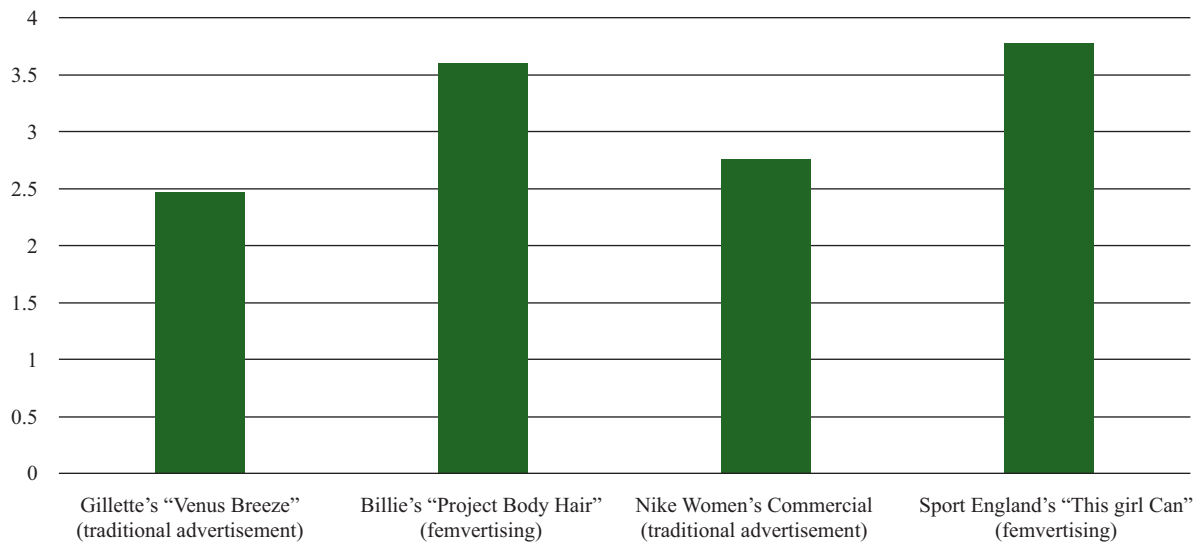
### 4.1. Ratings of femvertising and traditional advertising

The conducted research showed that women perceive femvertising more positively than traditional advertisement. The average ratings of the respondents indicate a better rating of femvertising – advertisements where one of them broke the taboo of female body hair and the other showed a body-positive message – compared to traditional advertisements. In the case of advertisements presenting a stereotypical image of women, the average score is close to 2.5 – the

average score for the first advertisement is 2.47, while for the third one it is 2.76. The situation is different in the case of pro-female advertisements – the second ad, breaking the taboos of female hair, was rated on average at 3.61, and the fourth, containing a body-positive message, at 3.79 (Figure 1). These results confirm the  $H_1$  hypothesis that femvertising is perceived more positively than traditional advertising – the averages of these two groups differ by about 1 point.

**Figure 1**

Ratings of advertisements



Source: own research, N=321

## 4.2. Relation Between the Level of Sexism and the Perception of Advertisements

### 4.2.1. Relation between the level of sexism and perception of traditional advertisements

To test the 2a and 3a hypotheses concerning the relation between the perception of traditional advertisements and the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism, regression analyses were performed (Table 3). A simple linear regression was calculated to predict rating of the first traditional advertisement based on the level of benevolent and hostile sexism. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(2, 318) = 61.059, p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .277. A simple linear regression was also calculated to predict the second traditional advertisement rating based on the level of two types of sexism. A significant regression equation for predicting rating of the second traditional advertisement based on the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism was found ( $F(2, 318) = 25.717, p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .139.

**Table 3**

Results of regression analyses for the traditional advertisements

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Level of sexism → perception of the first traditional advertisement							
<b>Constant</b>	0.701	0.167		4.208	0.000	0.373	1.029
<b>Level of benevolent sexism</b>	0.416	0.064	0.372	6.492	<b>0.000</b>	0.290	0.542
<b>Level of hostile sexism</b>	0.248	0.065	0.220	3.844	<b>0.000</b>	0.121	0.375
Level of sexism → perception of the second traditional advertisement							
<b>Constant</b>	1.392	0.202		6.880	0.000	0.994	1.791
<b>Level of benevolent sexism</b>	0.379	0.078	0.304	4.864	<b>0.000</b>	0.226	0.532
<b>Level of hostile sexism</b>	0.132	0.078	0.106	1.690	0.092	-0.022	0.287

Source: own research, N = 321.

The analysis showed that in the case of the first traditional advertisement, the evaluation of the advertisement was influenced by both the level of benevolent and hostile sexism – in each case the probability value was below 0.05. A positive coefficient indicates that as the value of the independent variable increases, the mean of the dependent variable also tends to increase. The coefficient value signifies how much the mean of the dependent variable changes given a one-unit shift in the independent variable while holding other variables in the model constant. Participants' ratings of the first traditional advertisement increased for each level of benevolent sexism. With an increase in benevolent sexism by 1 point, the rating for the first traditional advertisement improves by 0.416. The result was similar for the second type of sexism. Participants' ratings of the first traditional advertisement increased for each level of hostile sexism. With an increase in hostile sexism by 1 point, the rating for the first traditional advertisement improves by 0.248. In other words, the higher the level of the two types of sexism, the higher the rating of the first traditional advertisement.

In the case of the second advertisement not containing a feminist message, only one independent variable had a significant impact on the perception of advertising. The probability value was below 0.05 only in the case of benevolent sexism. With an increase in benevolent sexism by 1 point, the rating for the first traditional advertisement improves by 0.379. Hostile sexism did not affect the advertisement's rating.

In the case of the first traditional advertising, the perception was influenced by both the level of hostile and benevolent sexism. As for the second traditional advertising, only the influence of benevolent sexism was statistically significant. This allows for positive verification of hypothesis 2a and partial positive verification of hypothesis 2b.

#### 4.2.2. Relation between the level of sexism and perception of feminist advertisements

To test the 2b and 3b hypotheses concerning the relation between the perception of traditional advertisements and the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism, regression analyses were performed (Table 4). A simple linear regression was calculated to predict rating of the first feminist advertisement based on the level of benevolent and hostile sexism. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(2, 318) = 44.637, p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .219. A significant regression equation for predicting rating of the second feminist advertisement based on the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism was found ( $F(2, 318) = 14.945, p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .086.

**Table 4**

Results of regression analyses for the feminist advertisements

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Level of sexism → perception of the first feminist advertisement							
<b>Constant</b>	5.545	0.213		25.974	0.000	5.125	5.965
<b>Level of benevolent sexism</b>	-0.277	0.082	-0.201	-3.376	0.001	-0.439	-0.116
<b>Level of hostile sexism</b>	-0.452	0.083	-0.326	-5.473	0.000	-0.615	-0.290
Level of sexism → perception of the second feminist advertisement							
<b>Constant</b>	4.946	0.219		22.573	0.000	4.515	5.377
<b>Level of benevolent sexism</b>	-0.183	0.084	-0.139	-2.165	0.031	-0.348	-0.017
<b>Level of hostile sexism</b>	-0.253	0.085	-0.192	-2.978	0.003	-0.420	-0.086

Source: own research, N = 321.

In the case of the first feminist advertisement, showing the image of female body hair, the evaluation of the advertisement was influenced by the level of both hostile and benevolent sexism, as indicated by a probability value lower than 0.05 in both cases. A negative coefficient suggests that as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable tends to decrease. With an increase of the level of benevolent sexism by 1 point, the rating of the first feminist advertisement decreases by 0.277. Furthermore, with the increase of the level of hostile sexism, the rating of the advertisement decreases by 0.452. In other words, the higher the level of both hostile and benevolent sexism, the lower the rating of the first feminist advertisement.

The second pro-female advertisement showed a realistic picture of women's bodies and exercises. The rating of it was also influenced by the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism – the probability value is less than 0.05, which indicates statistical significance. Participants' rating of the second pro-women advertisement decreased 0.183 for each level of benevolent sexism and 0.253 for each level of hostile sexism.

As already presented above, the two types of sexism influenced the perception of both of feminist advertisements. The higher the level of both hostile and benevolent sexism, the lower the rating of the feminist advertisements. Thus, hypotheses 2b and 3b are positively verified.

## 5. DISCUSSION, STUDY LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Femvertising is a relatively new way of marketing communication. The conducted research allowed for the formulation of several interesting conclusions regarding advertisements' perception by the surveyed Polish women, as well as the influence of some factors on their rating of pro-female and traditional advertising.

### 5.1. Discussion

The aim of the study was to understand the role of portraying women in advertising and its impact on the perception of advertising by Polish women. In addition, the study investigated the relationship between advertising rating and the level of both benevolent and hostile sexism. The results obtained allow for several conclusions to be drawn.



The first conclusion concerns the general evaluation of advertising. The surveyed Polish women rate higher advertisements that break taboos and contain a body-positive message compared to traditional advertisements that present women in a stereotypical or idealized way. The use of a feminist message in advertising improves its perception by women, and there may be several reasons for this. This type of marketing communication allows women to identify with the heroines of advertisements thanks to greater inclusiveness – these advertisements present different types of bodies and beauty. Moreover, they show various pictures of femininity, the situations that female representatives face daily. This is what sets them apart from traditional advertising. All this shows the importance of a pro-female message in advertising – femvertising is an effective strategy that contributes to distinguishing a given brand from others.

Another area of analysis concerned the relation between the level of the two types of sexism and the perception of advertising. Regression analyses have shown that benevolent sexism affected the perception of both traditional advertisements. The higher the level of this type of sexism, the higher the rating of commercials showing conventional images of women. Women presented in traditional advertisements fit the imposed beauty standards and did not break gender stereotypes, therefore the respondents with a higher level of benevolent sexism rated traditional advertisements higher. However, the difference in the strength of the aforementioned influence is visible. In the case of the advertisement with a woman with a shaved body, a change in the level of benevolent sexism by 1 point improves the perception of the advertisement by 0.416, while in the case of the second advertisement, where the idealized image of exercise was presented, the rating of the advertisement increases by 0.248. This may be due to the fact that the woman in the first advertisement fit the imposed gender stereotypes more than the second one, who was athletic.

As for hostile sexism, it only influenced the assessment of the first traditional advertisement, which showed a woman with no body hair. In the case of the ad portraying an athletic woman, the influence of hostile sexism on perception was not statistically significant. This might again be due to the fact that the woman in the advertisement for the razor matched gender stereotypes, and the portrait of the other woman who exercised did not refer to them that much.

When it comes to the feminist advertisements, both types of sexism influenced the perception of each of them. It should be noted, however, that there is a visible difference in the strength of this impact. In the case of the first advertisement, where female body hair was visible, with a higher level of benevolent and hostile sexism by 1, the advertisement rating decreased by 0.277 and 0.452, respectively. In the case of the second ad, it decreased by 0.183 and 0.253. The respondents' reactions could be intensified by the fact that the female characters of the first pro-women advertisement did not fit the image of femininity imposed by the patriarchy – they had visible hair on their legs, armpits, or in the bikini area. Even if male body hair is not controversial, female body hair is still associated with uncleanness, a lack of proper hygiene (Smelik, 2015), and has become an elicitor of disgust (Tiggemann & Lewis, 2004). In the case of the second feminist advertisement, where a realistic image of the human body and exercise was shown, the influence of the level of benevolent and hostile sexism was smaller. This could be due to the fact that the image of women presented in the advertisement of sportswear did not oppose the vision of femininity created by the patriarchy as much as the advertisement of razors.

The results of the study conducted on Polish women were similar to those from the study presented on Chinese students in 2020. Both studies showed the influence of hostile sexism on the perception of advertising – the higher the level of this type of sexism, the worse the perception of feminist advertising. However, for a study conducted in China, benevolent sexism was not predictive of consumer responses toward femvertising (Teng et al., 2021). Perhaps differences in results between studies appeared due to the type of advertisements presented. One of those presented to Chinese women showed smartphones – the first ad from this group showed women in non-traditional roles (e.g. a woman riding a motorcycle or practicing martial arts), while the second one did not contain any characters and only showed a telephone. The advertisements

presented to Polish women were different – the first group broke the taboo of female hair, while the second one contained a body-positive message. This may have contributed to a stronger influence of hostile sexism on the judgments of Polish women.

In the case of research on students from Gdańsk, examining the perception of advertisements presenting traditional and non-traditional images of men, the advertisements breaking gender stereotypes were rated higher. The analyses showed similar results to the research carried out on Polish women. Additionally, a study on students showed that people with more liberal views responded more positively to the non-traditional portrait of the advertising hero compared to people with conservative views (Zawisza et al., 2006). Conservatism is connected with the traditional vision of gender roles, and thus with sexism – this suggests the connection of these factors, but to clearly define this relationship, it is necessary to conduct further research.

Each of the studies mentioned above has one thing in common – the respondents rate higher the advertisements that show people who do not fit into traditional gender roles and break the imposed gender norms. Although over the years the tactic of presenting a stereotypical image of advertisements' heroes has been used to build some kind of credibility, as well as to make it easier for consumers to identify with them by showing the “most common case” of a specific category (Leszczuk-Fiedziukiewicz, 2009), the latest research suggests using a different tactic. They are a suggestion for advertisers that diversifying the advertising message can be beneficial and contribute to a better assessment of both the product and the brand. However, it is unknown if a more positive perception of femvertising compared to traditional advertising is a permanent change in the expectations of consumers or it is because that this form of marketing communication is relatively new.

## 5.2. Study Limitations and Directions of Further Research

This study on Polish women was limited by several factors. The first one is the method of selecting female respondents – convenience sampling was used here. Therefore, the sample is not representative for the entire population – it limits the possibility of generalizing and presenting conclusions concerning the whole population. In addition, the study does not take into account factors that may affect the respondents at the time of filling in the questionnaire – these may be differences in mood, fatigue and carelessly reading the questions. It was also impossible to control external factors, for example noise. Another limitation of the study is the inability to deepen the answers – all questions contained in the questionnaire were closed, single-choice and the respondents could not provide any additional explanations regarding their choices. As for the advertisements presented to the respondents, they did not show products of the same brand – this could have influenced their rating of advertisements. Further research should take into account these limitations and check the mood level of the respondents, as well as conduct the survey in conditions that limit the influence of external factors on the responses. In addition, if possible, respondents should be shown advertisements of the same brand. Additionally, a stratified sampling method should be used to be able to transfer the results of the study to the entire population.

The conducted research did not investigate the impact of using a pro-female marketing message on consumer behavior. There were also no issues related to the perception by Polish women of the impact of femvertising on society and possible changes introduced thanks to this type of marketing communication. All this points to a possible direction for further research that would help in a deeper analysis of the perception of femvertising and its impact on consumers.

## 5.3. Conclusion

Research showing the perception of femvertising is important to our understanding of this relatively new phenomenon in marketing communication. This study extends the literature on the

topic of the impact of ambivalent sexism on the evaluation of advertising by providing support for the idea that the level of sexism influences the rating of advertisements. A higher level of benevolent sexism is related to the lower rating of pro-women advertisements and higher rating of traditional advertisements. In the case of the level of hostile sexism, it influences the perception of feminist advertisements. It is worth mentioning, however, that Polish women evaluate feminist advertisements better than advertisements showing gender stereotypes.

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## APPENDIX

### Rating of advertisement

1. The commercial did seem to be speaking directly to me.
2. There is nothing special about (this brand) that makes it different from the others.
3. This commercial did really hold my attention.
4. This commercial did remind me of experiences or feelings I've had in my own life.
5. It is the kind of commercial that keeps running through your head after you've seen it.
6. It's hard to put into words, but this commercial leaves me with a good feeling about using (this brand).
7. I could really relate to this commercial.

### Benevolent sexism scale

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
3. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
4. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
5. Men are complete without women.
6. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
7. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

### Hostile sexism scale

1. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality".
2. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
3. Women are too easily offended.
4. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
5. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
6. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
7. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.

### The advertisements used in the study

1. Gillette's Venus Breeze: [youtube.com/watch?v=IXVWp3yujoA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXVWp3yujoA)
2. Billie's "Project Body Hair": [youtube.com/watch?v=P4DDpS685iI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4DDpS685iI)
3. Nike Women's Commercial: [youtube.com/watch?v=E2-efiAcS3w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2-efiAcS3w)
4. Sport England's "This Girl Can": [youtube.com/watch?v=jsP0W7-tEOc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsP0W7-tEOc)