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LIPSTICK ON A PIG:
EXPLORING THE ETHICAL SENSITIVITY OF GENERATION Z AND THEIR
RESPONSES TO GREENWASHED ADVERTISING THROUGH TARES

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Communication Division

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Josue Israel Ramirez

July 2018

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under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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July 2018

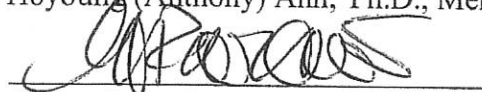
Faculty Committee



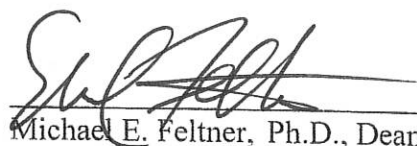
Bert Ballard, Ph.D., Chairperson



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and encouragement of several individuals who in one way or another contributed their insight and assistance.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my family and my best friend for their continued support and encouragement throughout this entire process. I will forever be indebted to the sacrifices made by my parents, Carmen and Carlos, who have enriched my life with practical wisdom and a great deal of love. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my sisters, Andrea and Judith, for their unyielding support and unfaltering commitment to help me realize my academic aspirations. I am especially grateful to my best friend, Drew, whom I was fortunate enough to meet while pursuing graduate studies. Her presence in my life has felt like one uninterrupted conversation, and I will forever be thankful for her unwavering care and support throughout this entire journey.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my committee chairperson, Dr. Bert Ballard, for his unfailing support as my thesis adviser. He not only contributed to a rewarding graduate experience by affording me intellectual freedom in my work, but also directed me to new ideas, and demanded that I push myself to produce high quality work. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Anthony Ahn and Dr. Ginger Rosenkrans, whose interest in my work and experience in advertising research proved invaluable in elevating the academic rigor of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
 CHAPTER	
1. Introduction	1
Purpose and Rationale.....	2
2. Literature Review	5
Why the Green Trend?.....	5
Green Advertising and Its Criteria.....	6
The American Green Consumer.....	12
Marketing Theory in Green Advertising?.....	15
Greenwashing: Lipstick on a Pig or Substantive Change?	20
Millennial Responses to Green Marketing	23
Generation Z: The Post 1995 Millennial	24
Gender-Related Responses to Green Advertising	27
Ethical Sensitivity.....	28
Ethical Persuasion: The TARES Test.....	40
3. Methods.....	53
Sample.....	53
Procedure and Manipulation	54
Development of the Survey Instrument.....	56
4. Results.....	60

Demographic Profile of the Sample	61
Green Attitudes and Behaviors.....	61
Confirmatory Factor Analysis	63
Reliabilities of the ESSQ Scores	64
Ethical Sensitivity in Generation Z.....	64
Race-Related Differences in Ethical Sensitivity	66
Manipulation Check of Ad Designs	68
Pre-TARES Evaluation of Ad Ethicality	69
Reliabilities of the TARES Scores	70
Manifestation of TARES	72
Descriptions of Gender Related Differences in TARES Scores	74
TARES Scores as Ordinal Data.....	75
Ethical Sensitivity and TARES	78
5. Summary and Significance of Major Findings.....	80
Summary	80
Ethical Sensitivity of Gen Z	80
Ethical Evaluations of Ads through TARES.....	84
6. Implications, Limitations and Directions for Future Research	92
Theoretical Implications	92
Practical Implications	97
Limitations	98
Directions for Future Research.....	99

APPENDICES

A. Control Advertisement.....	100
B. Greenwashed Advertisement.....	101
C. Green Advertisement	102
D. Coding Categories for the ESSQ.....	103
E. Coding Categories for the TARES Test.....	105
REFERENCES.....	106

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Sins of Greenwashing	22
2. Skills of Ethical Sensitivity	36
3. Frequencies and Percentages for Green Behaviors	62
4. Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities for the ESSQ	65
5. Gender-Related Differences for Responses to the ESSQ	67
6. Race-Related Differences for Responses to the ESSQ	68
7. Frequencies and Percentages for Pre-TARES Ad Evaluations	70
8. Ethical Issues Prior to Applying the TARES Criteria	71
9. Reliabilities of the TARES Scores and the Principle of Truthfulness	71
10. Descriptive Statistics for TARES Scores	73
11. Tukey's HSD Comparison for TARES Principles	74
12. Gender-Related Differences for TARES Scores	75
13. Frequencies and Percentages for TARES Scores	77
14. Mode Statistics for TARES Test Results	78

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the ethical sensitivity of Generation Z and their subsequent assessments of the ethicality of greenwashed messaging through the TARES Test. The initial focus of this study was to examine the ethical sensitivity of Gen Z undergraduates (n=120) from a private University in Southern California using the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) (Narvaez, 2001). The following research questions were explored: (1) What is the level of ethical sensitivity that Gen Z undergraduates possess; and (2) Are there any differences in ethical sensitivity between male and female students? Descriptive statistics revealed that the level of ethical sensitivity in the sample based on the ESSQ was high, particularly when compared to other studies that employed the same methodology. Furthermore, a Mann-Whitney U Test confirmed that female students have significantly higher self-estimations of ethical sensitivity than male students, specifically in the dimensions of “caring by connecting to others” and “identifying the consequences of actions & options.”

A secondary focus of this study was to assess the ethical dimensions of green and greenwashed advertisements through the TARES Test, which is a quantitative measure that directly evaluates persuasive messages for Truthfulness, Authenticity, Respect, Equity, and Social Responsibility (Baker & Martinson, 2001). Three ad types were created using a fictional brand in order to avoid prior user experiences that could negatively or positively influence a participant's evaluation of the ad content. The corresponding research questions for this portion of the study included: (1) To what extent will Gen Zers be able to recognize ethical issues in green advertising through the use of TARES?; and (2) Are there any gender-related differences in the ethical assessments of green and greenwashed ads? The results indicated that Gen Zers are not able to consistently differentiate green and greenwashed content across all the principles of the TARES. However, when principles are observed collectively, the green ad is being evaluated as having significantly higher ethical content than the greenwashed ad. Lastly, this study sought to synthesize these findings by exploring if there was any correlation between Generations Z's ethical sensitivity and their ethical evaluations of the ads through TARES. This question was subjected to a Pearson's product-moment correlation, which revealed that no connection exists between ethical sensitivity and ethical assessments of advertisements through TARES. Theoretical implications and practical recommendations for future research and green advertisement design are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Human progress in the form of the industrial revolution left its mark not only in its discoveries and inventions, but also in the carbon footprint that contributed to the emergence of air pollution, deforestation, and the destruction of natural landscapes. The voices that critiqued this environmental devastation ultimately galvanized green movements, which championed issues that spoke to the individual responsibility of consumption and waste management. This individual conviction has garnered the attention of companies that must now account for their lack of green consciousness in their practices, production, and products. It was either through conviction or a genuine concern for their brand image, that many companies such as, Coca Cola, General Electric, Wal-Mart, and Toyota altered their modes of production and consumption, in order to make a firm declaration that they share the ecological concerns of their consumers. It is to this end that advertising and marketing campaigns have become essential tools for companies to publicly announce that they are choosing to become part of the solution to environmental degradation.

Advertisements are therefore an important unit of analysis given that they address public perceptions in the following manner: (1) they frame the narrative by which society will observe and interpret the significance of environmental issues (Gephart, Emenike, & Bretz, 2011); and, (2) they provide insight as to what types of messages marketers are devoting time and resources, in order to better appeal to consumers. While advertisements are limited in their ability to elucidate the sincerity behind the actions of a

company, it does raise a pertinent question for consumers regarding the motivation behind the emergence of green adverts among big companies. Do these green shifts represent genuine commitments to ecological and sustainable efforts? Are these green practices part of a larger marketing strategy aimed at improving brand image and consumer relations? Is this all just a green façade, commonly referred to as “greenwashing”?

Purpose of the Research

In effect, this study intends to bring into focus the misguided nature of message assessment, which is often evaluated purely on its outcome rather than its moral worth (Kirby & Andreasen, 2001). The value of ethicality to the field of advertising can be evidenced in the interplay that exists between accountability, credibility, respect, and trust in relation to the effectiveness of a message (Lee & Cheng, 2010). From a strategic standpoint, green marketers must take notice of the potential value that ethicality brings to message content, particularly given that research from the last two decades continues to show skepticism among green consumers in relation to advertisements that are having “virtually no impact on the market” (Finisterra do Paco & Reis, 2013). This reality is further exacerbated by the recognition that the goal of persuasion in advertising is often achieved through the exploitation of consumers in a way that is detrimental to their interests and well-being (Hawkins, 2017; Rotfeld, 2005; Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994). Ethical messaging might therefore represent the means of converging the disparate agendas of green consumers and green advertisers.

This research will address this ethical imperative by examining the concept of ethical sensitivity, which to date has never been used as a variable for further evaluating an individual's self-assessed ability to weigh the ethicality of green advertisements. Ethical sensitivity has remained a largely underexplored facet of ethical decision-making and has seldom been evaluated within the context of advertising research. It is however salient to do research on green marketing, largely because it shifts the focus from message efficacy to the ability of consumers to perceive the ethical content of a strategy that has been marred by misinformation. In regards to ethical sensitivity, it is imperative to underscore the following: (1) it is context specific, which means it is not an objective occurrence that all rational agents will experience in the exact same way; and (2) it is learned, and therefore contingent upon individual socialization.

The demographic of interest for this study is the emerging generation commonly referred to as Generation Z, which represents an ideal unit of study for ethical sensitivity in green marketing given that they represent "one of the most highly-educated demographics when it comes to understanding the importance of ecological and environmental conditions" (Gaudelli, 2009). Although one plausible assumption may be that individuals with higher self-assessed ethical sensitivity will be more adept at evaluating the ethicality of greenwashed advertisements, the facades that mask the duplicitous and fraudulent content of these advertisements may be so well packaged that even persons with high ethical sensitivity may lack enough information as a consumer to recognize the disingenuous nature of the content. If this is the case, advertisers producing greenwashed ads are not merely engaged in persuasive communication, but also

consumer deception, given that these ads are cultivating or contributing to false beliefs about the nature of the products or services that are being advertised. While this study may have possible implications for green marketers regarding how to appeal to Generation Z, and/or how to construct ethically sound advertising content, the aim of this study is more exploratory in nature and as a result will only offer implications from the findings, rather than a strategic plan for marketers based on these findings.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Why the Green Trend?

The emergence of a green marketing movement can be traced to the late 20th century where many contemporaries believed it would be nothing more than a trend that would disappear almost as quickly as it emerged (Furlow & Knott, 2009). Nevertheless, the current investment, both from consumers and businesses of all scales, has demonstrated that green attitudes and behaviors are here to stay. Interestingly, research has continually pointed to a disconnect between a consumer's expressed support for the environmental friendly products and their actual purchasing behavior (Li, Hartman, & Zee, 2009). Despite market research indicating a high level of inaction among these consumers, green companies are on the rise, and one study found that nearly 50% of CEO's consider that consumers are the largest stakeholder in influencing green changes to the actions, products, and packaging of any given company (Lacy, Cooper, Hayward, & Neuberger, 2010). As such, there remains significant interest in understanding how companies are responding to the heightened concerns of consumers by means of green retailing (Lai, Cheng, & Tang, 2010). This type of retailing has been employed with greater frequency, utilizing the implementation of measures to safeguard the environment through retail operations (Lai et. al, 2010). This has become increasingly more important now that government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have implemented means of regulating and monitoring corporate sustainability efforts (e.g., Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program) and

green claims (e.g., FTC Green Guides) (Kauffmann, Less & Teichmann, 2012; Ashcroft & Smith, 2008).

This wide reaching concern for environmental reporting has in many ways been precipitated by the ever-growing debate surrounding issues such as global warming, the use of chemicals in food preparation, the practice of applying insecticides in agricultural production, and the overall concern for environmental protection. The consequent scrutiny to which businesses are subjected in trying to determine the eco-friendliness of their practices is precisely why environmental reports are among some of the most useful sources of information that consumers have to evaluate and compare the business practices of competitors (Clarkson, Li, & Richardson, 2004; Evers, Smith, Brown, & Drake, 2006). This shift can be further explained by noting that business strategies that are deemed to be environmentally friendly can be advantageous and contribute to greater financial performance (Sharma, Iyer, Mehrotrac, & Krishnana, 2008).

Green Advertising and its Criteria

Environmental related issues began to garner the attention of marketing scholars in the early 1970s. Since that time, these issues have gradually transformed the means of competition between businesses in today's market economy, which has necessitated and often forced the incorporation of a number of legal, social, and economic expectations to strategic marketing planning. Hence, environmental, ecological, and green marketing were developed as a means for businesses to appeal to an emerging niche market that was beginning to change the contours of consumer environmental concerns that were now galvanizing the "greening" of company activities, production, and packaging. The word

“green” therefore denotes an awareness and subsequent sense of responsibility for the environment and its conservation.

The notion of green advertising refers to this same definitional undertone, yet it also encompasses a myriad of other related characterizations, which may not always be in agreement with one another. In its most general sense, green marketing is used in reference to any activity that is devised with the intention of incorporating environmental elements or concerns into its content (Crane, 2000). One of the most commonly cited definitions of this marketing strategy assumes that any action or undertaking that is constructed with the intent of meeting consumer needs through services, products or commodities that have minimal degradation to natural environments are engaged in a form of green marketing (Polonsky, 1994).

Another criterion for identifying green marketing requires that at least one of the following conditions be met: (a) there must be a defined relationship between the product or service and the environment; (b) it should promote an ecofriendly lifestyle in spite of the product or service that is being marketed; and (c) it cultivates a brand image that demonstrates a dedication to environmental responsibility (Banerjee, Gulas, & Iyer, 1995 p. 22). This represents one of many evaluative frameworks for an ecological position that gives greater precedent to products that can be produced by means of renewable resources (ie., the resources are used at a lower rate than they are replaced). Despite this criterion, consumers in the late 20th century perceived green advertising as having low credibility, which has presented a difficult challenge for businesses that have an earnest commitment to minimizing their impact on the environment. This suspicion amongst

consumers can to some degree be attributed to a number of factors including (a) a persistence by advertisers to emphasize corporate image to a greater degree than the product or service itself (Iyer & Banerjee, 1993), (b) low information content across green advertisements (Ottman, 1991), and (c) green adverts are often perceived to be marketing ploys that deceptively exploit consumers (Begley, Hager, & Wright, 1990). This reality is further exacerbated by the lack of agreement between marketers and consumers regarding the changes in activity and production that would readily meet the conditions for being green.

There is of course quite a variance in regards to the characteristics, greenness, objectives, and appeals that are employed in green advertisements (Banerjee, Gulas, & Iyer, 1995). In fact, there is a very obvious demarcation between print and TV ads in the aforementioned areas, which can be evidenced by the results of their study: (a) Print ads demonstrated a great focus on the greenness of the product rather than corporate image; (b) TV ads emphasized consumer behavior and the symbiotic relationship that it shared with the environment; and (c) TV ads had a greater focus on issues (e.g., water & atmospheric pollution), while print ads proffered a higher volume of generalized statements regarding the environment. Despite this insight, many of the 20th century studies on green advertising frequently expressed that the ineffectiveness of this strategy could be attributed to the over reliance on natural imagery and the lack of significant information regarding the eco-friendly attributes of the products (Kilbourne 1995; Zinkhan & Carlson 1995; Easterling, Kenworthy, & Nemzoff 1996).

It is within this context that Carlson, Grove, and Kangun (1993) developed a claim-type classification system that evaluated green advertisements as emphasizing one of the following points: (a) product orientation: focuses primarily on the product's environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., biodegradable); (b) process orientation: underscores the non-hazardous production technique and/or the disposal methods of the organization (e.g., 30 percent of every product is made with recyclable raw materials); (c) image orientation: the organization is associated with an environmental cause or activity (e.g., "We are committed to preserving our forests"); (d) environmental fact: the inclusion of a factual, yet independent statement about nature (e.g., Half the world's tropical and temperate forests are now gone); (e) combination: the claim reflects some combination of the aforementioned points of emphasis.

Further research in this area led to the development of a dichotomous classification system where green advertisements were deemed to be distinguishable on the basis of the substantive or associative claim they transmitted (Carlson, Grove, Kangun, & Polonsky, 1996). According to this framework, a substantive claim is characterized by claims that demonstrate distinct and noticeable advantages that complement or improve a consumer's perception of an organization's environmental responsibility. The placement of information that demonstrates a tangible environmental benefit will also assist in mitigating any suspicion that a consumer may have regarding the economic motivation behind green changes (Ottman, 1995). This can be evidenced in the print advertisements for Ford's "Living Roof" at their Dearborn truck plant, which is comprised of 10.4 acres of drought-resistant groundcover called sedum that offers many

advantages over conventional tar and metal roofs. These advantages include: (a) serving as a habitat for bees and nesting birds; (b) reducing energy costs by providing insulation for the truck plant (i.e., keeping it ten degrees warmer in the winter and ten degrees cooler in the summer); and (c) reducing the urban heat effect, thereby allowing the roof to last up to twice as long as other conventional options. On the other hand, associative claims can either be image-based or representative of more general environmental facts. In this case, the focus is not on the greenness of a company's product or production, but rather the intention is to create a façade that leads consumers to infer environmentally friendly connections despite there being no tangible correlation between an organization's efforts and reduced environmental impact. This claim is demonstrated in a 2013 Chevrolet billboard that used an all green background with a "green" tagline that stated, "Gas-friendly to gas-free." This generalized message about the brand not only fails to offer a tangible connection between the vehicles in production and the environment, but it also misleads consumers into assuming this is a large scale change despite the fact that gas-free cars are merely a fraction of the fleet that Chevrolet has in production.

While the components of green advertising can be readily discernible through the aforementioned characteristics, the question remains as to whether these messages are being strategically designed in such a way that they are effectively changing consumer attitudes and subsequent behaviors. Given that consumers are exhibiting a growing concern for environmentally related issues, many studies have sought to evaluate the efficacy of green advertisements on the basis of their cognitive persuasion strategies.

Furthermore, green adverts that demonstrate a greater propensity toward presenting detailed information regarding the eco-friendly features of a product will generate more promising consumer responses (Davis, 1993; Chan, 2000). Nevertheless, marketers rely on several other techniques to promote a product as being “green,” including (a) creating a product name that will evoke an association with nature, (b) using green tones to attract the attention of green consumers, (c) employing distinct terms or phrases such as “disposable,” “recyclable,” “organic,” or even “sustainably sourced” (Peattie, 1995), and (d) incorporating eco-labels or seals in product packaging to improve credibility and trust in the product’s green claims (Bickart & Ruth, 2012).

Research spanning across several decades has consistently demonstrated a partiality on behalf of consumers toward natural scenery, especially in relation to artificial environments (Calvin & Curtin, 1972). This is further corroborated by studies in psychology, health, and medicine, where individuals exhibited positive physical and psychological effects when exposed to natural elements (Frumkin, 2003). It then follows that there is an almost instinctive inclination for human beings to want to protect natural environments by virtue of how it makes them feel. It is precisely this tangible benefit that businesses incorporate into their advertisements so as to create the type of image association that will incline consumers to want to participate in the experience that is being presented (Kaplan, 1995). However, an associative connection does not necessarily demonstrate a tangible connection to sustainability, let alone an ethical commitment to environmental protection.

The American Green Consumer

The Roper Organization's Green Gauge Study identified five consumer segments in the United States that were categorized based not only on their environmental commitment but also on their varying attitudes, behaviors, and demographics. These segments were succinctly described by Ottman (1998) as follows: (a) true blue greens: the most environmentally conscious who demonstrate the highest levels of behavioral change as it pertains to their consumption, purchases, and methods for disposing of products. Moreover they exhibit a firm belief that they can affect positive change in the environment and do so by committing their time and resources to environmental causes; (b) the green-back greens: committed to making green decisions, but do so largely by donations and purchases rather than dedicating a significant amount of time to a cause. This segment may be the most well educated group, but their young age and busy lifestyle will largely limit their action to financial contributions; (c) sprouts: advocate for judicial action in preserving the environment and are slowly beginning to participate in green consumerism; (d) grouseers: have a less than average education and income, which contributes to limited environmental actions due to green products being costlier than non-green products. They also believe that the onerous duty of fixing problems in the environment rests on businesses, not consumers; and (e) basic browns: constitute the largest group, but are also the least involved either because they do not believe they can make a difference or they simply do not care (Iyer & Banerjee 1993).

GlobeScan and The National Geographic published the 2014 Greendex result, which assessed the international sustainability patterns for consumerism. This

quantitative study of 18,000 consumers from a total of 18 countries, asked questions about behavior as it pertains to “energy use and conservation, transportation choices, food sources, the relative use of green products versus conventional products, attitudes toward the environment and sustainability, and knowledge of environmental issues” (“Increased fears about environment,” 2014). Overall, the study found that environmental concerns have increased since 2012, and this is in large part due to the tangible association that consumers are experiencing with climate change. While countries such as India and China had the top-scoring consumers, American consumer behavior has ranked as the least sustainable of all surveyed countries since the study began in 2008. Specifically, American consumers were (a) most likely to choose disposable household products as opposed to reusable items, (b) least likely to consume locally grown produce, (c) most likely to consume processed foods, (d) least likely to consume fruits and vegetables, but were the highest consumers of beef, and (e) less likely to use public transportation (“Increased fears about environment,” 2014). Despite the relational disparity in green behaviors between American consumers and other consumers around the world, the Greendex study did note significant improvements by American consumers in food production, which can to some degree be attributed to an ever-increasing demand for local and organic produce. Moreover, results indicated that consumers who already exhibited comparatively sustainable behaviors were more likely to further develop these green practices if they received positive reinforcement.

Green consumers can therefore be characterized as individuals who generally avoid purchasing products that (a) compromise the health of others, (b) will produce

significant levels of damage to the environment either in its production or disposal, (c) create needless waste due to packaging or a short usefulness of the product itself, (d) involve the unnecessary use of animal testing for toxicity, and (e) involve adversely impacting other countries, particularly those that are less developed (Roberts, 1996; Elkington & Hailes, 1989). As such, a green consumer readily associates the very act of purchasing a product with environmental preservation, which is more fundamentally grounded to a sense of personal consumer ethics (Hailes, 2007). Moreover, there is a behavioral pattern of avoidance as it relates to (1) products they perceive to be damaging to their health, (2) environmental harm at the stage of production, (3) excessive packaging, and (4) products that contain materials or ingredients that are derived from endangered habitats or species (Akehurst, Afonso, & Gonçalves, 2012). It is precisely this profile that has made the task of advertising to green consumers more difficult for there is an already existing suspicion by these consumers in relation to advertising in general. This much is evident in the work of Chase and Smith (1992), where consumers did not display confusion about advertising claims, but rather exhibited distrust in the ads themselves. This distrust is particularly problematic given a 2015 market report by the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) that noted that U.S consumer awareness and consumer attitudes in respect to “green,” brands were at an all time high. In fact, NMI’s research found that 85% of the U.S. population has exhibited some level of agreement with sustainable practices and 63% have increased their purchasing of green products, while also demonstrating greater inclinations to adopt sustainable practices. More importantly, 69% of U.S. consumers claim to care about the social responsibility that a company

demonstrates by means of its business model. It is precisely these attitudes toward sustainable practices that have allowed a once niche market to become mainstream. This can be evidenced by the growth in organic foods, which has steadily grown since 1997 and as of 2014 had sales that totaled well over thirty five billion dollars (“US organic food sales,” 2015).

Marketing Theory in Green Advertising

There is some need to provide a brief backdrop of the underlying theories that explain how consumer attitudes and beliefs inform their interpretation and responses to advertising content in general, and green advertising in particular. While these theories do not have an immediate bearing on advertising ethics, they do provide elucidation upon the specific strategies and tactics that are available to marketers, which are in many instances employed to more effectively appeal to green consumers. What follows is therefore a succinct overview of some of the most salient theories in green advertising, which include the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behavior and the persuasion knowledge model.

Theory of Reasoned Action

In the 21st century, individuals regularly encounter advertisements on a wide array of media platforms, yet their response to the advertising content can manifest itself in starkly different manners. Generally speaking, responses can proceed from individual motives and predilections or communal motives that are shared by a specific sub-culture (Richards, 2013). These responses are key indicators for whether consumers will have negative or positive feelings related to brand perception, skepticism toward the ad

content, and/or purchase intention (Hilliard, Matulich, Haytko, & Rustogi, 2012). In this regard, the theory of reasoned action has provided researchers with a helpful framework that not only explains the relationship between an individual's feelings, attitudes, intentions, and behavior, but also posits that a consumer's perceived positive outcome of a particular behavior may play an integral role in the formation of favorable attitudes toward a product or service (Hilliard et al., 2012). This theory therefore proffers one plausible explanation for why consumers may or may not decide to participate in certain actions and can prove useful in predicting behavioral responses to various advertisements. With this theory in mind, advertisements should be and often are designed with the intention to alter beliefs that will in turn influence a change in behavior to the extent that it will eventually lead to a desired action or purchase (Coleman, Bahnan, Kelkar, & Curry, 2011).

Within green marketing literature, the influence of consumer beliefs and attitudes has been shown to have a positive correlation, as is the case with the connection found between environmental concern and the materialization of environmentally friendly behavior (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). Moreover, researchers have pushed the parameters of the theory of reasoned action to include persuasive messages as an influencing variable when examining consumer beliefs and attitudes toward purchasing eco-friendly apparel (Stall-Meadows, Swiney, & Davey, 2009). This study found that green businesses would more effectively encourage consumers to purchase their green product, even at a premium price, if they were more intentional in disseminating messages that communicated their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Another study that employed the theory of reasoned action found a link between an individual's moral obligation for environmental protection and the likelihood that they will engage in green consumption activities (Chen & Chai, 2010).

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior suggests that behavior is a product of one's intention to engage in a specific kind of behavior, which consequently assumes that consumer decisions are motivated by self-interest (Bamberg & Schmidt, 2003). The fundamental premise of this model therefore relies on the correlative relationship that exists between the strength of a consumer's intention and the subsequent effort that will be made to engage in congruent behavior (Steg & Nordlund, 2012). Nevertheless, the actualization of such behavior remains contingent upon a number of factors including (1) attitude towards behavior: an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the behavior; (2) subjective norms: the degree to which an individual assumes that other members of society will approve or disapprove of one's behavior; (3) perceived behavioral control: an individual's evaluation of whether the engagement of a particular behavior will have a significant impact in the resolution of a problem (Ajzen, 1991; Ellen, Wiener, & Cobb-Walgren, 1991; Steg & Nordlund, 2012).

Employed as a conceptual framework, the theory of planned behavior has been successfully applied to a wide array of green marketing studies. One study explored the factors that influenced consumer behavior as it pertained to the purchasing of organic foods (Paul & Rana, 2012). The findings indicated that the prior knowledge of the health benefits of organic food and the availability of organic options were two of the strongest

influencers in making a purchasing decision, which in turn suggests that a practical implication would be for retailers to not only use organic labeling, but also emphasize the health benefits of their product over conventional options (Paul & Rana, 2012). The explanatory value of this model has been further corroborated by studies into recycling behaviors (Davis, O'Callaghan, & Knox, 2009) and green purchase intentions (Chen & Tung, 2014). Specifically, these studies reinforce the notion that an individual's level of concern for the environment may not only exert an influence on their attitudes toward green products and services, but also on their sense of moral obligation, which in turn can influence their purchase decisions.

Persuasion Knowledge Model

The persuasion knowledge model operates under the assumption that all consumers possess varying degrees of knowledge regarding (a) the persuasive goals and tactics of marketers, (b) the efficacy and correctness of their strategies and tactics, and (c) beliefs concerning their ability to cope with such persuasive attempts (Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007). More importantly, since its inception, this model has underscored the historically linear development of consumer persuasion knowledge that is defined, maintained, and eventually reconstructed through a process of socialization that is contingent upon an individual's social interactions, enculturation, education and the spatial and temporal boundaries that defined their lifespan (Tan & Tan, 2007; Friestad & Wright, 1994). It is precisely this body of knowledge, triggered by the presence of persuasive communications, which allows consumers "to recognize, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and remember persuasion attempts and to select and execute coping tactics

believed to be effective and appropriate” (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 3). This response on behalf of the consumer is not assumed to always be negative, for what persuasion knowledge offers is a lens by which a consumer can then decide to accept or resist the content of persuasive communications (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Koslow, 2000; Taylor & Nelson, 2012). However, studies have shown that as consumers begin to gain more sophisticated knowledge, they will not only become better at identify persuasive attempts, but will also demonstrate greater skepticism toward these attempts (Taylor & Nelson, 2012).

In understanding persuasion knowledge, it is imperative to differentiate the knowledge structures that provide the aforementioned lenses by which consumers form an evaluation of persuasion attempts. Specifically, there are three types of persuasion knowledge that can be activated to varying degrees and under certain conditions when consumers evaluate persuasive messages: (1) agent knowledge: non-persuasion related information about an agent that consumers will use to establish an organization’s ulterior motives (e.g., persuade consumers and increase profit margins); (2) persuasion or tactic knowledge: consumer knowledge regarding the strategies and tactics employed in persuasive communication; and (3) topic knowledge: all knowledge unrelated to persuasion that concerns the topic or content for which the persuasion attempt was created (e.g., product and/or category information), as well as the context in which the content appeared (Robert, 2009; Tutaj & Reijmersdal, 2012; Lorenzon & Russell, 2012).

Collectively these knowledge structures have been shown to bear on a consumer’s processing of persuasion attempts. In the context of green advertising, consumers who

understand the contribution of corporate social responsibility activities to public welfare are more likely to positively assess these activities and as a result will be more willing to purchase products or services from this organization (Manuel, Youn, Yoon, & Morrison, 2012). Other studies have shown that consumers with interest and knowledge of environmental issues not only demonstrate a preference for eco-friendly products, but also exhibit positive attitudes (Kim & Choi, 2005; Bishop & Barber, 2012). Furthermore, contemporary advertisers have employed certification cues (e.g., eco-seals) for the greenness of products or services with greater frequency, yet consumer knowledge in relation to their level of environmental concern has been shown to affect the consumer's perception of the credibility and effectiveness of these appeals (Bickart & Ruth, 2012).

Greenwashing: Lipstick on a Pig or Substantive Change?

“Lipstick on a pig” is a rhetorical expression aimed at critiquing an organization's attempt to disguise its products genuine constitutive properties by using superficial or aesthetic changes in an effort to better persuade a target consumer. This phrase is perfectly analogous to the notion of greenwashing, which is a term that emerged as a critique of green advertising, especially those which employ visual aids as a means of disseminating disinformation for the purpose of improving an organization's public image, but lack a genuine commitment to the environment (Wilson, 2007). The prevalence of greenwashed messages and the environmentally irresponsible behavior exhibited by some organizations has further contributed to a rise in “green skepticism,” which can aptly be described as consumer uncertainty or doubt in regards to the environmental performance and/or benefits of green products (Walker, 2012; Leonidou &

Skarmeas, 2015). While some research has treated this form of consumer skepticism as merely the product of personality traits (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013), most other scholars have proposed that this apprehension is largely induced by external factors (Patel, Gadhavi, & Shukla, 2016). This in turn suggests that the feelings of distrust or disbelief amongst consumers can in fact be reversed under the right conditions, such as presenting consumers with sufficient proof for product claims (Foreh & Grier, 2003).

Due to an overabundance of green marketing campaigns, consumers develop a propensity toward screening information they would like to internalize (Wilson, 2007). The effects of this are twofold: (a) on a subconscious level they are able to distance themselves from environmental problems; and (b) they rely on denial as a means of shielding themselves from the cognitive dissonance that would otherwise trouble them concerning the realities of environmental problems. This largely explains the ineffectiveness of green campaigns that try to capture the visual detriment of the environment. In these instances, consumers will likely protect themselves from these visuals as a means to avoid emotional distress. Alternatively, it points to the prominence and effectiveness of greenwashing, which as noted earlier, seeks to disseminate the perception that a brand's products, production, or policies are environmentally friendly when in fact they are not.

From 2007 to 2010, TerraChoice and Underwriters Laboratories responded to the growing presence of greenwashing by collaborating on research that not only advanced the mission of global sustainability and environmental health, but also offered a systematic categorization of greenwashing "sins" (see Table 1).

Table 1
Sins of Greenwashing

Sins	Definition	Examples
Sin of the Hidden Tradeoff	A statement that focuses on a limited set of product attributes and avoids consideration of other environmentally harmful factors	Paper is not environmentally preferable, particularly due to greenhouse gas emissions and chlorine used in the papermaking process
Sin of No Proof	Claims that cannot be verified by readily available information or by a reputable third-party certification;	Products that claim percentages of post-consumer recycled content without supporting the claim with evidence.
Sin of Vagueness	Claims that lack clarity and therefore will likely be misinterpreted by the consumer.	‘All natural’ is not necessarily green for it may include naturally occurring, yet poisonous elements such as arsenic and mercury.
Sin of Worshipping False Labels	The use of words or images that convey third party endorsement, yet no such certification exists;	Manufacturers using their own labels for products with images and/or statements making green claims.
Sin of Irrelevance	A green claim that despite its truthfulness is in fact inconsequential to a consumer in search of environmentally friendly products.	Claiming a product is ‘CFC-free’ despite the fact that CFCs have been legally banned.
Sin of Lesser of Two Evils	A claim that is truthful within the product category, yet it obfuscates risks directly associated to the broader category that has a greater environmental impact.	Fuel Efficient SUVs.
Sin of Fibbing	Claims that are unequivocally false.	Volkswagen falsely claiming that some of their vehicles had low carbon dioxide emissions.

Note: Adapted from <http://sinsofgreenwashing.com/findings/the-seven-sins/index.html>.
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Together the sins of greenwashing point to an almost systemic problem in green marketing that is failing to deliver accurate and easily discernible information to everyday consumers. This sustained effort on behalf of marketers to employ greenwashing tactics can in many ways be attributed to their desire to appeal to the “green” values and attitudes of Millennials and Generation Z, which constitute the two most important generations for marketers given their current and future spending power.

Millennial Responses to Green Marketing

Although this study focuses on Generation Z (see below), it is important to understand the attitudes and behaviors of the previous generation given that Gen Zers were raised in a sociocultural milieu shaped largely by the values and concerns of Gen Y. There is some disagreement as to what specific time period Millennials should be situated in relation to their contemporaries (e.g., Gen X and Gen Z), but Nielsen defines them as those born between 1977 and 1995 (“Millennials: Breaking the myths,” 2014). This generation has become a vital group of study to green marketers due to their growing reputation for being socially conscious consumers that actively search for green products (Smith, 2010). Despite renewed efforts on behalf of businesses to appease the needs of these environmentally friendly consumers, few retailers have been able to successfully employ green marketing tactics to reach this demographic (“Gen Y has split,” 2007). This should be concerning to green marketers given that 47% Millennials claim to be willing to pay a greater cost for services, brands, or products that are environmentally friendly alternatives. Moreover, nearly 77% of these consumers attribute their willingness to spend more on green products to a personal belief that they must exhibit care in relation

to the environment (“Gen Y has split,” 2007). These attitudes are of course important to businesses and marketers given that Millennials spend over 600 billion dollars a year in the United States alone (Donnelly & Scaff, 2013).

It is precisely this generation’s attraction to environmentally friendly products that makes it an important product characteristic that can be used to build consumer loyalty. This attraction, however, is not something that big brands have been able to capitalize on, specifically in regards to Millennial consumers (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999). This is in spite of the fact that Millennials are in search of brands that are deemed to have a positive impact in preserving the environment and are particularly receptive to four characteristics: (1) first in its product category, (2) have minimalist practices (e.g., clean designs and simple packaging), (3) the brand category is relevant to green brands (i.e., food products have greater expectations of being green as opposed to clothing or technological products), and (4) the brand has greater activity in the social networking culture (Gunelius, 2008). Millennials are particularly susceptible to words that convey an image of sustainability such as “eco-friendly,” “recycled,” “green,” and “biodegradable” (Smith, 2014). In fact, the package feature that they most closely associate with being environmentally friendly is the symbol for recycling. One important factor to remember in regards to Millennials is their ever-growing propensity to shape their perception of environmental friendliness on the basis of a company’s reputation and advertising.

Generation Z: The Post 1995 Millennial

Generation Z is one of many categorical terms (along with Centennials, Generation 9/11, or the Homeland Generation) used to refer to those born in the decade

following the global emergence of the Internet (i.e., the mid-1900s to early 2000s) (Williams & Page, 2011). Gen Z is therefore regarded as the next big demographic cohort after Millennials and while they are quickly becoming the focus of marketers, there appears to be little if any academic research dedicated to understanding where they fit within the scope of green marketing. While the full extent of their spending power is still years away from being realized, they currently hold 44 billion dollars in buying power and the full estimate of their spending power is projected to surpass that of Millennials by nearly 3 million (Shay, 2017). Moreover, despite their formative years occurring alongside one the most difficult economic climates of the last century, a global study by Nielsen reaffirmed the permanence of green attitudes among this generation, where three of four respondents indicated a willingness to pay more for sustainable products. This number has rapidly increased from 55% in 2014 to 72% in 2015 (“Green Generation,” 2015). It is likely that these attitudes can be ascribed to the inevitable socialization that occurs from a generation being entirely raised in an environmentally conscious world where “green” is normative to their everyday life (Ottman, 2011). Hence, their enculturation into green living patterns can occur at school, while learning about the environmental impact of human consumption in videos such as, *The Story of Stuff* (Priggen, 2007), or at home via their parent’s shopping lists that more frequently include eco-friendly cleaning products, locally sourced produce, and recycled paper goods (Ottman, 2011). This is consistent with the findings of the 2016 Masdar Gen Z Global Sustainability Survey, which reaffirmed that Gen Zers view climate change as the biggest

threat to humankind over the next 10 years, ahead of the economy and terrorism.

(“Generation Z wants more action,” 2016).

When examining Gen Z as consumers, there are four dominant trends that characterize this generation: (a) focus on innovation, (b) insistence on convenience, (c) underlying desire for security, and (d) tendency toward escapism (Wood, 2014). These inclinations can in many ways be attributed to the digital culture that has permeated every facet of their existence since birth. These “digital natives” are unaware of a world without Internet, and thus they exhibit an innate desire to “want everything, everywhere and immediately” (Benhamou, 2015). In this regard, this generation has become accustomed to product obsolescence and has grown to expect tech products to be continuously improved upon (Wood, 2014). As such, they are likely to rely heavily on design-based (aesthetic) differentiation in making purchasing decisions. The American Marketing Association has also warned that this generation figures to be the “toughest, most demanding and skeptical audience marketers have yet to encounter” (Friedman, 2015). Gen Zers have also exhibited a disdain for traditional marketing tactics and have thus far relied on, or have been more receptive to, word of mouth via social media platforms and tactics that allow them to be involved with brand and product development (Friedman, 2015).

Therefore, while both Millennials and Generation Z would represent a viable group of study for this research, the impending focus of contemporary marketers on Gen Zers would seem to render this group to be of more lasting significance. Moreover, given that Gen Zers represents the first generation raised entirely in an environmentally

conscious world, their exposure to environmental issues and adverts that claim to address these problems make them a suitable cohort to evaluate green advertising content.

Research has shown that as the number of companies employing green marketing tactics increases, the suspicion of consumers toward these types of advertising efforts will also increase (FuiYeng & Yzadanifard, 2015). Suspicion in this instance, should not be assumed to be some sort of an internal bias of Generation Z participants toward green advertising, but rather it denotes an almost habitual questioning of the trustworthiness of the brand and truthfulness of the claims.

Gender-Related Responses to Green Advertising

Along with generational differences, men and women have traditionally exhibited different attitudes and responses to advertising in general and green advertising in particular. Studies have shown that women are able to recall nearly 70% more detail than men and as such, are able to be more attuned to contextual and intuitive messaging (Levit, 2012). Alternatively, men have been shown to prefer short and direct verbal communication (Heermann, 2010). Women are also more adept at noticing inconsistencies in the marketing message (Holland, 2012). However, if women have trust in the quality of the product or service, they are willing to pay a premium (Kraft & Weber, 2012). As for green marketing, women are more inclined toward purchasing sustainable products (Heinzle & Kanzig, 2010). Moreover, women were shown to be more sensitive toward content that focuses on ecology and the environment. This is further corroborated by research that found women to have greater preference and show higher levels of support for environmental responsibility and protection (Khan & Trivedi,

2015). Together, these perceptions may have a profound influence on whether or not a target consumer will even consider purchasing the product or service being marketed.

Ethical Sensitivity

Ethical issues related to communication often manifest themselves as problems with the factuality of statements (e.g., misinformation, hyperbole, or the withholding of information). The aptitude to recognize that communication activities have ethical components is “ethical sensitivity,” which can be defined as the “perception that something one might do or is doing can affect the welfare of someone else either directly or indirectly (by violating a general practice or commonly held social standard)” (Bebeau, Rest, & Yamoore, 1985, p. 286). The conceptual paradigm that undergirds ethical sensitivity is Rest’s four-component model of moral behavior (Rest, 1986). Important to understanding Rest’s research is his definition of morality, which is grounded in social and cognitive psychology. This means that morality carries social value in that it underscores the way in which human beings cooperate and/or coordinate their behavior with the purpose of advancing human welfare (Rest, 1986). As such, morality can only be actualized in the midst of groups of people, for it is morality that creates the impetus for the formation and obedience of certain guidelines that acknowledge the symbiotic nature of the human condition. Rest goes on to propose that moral behavior is realized by means of four psychological processes: (a) moral sensitivity: ability to identify and interpret the ethical dimensions of problematic situations; (b) moral judgment: analyzing and rationalizing what action(s) would best meet the standards put forth by moral ideals; (c) moral motivation and commitment:

determining one's behavior after considering the weight of both moral and non-moral values; and (d) moral character and competence: enacting a consequent plan of action and maintaining it.

The first component of Rest's methodological framework is moral sensitivity and it rests entirely upon the notion of ethical sensitivity, which according to Rest (1986) requires that an individual be able to perceive an ethical situation by means of recognizing the correlation between one's actions in a given situation and the welfare of others. This process does not necessarily entail that one engage in an intentional and analytic deliberation on these effects, but rather arises from the recognition that one's activities have the potential to affect others and hearken ethical consideration. Within the context of green advertising, this ethical sensitivity may present itself when consumers identify the impact that buying products with too much packaging can have on the environment. Nevertheless, ethical sensitivity is not uniformly exhibited by individuals and in fact, Rest (1983) offers three main findings that provide a brief overview of how individual perceptions may differ when exposed to ethical situations: (a) many find it difficult to interpret even the most simple of situations; (b) glaring individual difference can be found in the sensitivity that individuals perceive in regards to the needs and wellbeing of others; and (c) age is one of the most significant variables among people in their sensitivity to the needs and welfare of others, as the capacity to make these inferences generally develops with age (Rest, 1983). These differences demonstrate the influence that situational cues and personal differences can exert on an individual's ability to recognize the ethical content of their surroundings.

While it may be the case that moral judgments (i.e., the second component of Rest's model) come naturally to people, the reality remains that moral reasoning is entirely contingent upon learning, which comes through socialization. Moral judgment therefore requires that an individual move beyond simply recognizing the ethical dimensions in particular circumstances to exploring which type of actions are morally justifiable means of responding to a given situation. In the case of green advertising, this could mean finding alternative products that demonstrate a greater commitment to the environment by using less packaging or ensuring that the packaging being used can be composted after use. Moreover, this cognitive process exists in relation to affective processes, which Rest proposes is manifested in the "the association of a person's conceptions of organizing social cooperation and the distinctive sense of fairness that accompanies them" (Rest, 1986, p. 12). In effect, it is the cognitive processes that contribute to greater uniformity in moral judgments while affective processes can be more readily identified with more individualized moral reasoning.

Rest's third component is moral motivation and commitment, which can simply be understood as the prioritizing factors that determine an individual's course of action when faced with the ethical content of their circumstance. Within green marketing, this could be facilitated by shifting ego-related appeals (e.g., vanity & self-actualization) to appeals that underscore or elevate the value and moral status of the environment in such a way that consumers would more readily make decisions motivated by the latter. Hence, rather than purchasing Fiji Water because it is the drink of choice of former President Barack Obama and the platinum singing artist Mary J. Blige, a consumer might opt for

using a reusable water bottle in effort to reduce the amount of plastic polluting the ocean. Intentions represent the point of convergence between attitudes (i.e., what an individual perceives to be right or wrong) and behavior. In this regard, Rest (1986) noted that it is quite common for the appeal of non-moral values to subvert a course of action that would grant preeminence to a moral ideal. Still, if an individual is able to recognize the difference between a moral ideal and something diminutive in relation to that ideal, it is likely that an individual would prioritize the former rather than the latter in order to address the dissonance.

Moral character and competence comprise the focus of Rest's fourth component and it refers to the implementation of a course of action, which requires that one discern the "sequence of concrete actions, working around impediments and unexpected difficulties, overcoming fatigue and frustration, resisting distractions and other allurements and not losing sight of the eventual goal" (Rest, 1986, p. 569). Again, within green marketing the challenge is to reorient the priorities of individuals so they do not view spending more money on eco-friendly products as an unnecessary financial burden or dismiss the goals of environmental preservation as something unworthy of their time and effort. It is certainly more convenient for the average American to buy bottled water, but those with moral character and competence will understand that their convenience is of less moral importance than the conservation of the environment. While this description may give the impression that ethical decision-making is an arduous task, it is often an unconscious process that generally only points to one possible scenario. It may very well be the case that someone could experience the process in an almost reactionary fashion,

yet what is particularly salient to any understanding of behavior is that the process will be predicated by a number of variables such as character or an opportunity to act unethically.

Another perspective for assessing ethical sensitivity applied an information processing approach that focused on how individual audience members selected, attended to, interpreted, processed and evaluated messages (Lind, Rarick, & Swenson-Lepper, 1995). In effect, although based on Rest's work, this latter research proposed five abilities that consumers have the ability to employ when exposed to a message: (a) understanding the multifaceted nature of the situation, specifically as it pertains to the actors involved, what actions were put forth, and the setting and/or context; (b) identifying the possibility that this situation is eliciting ethical inquiry, as well as accepting that all actors involved have rights, but also responsibilities; (c) awareness of the tangible impact that ethical choices will have on a given situation; (d) foresight of the disparate groups of people (i.e., the stakeholders) that can be affected by these choices, while also being able to ascertain how their individual rights and responsibilities will influence the experience of others; and (e) the ability to comprehend and interpret how the aforementioned abilities "interact or are linked to compose a larger system in which the person discusses his or her reasoning and evaluations about the presence or absence of ethical issues" (Rarick, Lind, & Swenson-Lepper, 1995, p. 6-7).

The face validity of Rest's components of moral behavior point to the soundness of using ethical sensitivity as a theoretical concept that correlates with green advertising. In doing so, this study aims to evaluate a consumer's interpretation and response to green

advertising within an ethical framework, which brings into focus green advertising's inconsistent history, specifically as it relates to the practice of greenwashing. An ethical inquiry is therefore warranted given that studies have found green purchase behavior to be associated with an individual's sense of moral or ethical obligation to environmental welfare (Doran, 2009). Indeed, based on Rest's four-component model, the first step in ethical green purchasing behavior is recognizing a product for its "greenness" or lack thereof, based on its respective advertising. Moreover, consumers who exhibit positive attitudes towards green products but lack an individual sense of moral or ethical obligation to the conservation of the environment are often unwilling to select green products, particularly in instances where conventional options are available (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). This supports the veracity of Rest's model by affirming that ethical behavior requires more than just recognition, but also judgment, motivation, and character/commitment. This correlation between ethical concern and green purchase behavior makes ethical sensitivity a worthwhile variable to examine for it could demonstrate a strong correlation to a consumer's ability to evaluate the ethicality of advertising content.

Empirical Research on Ethical Sensitivity

Ethical sensitivity has become an increasingly important area of study now that researchers and educators alike are proposing sensitivity to be the most significant indicator of ethical decision-making and behavior (Clarkeburn, 2002). This much is corroborated by Narváez and Endicott (2009), who wrote that, "Ethical sensitivity is the emphatic interpretation of a situation in determining who is involved, what actions to

take, and what possible reactions and outcomes might ensue” (Narváez & Endicott, 2009, p. 7). This high regard for ethical sensitivity has required that measurements be created to test it. Traditionally, studies in ethical sensitivity have been context-specific. The Dental Ethical Sensitivity Test (DEST) was developed to measure the degree to which dental students can identify ethical issues and consequences by means of transcribing their verbal responses to audio dramas that capture real life dental office situations (Bebeau, Rest, & Yamoore, 1985). This was followed by research into racial and gender intolerance in school, which was evaluated through the Racial Ethical Sensitivity Test (REST), where participants verbally responded to an interview protocol adapted from Bebeau and Rest (1982) after viewing two taped educational scenarios (Brabeck, et al., 2000).

In the field of communication, ethical sensitivity research has largely focused on issues in broadcast media and organizational communications. This includes a study that uses cognitive mapping techniques as a way of exploring the ethical sensitivity of television news viewers (Lind, 1997). In this study, a total of 99 in-depth interviews were conducted, coded, and mapped according to the four dimensions of ethical sensitivity (story characteristics, ethical issues, consequences, and stakeholders). The results indicated that while it may be useful to evaluate individuals as having either high, moderate, or low ethical sensitivity, it might also be helpful to consider an individual’s ability to reflect upon different types of variables circumscribed within the parameters of ethical sensitivity. These four types of ethical sensitivity were described as (a) fact sensitive: greater awareness to the particularities of the story itself; (b) consequence sensitive: more keen to evaluate the story on the basis of its potential ramifications; (c)

people sensitive: focus was directed toward stakeholders (i.e., the individuals involved in or affected by the broadcast); and (d) issue sensitive: attention was largely on the ethical issues themselves (Lind, 1997). The study in organizational communications also employed cognitive mapping techniques and a qualitative research method, but in this instance, it was used to compare differences in ethical sensitivity between people “from all levels of the organizations’ hierarchy” across three different organizations (Swenson-Lepper, 2005). While significant differences in ethical sensitivity were found between members of all three organizations, a hierarchical regression model revealed that these differences were likely due to educational differences among the participants.

The measurement used in this study is adopted from Kuusisto, Tirri, and Rissanen’s Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (2012), which provides the most comprehensive quantitative measure currently available by incorporating the seven skills that Narvaez identified to be associated with ethical sensitivity. Furthermore, the broad scope of these seven skills allows for insight to be gathered in other related elements such as ethical reasoning and emotional engagement. The Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire is comprised of 28-items that are organized into seven subdivisions that each correspond to Narváez’s seven skills of ethical sensitivity (see Table 2 for a list of skills and descriptions of ethical sensitivity)

The psychometric qualities of the ESSQ were first tested with Finnish teachers (Kuusisto, Tirri, & Rissanen, 2012). For this study, a sample of 864 participants was collected, of which 60 percent were practicing teachers and 40 percent were student teachers. Unique to this study is the inclusion of the integrative ethical education model,

Table 2

Skills of Ethical Sensitivity

Skills	Definition
Reading and Expression Emotion	Entails that one be able to identify the needs and emotions of others and oneself. The resulting skills in reading and expressing emotions are essential to resolving problems and conflicts.
Taking the Perspective of Others	Points to the ability to understand the multitude of perspectives that are available in any given situation or event. It specifically allows individuals to develop skills (e.g., empathy), that serve to improve problem solving and communication, which in turn can prove invaluable to resolving conflict.
Caring by Connecting to Others	Refers to the process of developing a sense of concern beyond the self. This awareness is what allows individuals to empathize and thus, enables them to make choices or take that (a) demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of others; (b) meet the needs of others; and (c) foster relationships.
Working with Interpersonal and Group Differences	Involves understanding why and how differences can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. It is important to be aware of the diversity within the groups we work in, as well as the diversity represented in ourselves. Success in this skill involves becoming multicultural, or able to interact with different opinions, perspectives, values, and cultures in order to accomplish group tasks, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and build leadership.
Preventing Social Bias	Entails comprehending, recognizing, and actively opposing bias, so as to create a more respectful and impartial society.
Generating Interpretations and Options	Involves fostering the skills to produce varying interpretations of a situation and the many alternatives that can be used to deal with the circumstance. This mitigates the proclivity to repeat mistakes, as an individual arrives to the conclusion that there is more than one way to respond to a situation.
Identifying the Consequences of Actions and Options	Understanding the connections between events and their respective consequences, so as to better understand the possible outcome of the actions under consideration. This involves both short-term and long-term consequences, as well as careful consideration of all the individuals that may be affected by chosen actions.

Note. Adapted from “Integrative Ethical Education,” by D. Narváez, 2006, in *Handbook of Moral Development*, M. Killen and J. G. Smetana, Eds., pp. 703–732, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Copyright 2006 by Psychology Press.

which, as a theory, divides individuals into novices and experts. Although children would naturally be novices in most instances, this dichotomy can more broadly be applied to a differentiation of inexperienced teachers (e.g., student teacher) and experienced practicing teachers. Experts are assumed to have more knowledge, which causes them to perceive and react to the world in a different manner (Narváez, 2006). Hence, the researchers rightly hypothesized that practicing teachers would have a higher self-assessed ethical sensitivity compared to student teachers. While the ESSQ can be applied to any context and would be perfectly suitable as a self-evaluation tool, it is imperative to underscore that the ESSQ is not an instrument intended to dichotomously categorize respondents as novices or experts when it comes to their ability to recognize the ethical dimensions of a given situation. Instead, the purpose of the ESSQ is to scale the orientations of respondents on ethical issues. The statements corresponding to the seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity reveal the issues and values that respondents find most important to them. It is not an objective measure of ethical sensitivity. It is subjective.

A later study that employed ESSQ examined the ethical sensitivity of 249, 7th – 9th grade students in two Finish urban schools (Holm, Nokelainen, & Tirri, 2014). The researchers adopted all 28 items of this instrument, as well as the corresponding 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 totally disagree to 5 totally agree). All ESSQ items were designed in such a way that they could be applied to any person, regardless of differences in their backgrounds or cultures. In analyzing the data, non-parametric Spearman rank order correlations, Cronbach's alpha values, and non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test were used. The results showed that students who have more religious education reported

higher ethical skills than younger peers who had not yet completed their Lutheran confirmation. Moreover, female students estimated their ethical skills were higher than their male peers, while students who were more academically gifted estimated their ethical skills to be higher than those students with average academic scores. Much like the earlier study, this instrument was not used to evaluate respondents based on a binary system of novice and experts, but rather it was a comparative tool, used to assess the self-evaluated ethical sensitivity of one group in relation to another. Still, this questionnaire is a useful tool in gauging respondent attitudes toward the statements that measure ethical sensitivity.

While the theoretical rationalization for ethical sensitivity has been well developed, it has not however, been the subject of much empirical research due to its focus on processes that occur prior to ethical judgments (Shaub, 1989). In fact, there appear to be no studies that have applied ethical sensitivity directly to green advertising, yet the research that has been conducted outside of the field of marketing have employed similar methodologies for measuring ethical sensitivity, which begins with a study of dental students conducted by Bebeau et al. (1985). Among its many findings, this study established discriminant validity (i.e., positive correlation) between ethical sensitivity and ethical judgment, which comprise the first and second components of Rest's model. Moreover, the variability in student responses challenged the notion that individuals are simply socialized into adopting certain positions that are deemed "official" or more socially acceptable when confronted with ethical dilemmas. While their research did not compare the ethical sensitivity of students and working professionals, the researchers did

express a belief that deficiencies in skills and perceptions in ethical sensitivity should not be assumed to be character flaws, but instead should be attributed to a deficiency that can be corrected via instruction and experience (Bebeau et al., 1985).

Alternatively, ethical sensitivity can occur across three distinct dimensions, which is a proposition that was studied through a qualitative textual analysis of interview data from television viewers (Lind & Rarick, 1995). Specifically, Lind and Rarick concluded that ethical sensitivity could be differentiated on three levels: (1) breadth: the array of markers of ethical sensitivity; (2) depth: the level of reasoning that could be evidenced in these various markers; and (3) time: the immediacy of which participants in the interview raised ethical concerns. Further studies utilized cognitive mapping as a way to illustrate the reasoning process of distinct viewers, one with high and the other with low ethical sensitivity (Lind, Rarick, & Swenson-Lepper, 1997). This study not only provided a new research approach for measuring ethical sensitivity, but it also provided further credence to the notion that ethical sensitivity has distinct sub-dimensions (e.g., story characteristics, ethical issues, consequences, and stakeholders) that all interact and inform an individual's reasoning process. Interestingly, a concurrent study that examined the ethical sensitivity in viewer evaluations of a TV news investigative reporting found that while classifications of people as exhibiting low versus high ethical sensitivity is possible and even a useful method for comparing two groups, ethical issues in media content would benefit from assessing the skills and potentials of individuals through multiple indicators that capture the multidimensional continuum of ethical sensitivity (Lind, 1997). As such, this research not only points to the relevancy of evaluating ethical

sensitivity in communication phenomenon, but also validates the multidimensional evaluation of ethical sensitivity through the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire. Nevertheless, while ethical sensitivity is a sound ethical and theoretical concept, it does not measure an individual's ability to evaluate the ethicality of advertising content. Therefore, to better understand Gen Z perceptions of the level of ethicality in green advertising, this study turns to the TARES test, which provides an instrument designed specifically to evaluate the ethics of persuasion in advertising.

Ethical Persuasion: The TARES Test

Although professional persuasion is measured or evaluated on the basis of its immediate or instrumental end (e.g., increased sales & improving brand image), arguments have been made for upholding the value of morally based ends, such as truth and the common good (Baker & Martinson, 2001). Insofar as advertisers fail to establish such moral ends, it follows that their persuasive practices will be guided by a nebulous configuration of means and ends, which will be retrained by the motivation to make the “right” business decision. While advertising professionals often argue that their work has the potential to serve economic or social systems by means of disseminating salient information to the public, the reality remains that messages transmitted through these mediums are often delivering misinformation. This can be evidenced by glancing at the numerous products on store shelves that claim to be ethical by virtue of being categorized as “all natural” or “green,” but upon closer inspection reveal that they are not so dissimilar to other conventional products in the category (Atkinson, 2013). This in turn, is

why some have argued that the act or end of persuasion itself is fundamentally unethical given that it can seldom be separated from manipulation, coercion, and/or deception.

Nevertheless, ethicists have supported the practice of persuasion under certain conditions, namely, the communication activity must serve as a medium for uniting people and they must allow for “maximum individual choice” (Andersen, 1978). Thus, the locus of ethical persuasion rests upon the notion of voluntary change, which distinguishes persuasion from acts that nullify individual choice such as in the case of indoctrination or coercion (Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994). Moreover, ethically sound modes of persuasion should avoid manipulative and deceptive tactics for it undermines the respect that needs to be demonstrated towards individuals and their capacity to make meaningful and rational choices. Under ideal circumstances, persuaders would be expected to provide a scientifically supported brief of a particular issue. Currently, however, the ethicality of communication activities must be measured by the motivation behind the message, which at the bare minimum should be to genuinely inform the public in such a way that false impressions by means of ambiguity or linguistic contortions are avoided. In effect, this would dissuade advertising practitioners from employing what Gaffney refers to as “the advantage of a lie without telling a literal untruth” (Martinson, 1997, p. 43).

As is the case with many things, defining the problem can sometimes be much easier than providing a solution to what in this case can aptly be described as an ethical dilemma. This is further complicated by the financial pressures and benefits that advertisers often experience in trying to realize their desired ends. This of course derives from a distorted or incomplete understanding of the stated goals of advertising, which is

defined as the intent “to inform or stimulate the market about [...] a particular product, to the exclusion of competitors’ products” (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1992, p. 13). Hence, there have been advocates for a shift in the egocentric proclivities of persuasion (e.g., increased sales, profitability, visibility of an organization/client) that are to be replaced by a “relative last end,” which aims to arrive at some greater social or individual end that is undergirded by a profound respect for the audience (Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994). Voluntary choice is therefore an ideal that must be preserved for it entails that the persuader elevate the interests of his target audience over his or her own self-interest, while also ensuring that messages disseminate truthful and markedly complete information, which will allow the receiver to accept or reject it by means of a rational choice. It is in the absence of such conditions that the public has grown to distrust professional persuaders who have not fully been able to dissociate themselves from tactics that are believed to be manipulative and acts of self-interest. It has therefore been proposed that professional persuaders would benefit from making an effort to observe their work from the standpoint of the one whom they are trying to target, which in turn will mitigate the allure of utilizing deception and language contortions (Gaffney, 1979).

It is with this in mind that an evaluative framework was developed to identify a set of principles for persuasion that operate congruently with ethical theory and can facilitate ethical decision-making within the art of persuasion (Baker & Martinson, 2001). The subsequent fivefold methodology demarcates the ethical boundaries of persuasive communication and functions as a set of guiding principles that includes: (a) Truthfulness (of the message), (b) Authenticity (of the persuader), (c) Respect (for the persuader),

(d) Equity (of the persuasive appeal), and (e) Social Responsibility (for the common good). Collectively these principles comprise the methodology for what is known as the TARES test. These interrelated moral safeguards are not to be applied as mutually exclusive variables, but rather as mutually reinforcing principles that validate one another at all times. There can, however, be instances in which these principles may conflict with one another and it is in this moment that an ethical dilemma can be resolved situationally by determining which of these principles carries the maximum moral claim for its given context.

The first principle in the TARES test emphasizes that persuasive messages must not only be true, but must also communicate substantially complete information (Baker & Martinson, 2001). This idea stems from a belief that deception not only causes harm to an individual but also to society by cultivating distrust. This comparative evaluation is in fact evidenced by the way in which power and control rests in the hands of the deceiver and/or persuader. Moreover, contemporary living is founded upon a reliance of information that individuals can then use to make a wide array of life decisions, which in turn intensifies the harmful and potentially dangerous causal effect that these deceptive messages may have. Truthfulness within the TARES test is therefore not to be limited to the commonly held definition of truth for advertising has continuously demonstrated that it is possible to deceive even in the absence of a literal lie. For this reason, the object of truthfulness does not rest entirely on content, but also upon the intent of the persuader, which must be devoid of deceit and aimed at transmitting the most salient information that consumers will need to make good decisions (Patterson & Wilkins, 2002).

The principle of Authenticity focuses more narrowly on the persuader. For the purposes of the TARES test, authenticity is best understood as a multidimensional parameter that encompasses the following: (a) integrity and individual virtue in the act and motivation for persuasion; (b) genuineness and sincerity in disseminating equitable and responsible messages, which the persuader should be able to support; and (c) carefully examining his or her loyalties to all parties (e.g., client, agency, consumer, etc.), so as to implement moral discernment in an effort to address and resolve the unavoidable conflict of interests (Baker & Martinson, 2001, p. 161). Together these commitments define a persuader's commitment to the persuadee, which will restrain narcissistic desires so that they are no longer of consequence to their professional activities (Taylor, 1991). Simply put, authenticity is integrity as captured by the age-old adage "you mean what you say."

Although already mentioned, the principle of respect for the persuadee is imperative to ethical advertising. It calls upon professional persuaders to uphold the dignity and worth of other human beings, which in turn will ensure that the rights, interests, and well-being of the persuadee are not violated. As such, others are not to be regarded as a means to an end, but rather as ends that are intrinsically "beyond price" (Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994, p. 128). Moreover, communication that is carried out with the intention of influencing the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of others can only be deemed ethical insofar as it allows for free, informed, and rational choice (Griffin, 2000).

The equity principle evaluates the persuasiveness of the appeal itself within the context of fairness to the persuadee. This means that the persuader is responsible for

assessing the fairness and equity of not only the content, but also its execution (i.e., did it utilize deception or transmit misinformation). This principle is further complemented by the notion of a “veil of ignorance,” which is a valuable conceptual tool that requires a professional communicator to evaluate the equity of the appeal from the perspective of the weaker position of the persuadee (Rawls, 1971). This understanding of equity is therefore closely related to the principle of social responsibility, which focuses on the duty of a professional persuader to be sensitive to and concerned for the interests of the larger public and the common good. This means that advertising practitioners are responsible to numerous stakeholders including agencies, clients, consumers, and any person that could potentially be exposed to the ad. As such, this principle serves as a reminder that a persuader’s responsibility is to the audience, not their self-interest, profit, or career (Baker, 1999). This understanding is derived from a larger narrative whereby all individuals are seen as existing in a symbiotic relationship with one another. Advertising practitioners should be expected to abide by this principle and refrain from promoting products or ideas that would cause harm to individuals or the society in which they live. This principle of the TARES test is therefore predicated upon the following assumptions: (a) all individuals are symbiotically engaged and codependent communal beings; and (b) persuaders are morally obligated to act as good citizens for the betterment of the society that they operate in and profit from (Baker, 1999). This and all the aforementioned principles are therefore motivated by a single underlying ideal, which is hinged on “the question of respect, respect for individuals and for society” (Martinson, 1998, p. 149, citing Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994).

Empirical Applications of the TARES Test

Interestingly, there has been little research that has applied the TARES test to the field of marketing, and there does not appear to be any that have focused on green marketing. Nevertheless, there are two relevant studies in advertising, the first of which begins with Lee and Cheng (2010) who utilized TARES as an ethical model for public health communication, specifically focusing on antismoking public service announcements (PSAs). The main theoretical approach employed in this study necessitated content analysis in order to determine the thematic frames and emotional appeals of individual PSAs for the purpose of evaluating if there was correlation between messages attributes and message ethicality. Thematic frames serve as a broader organizing idea, which allow the audience to give meaning and create connections with the issue (e.g., tobacco industry practices, smoking prevention, health consequences for consumers, secondhand smoke, etc.). Emotional appeals may work in agreement with a thematic frame, but where a thematic frame could be couched within a rational argument emotional appeals serve to sway an audience purely on the basis of their feelings (i.e., devoid of rational persuasion).

In this study, the researchers used a total of 826 television ads from the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Media Campaign Resource Center. While the antismoking ads used in the study generally scored highly in ethicality, there was a more significant finding that brought attention to the significant relationship between ethicality and message attributes, such as thematic frame, emotional appeal, target audience, and source. This was manifested in the following ways: (a) Ads

portraying smoking as harmful to an individual's health and as a social stigma scored lower in ethicality than those that focused on the tobacco industry's manipulation, addiction, and dangers of secondhand smoke; (b) Emotional appeals such as anger and sadness had higher ethical scores than humor and shame appeals; (c) Ads created by the CDC were associated with higher ethicality than those that were produced by other sources.

Another empirical study that applied the TARES test examined fast food advertisements within a deontological-ethical paradigm, which shifted the focus from an often maligned moral evaluation of the product itself, to a measurable evaluation of the moral responsibility of fast food advertisers who as moral agents must be held accountable for the content of their messages (Lee & Nguyen, 2013). Hence, rather than utilizing a teleological approach, which questions the persuasive communication message by means of its outcome alone, this study sought to assess a message through its intrinsic moral worth. A deontological approach is therefore consistent with TARES for it assumes that acts are bound by duty and therefore it is an advertiser's duty or social responsibility to produce a message that is morally sound. In effect, this approach seeks to answer the question, "If children (and their parents) cannot be expected to be rational consumers, where does the moral responsibility for fast food advertising lie if not with fast food advertisers?" (Lee & Nguyen, 2013, p. 227). To this end, the study employed the five principles of the TARES as a means of evaluating the content of 380 television/print ads for fast food in Singapore. The results showed that ads targeting children and teenagers have greater associations with low message ethicality than those

that target adults and a general audience. Most of the advertisements that failed the TARES test were due to their inability to meet the principles of truthfulness and social responsibility. Ads creating thematic associations that relate to fast food being a desirable “lifestyle” or with a “happy family life” scored lowest in message ethicality, while frames that shift the focus to charitable donations or value for money tend to be associated with higher message ethicality.

One consistent finding in both studies was that a significant relationship does exist between message attributes and message ethicality. While this will not be the focus of this research, these studies demonstrate the value of employing a multifaceted framework like the TARES in order to allow respondents to identify specific areas where an ad exhibits high and low message ethicality. From a pedagogical standpoint, this assessment is a far more useful instrument for evaluating the ethicality of advertisements given that it does not obligate participants or researchers for that matter, to simply categorize the entirety of an ad as ethical or unethical, but rather brings attention to specific areas that professional persuaders may need to improve upon if they wish to engage in ethical persuasion. Despite this advantage, the TARES test alone does not offer any assessment regarding a respondent’s pre-existing skills and potential to identify ethical dilemmas, which could prove significant in a respondent’s ability to fully understand and apply the TARES criteria to advertising content. Although it is purely speculative at this juncture, it seems reasonable to surmise that individuals who display greater sensitivity to ethical situations would be better equipped to evaluate the ethicality of advertising content.

While this study adopts quantitative approaches (e.g., the ESSQ and the TARES test) that have already been tested on different populations and within varying contexts, their application to this study is unique in the following ways: (a) it represents what appears to be the first study that explores the ethical sensitivity of Generation Z through the ESSQ; (b) there appears to be no other studies that have allowed respondents to quantitatively assess the ethicality of green advertisements, which includes an ad that exemplifies many of the ethically dubious characteristics commonly associated with greenwashed content; and (c) it explores the possibility of a correlation between an individual's self-assessed ethical sensitivity and their subsequent ethical evaluation of green and greenwashed messaging. Therefore, given that this study combines an ethically driven question aimed at exploring a consumer's ethical evaluation of incipiently claimed ethical and unethical persuasive green advertisements, the use of research questions will afford this study greater flexibility to explore the relationship between these concepts without being concerned with making predictions. Thus, due to their frequent use in communication literature and the novelty of the constellation of concepts that are basically exploratory in nature, research questions would seem to be a better fit for this particular study.

With this in mind, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What is the level of ethical sensitivity that Gen Z undergraduates possess?

This question allows for a better understanding of a respondent's perceived skills and ability to identify ethical issues prior to responding to communication stimuli. By exploring a respondent's ability to perceive an ethical situation divorced from such

stimuli will allow this research to investigate whether or not this variable correlates with their ability to recognize the ethical issues in greenwashed content.

RQ2: Are there any differences in ethical sensitivity between male and female students?

Researchers have long noted the presence of gender-related orientations towards ethics. In moral development theory, it was argued that men are more justice oriented (i.e., apply general principles to individual cases), whereas females are more inclined toward care-oriented moral reasoning (i.e., focus on interpersonal relationships) (Gilligan, 1982). The saliency of this distinction to the ESSQ cannot be understated, as researchers have specified that the majority of the items of the ESSQ tend to focus on caring ethics (Tirri & Nokelainen, 2007). Existing research that has applied the ESSQ to Finnish adolescents and Dutch university undergraduates have further corroborated the higher self-assessment of ethical sensitivity by females (Schutte, Wolfensberger, & Tirri, 2014; Tirri & Nokelainen, 2007). Thus the precedent for understanding gender-related differences in ethical sensitivity exists and is therefore a worthwhile point of analysis for Generation Z.

RQ3: To what extent will Gen Zers be able to recognize ethical issues in green advertising through the use of TARES?

Although Generation Z has been raised in an environmentally conscious world, this does not guarantee that they will be able to identify ethical issues in green advertising generally or greenwashed advertising more specifically. The TARES test is therefore an important instrument for evaluating the ethicality of advertising content, for it more narrowly defines a specific set of criteria through which Gen Zers can assess the

messaging and content of advertising stimuli. Even so, the TARES does not guarantee that respondents will uniformly be able to identify ethical issues and given the presence of greenwashed content, it will be interesting to see how this “green” cohort will fare in assessing the different advertising stimuli.

RQ4: Are there any gender-related differences in the ethical assessments of green and greenwashed ads?

This question not only complements RQ2, but it is a necessary area of study given that there appears to be very limited research on gender-related differences in TARES research. In fact, there appears to be only one study in TARES research, which explored gender related difference, yet it did so within the context of public relations and not advertising (Lieber, 2005). Nevertheless, this study found that women had significantly higher concern for integrity when facing challenging communication decisions, which therefore suggests that a connection does in fact exist between gender and ethical consideration. Despite this precedent, gender-related differences were not considered in either of the two TARES studies on advertising, which have been discussed throughout this paper. As such, this type of exploration still represents a shift from normative methods of ad assessment, which often investigate gendered assessments in light of strategy and design, but neglect to take seriously the potential differences that can exist in male and female assessments of ad ethicality.

RQ5: Is there a connection between Gen Zers ethical sensitivity and their ability to recognize ethical issues in green advertisements?

This question aims to investigate one of the most unique dimensions of this study, which deals with exploring a possible connection between the distinct dimensions of an individual's ethical sensitivity and their ethical assessment of green advertisements by means of the multidimensional criteria provided by the TARES test. In effect, this inquiry brings into focus a new direction for advertising research that evaluates consumer apprehension of green advertising content within an ethical framework, rather than solely relying on methodologies that assess the effectiveness of the persuasive appeals. By incorporating Baker and Martinson's (2001) TARES framework into its methodology, this study may point to a need for accountability amongst green advertising practitioners, particularly as it relates to the formation of messages that rely on the misrepresentation of information or an exploitation of consumers who have strong values or behavioral biases, but lack sufficient information to make an informed purchase decision. While persuasion in the context of green advertising can aptly be described as a means to an instrumental end, it does not disavow the need for ethical persuasion, which is aimed at a morally justified final end that is circumscribed by the principles of the truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity, and social responsibility that make up the TARES.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This chapter shifts the attention to method and discusses the sample, the research design, and the survey instruments that were used to measure ethical sensitivity and the five principles of the TARES.

Sample

A convenience sample of 120 Gen Z undergraduates from a private University in Southern California between the ages of 18 and 21 was made to gather information regarding (a) their ethical sensitivity through the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire; (b) an ethical evaluation of varying print advertisements, using a modified version of the TARES test; and (c) a brief assessment of their green attitudes and behaviors. The researcher spoke to university faculty to explain the research project and receive permission to speak to students inside their classrooms. Interested participants were contacted through official university emails, where a link was provided for them to access an online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. The survey took an average of 10-15 minutes to complete and all responses and participants were afforded an entire week to submit their responses before the link expired. All participant information remained anonymous by selecting Survey Monkey's anonymous response feature, which excludes personal information such as a participant's full name, email address, and IP address. Additionally, participants were never asked to provide their name or any identifiable information in any portion of the survey. Confidentiality was therefore ensured by having

implied consent rather than signed consent. A small food incentive was offered to each participant upon completion of the survey.

Procedure and Manipulation

Study participants first answered questions that scaled their orientations on ethical issues. Then, they were asked to evaluate the ethicality of one of three advertisements through the TARES test. These advertisements were assigned at random and were designed as follows: (a) control advertisement: promotes a product that has no particular environmental benefit (see Appendix A); (b) greenwashed advertisement: uses greenwashed techniques to improve brand image and product association as it relates to the environment (see Appendix B); and (c) green advertisement: disseminates a message and image that legitimately demonstrates an environmental benefit (see Appendix C);

The product chosen for each advertisement was bottled water given that it is an everyday product that most participants are familiar with and have likely purchased at a similar rate. Rather than using existing water bottle ads, this study elected to use a fictional brand called, Karma H2O in order to avoid prior user experiences that could negatively or positively influence a participant's evaluation of the advertising content. In order to be consistent with previous research, the three advertisements were created using the same color, size, layout, and image, but varied in headline, sub-headline, and benefit claim (Grimmer & Woolley, 2012). The control ad type was manipulated by adding information that avoided associations with green claims. This included a headline that read, "Share it with the World" and a sub-headline, which stated, "Filtered Water. Pure Taste. All the Time." Additional product information indicated that the water had a

“perfect pH balance.” The headline and sub-headline for the greenwashed ad tried to convey a green connection despite there being little if any evidence to support the claim. The headline and sub-headline for this ad read, “Better for You and the Planet” and “Because a green lifestyle starts with greener choices,” respectively. Additional product information for this ad type stated, “Certifiably Natural. Please Recycle.” Lastly, the green ad type communicated an immediate and direct connection between the product and environmental friendliness by employing a headline and sub-headline, which stated, “It’s Better to Green It” and “Our bottles are made entirely from plant based materials and are 100% biodegradable.” Additional product information confirmed the product was “certified for reduced environmental impact.”

Each of the three designs was pre-tested with a convenience sample of 10 Gen Z respondents prior to the data collection. The pre-test ensured that the final messages used were being observed in the desired manner. The stimulus for each design was tested with one central question, “Did you notice any environmental claims in this ad?” The green and greenwashed ad type were further tested by asking respondents a question regarding the greenness of the product attributes, as well as a question that asked respondents to evaluate the environmental efforts being carried out by the brand.

Along with the manipulation check, a pre-test of the survey was conducted with 8 Gen Z respondents in order to ensure that there were no typos or problems with the intelligibility of the survey questions (Boeije & Willis, 2013). This cognitive testing involved a collection of verbal reports obtained by both think-aloud and verbal probing procedures (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). The feedback collected during this pre-testing

phase resulted in a shortening of the survey, along with a few minor stylistic changes to items related to the TARES test and a resizing of the images to improve loading time and device compatibility.

Development of the Survey Instrument

Ethical Sensitivity through the ESSQ

The Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) is comprised of seven coding categories that correspond to Narváez's seven skills of ethical sensitivity, which include (a) reading and expressing emotions, (b) taking the perspectives of others, (c) caring by connecting with others, (d) working with interpersonal and group differences, (e) preventing social bias, (f) generating interpretations and options, and (g) identifying the consequences of actions and options (see above Table 2). Each dimension is measured with four items, meaning that twenty-eight total items were used and rated by participants using a 5-point Likert scale. According to the user self-evaluations, the items were coded with scores that ranged from 1 for low ethical sensitivity to 5 for high ethical sensitivity.

As noted earlier, the ESSQ is not an instrument intended to categorize respondents as novices or experts, but rather serves to scale the orientations of respondents on ethical issues. These orientations of course reveal the issues and values that respondents find most important to them. Despite not having a binary method of categorization, the ESSQ has proven to be a useful comparative tool by which groups of respondents categorized by race and gender, for example, can be assessed as having higher ethical sensitivity in relation to other groups within those categories. The results of each item were analyzed with means and standard deviations, a Mann-Whitney U Test to

explore gender related differences, and an independent samples t-test to investigate potential variances across racial categories. An explanation for the inclusion of these variables is provided in the results section.

Message Ethicality & the TARES Test

There are five coding categories that correspond with the ethical principles of Baker and Martinson's (2001) TARES test. The measures used to assess the ethicality of the ads were adapted from Lee and Cheng's (2010) research, which used a 19-item methodology where participants were asked to dichotomously arrange ads as passing or failing. For this study, the measure was reduced to a 14-item survey and participants were asked to respond to measurement items using a 5-point Likert scale. The shortening of this portion of the survey instrument was precipitated by the overall length of the survey, which was exacerbated by the additional cognitive processing involved in using a 5-point Likert scale for two separate measures. In effect, respondents would be expected to perform a matching or mapping process in order to assess their attitudes in conceptual terms, before having to sort through the points on the rating scale to determine which category best matched their attitudes (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). Given that the TARES test followed the 28-items of the ESSQ, there was a risk of losing respondent engagement, which could have resulted in satisficing or in non-completion. In addition, questions were omitted based on their speculative nature or use of ambiguous terminology. Examples of these questions included: (a) Would the reason(s) presented in the ad be convincing equally to the audience member and the creator of the ad? and (b) Is the creator of the ad showing respect to the audience?

The truthfulness of the visual and textual content of each ad was measured with five of the eight items used by Lee and Cheng (2010) to evaluate components such as truth telling, exaggeration, and omission. The use of multiple items was necessary given that truthfulness is a layered concept that not only refers to the validity of information included in the advertisement, but also to the exclusion of information, which some may readily identify as deceit. Nevertheless, omission of information or the inclusion of exaggeration is not inherently deceitful for there must also be intent to deceive or mislead. In a study by Patterson and Wilkins (2002), a Cheerios commercial was found to have omitted information regarding other practices that contribute to a heart-healthy lifestyle or that other breakfast cereals could be equally as healthy. Despite these omissions this commercial was not found to have caused consumers to make false assumptions or bad choices, which according to TARES would still allow this advertisement to meet the principle of truthfulness, despite having only communicated partial truths. These limitations in truth telling can largely be attributed to the restrictions that brands and advertisers face in regards to time and content (Lee & Nguyen 2013). Authenticity was measured with one item, which was intent on evaluating the sincerity of the ad by posing the question of whether this ad is even necessary within the variety of commodities and services available. The principle of respect was also assessed with a single item that considers the advertiser's readiness to take full responsibility for the message of the ad. Equity was measured through two items that addressed the ability of the audience to fully understand the information communicated in the ad. These items probed participant evaluations regarding whether or not the ad was manipulating the

audience by employing tactics that exploit human emotion such as fear or anxiety.

Finally, five items were used to measure social responsibility, particularly as it relates to the following: (a) the ad's benefit or harm to society; (b) the level of trust that an average consumer will have for ads in general after viewing these ads; and (c) whether or not the advertiser has attempted to demonstrate concern for human welfare.

According to participant evaluations, ads were coded with scores that ranged from 1, for low message ethicality, to 5, for strong message ethicality. The results of each item were analyzed with means, frequencies, and modes, as well as a Mann-Whitney U Test to explore gender related differences. The resulting analysis will provide an indication of how strongly each principle was manifested in across the three ad types, while the aggregate score of the 14 TARES items will determine the overall message ethicality. The ESSQ and the TARES results were correlated to determine whether respondents with higher reported ethical sensitivity were better able to associate greenwashed content with low message ethicality. It was speculated that a respondent's ethical sensitivity would have an inverse relationship with the TARES results, meaning that a higher ethical sensitivity score should result in a lower evaluation of the message ethicality for the greenwashed messaging. However, given the exploratory nature of this study, as well as the modifications made to the measures employed, there is hesitancy to offer formal hypotheses.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter reviews demographic descriptions of the sample, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the ESSQ, reliability statistics for the survey instruments, descriptive statistics for the research variables, and the results of statistical analyses. The demographic characteristics of the sample include age, gender, race, and green attitudes. The CFA was performed using AMOS statistical software and was used to confirm the factor structure of the ESSQ. The internal consistency for all factors of the ESSQ and the TARES were assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The effectiveness of the manipulation for the varying ad types was examined using a Pearson's chi square test of association to assess whether a green appeal is associated with the ad types. In addition, an independent samples t-test was used to determine which ad type was most effective in communicating (a) the environmental friendliness of the product attributes; (b) the usefulness of the product information; and (c) the perceived environmental friendliness of the brand.

RQ1 was examined using descriptive statistics for the ESSQ, which included means and standard deviations. RQ2 required the application of Mann-Whitney U test to compare differences between the ESSQ mean scores for male and female respondents. RQ3 required a wider array of descriptive statistics including means, modes, frequencies, and percentages. Like with RQ2, RQ4 employed a Mann-Whitney U Test to compare the median scores for the ethical assessments of male and female respondents. Lastly, a Pearson's product-moment correlation provided an answer to RQ5, which sought to

examine the possibility of a relationship between a respondent's self-estimated ethical sensitivity and their ethical evaluation of one of three ads through the TARES test.

Demographic Profile of the Sample

The mean age of the study participants was 20.39. For gender, 56.7% of the study participants were female. In terms of race, 21% of the participants identified as Black/African American, 20% were Asian/Pacific Islanders, 49.2% were White/Caucasian, 12.5% were Hispanic/Latino, 1.7% were Native American, and 7.5% identified as mixed race.

Green Attitudes and Behaviors

In order to better understand the green attitudes and behaviors of the sample, respondents were asked to self-describe in terms of environmental friendliness. Three out of every four respondents indicated that they considered themselves to be environmentally friendly. Additionally, behavioral questions were asked about (a) the purchasing of products specifically because they are better for the environment, (b) their willingness to pay extra for environmentally products, and (c) the recycling of product packaging (see Table 3). While 30% of respondents agreed that green product attributes were instrumental in their purchasing decision, 52% reported being undecided. In regards to being willing to pay extra for eco-friendly products, 40% of respondents indicated they would, while 36% remained undecided. Lastly, nearly three of every four respondents stated that they recycled product packaging.

Collectively, these statistics seem to reflect the same disconnect observed in past generations, namely, that purchasing behavior is not commensurate to the expressed

support for environmentally friendly products (Li, Hartman, & Zee, 2009). One important factor to consider in regards to the first and second behavioral question is that this sample is comprised entirely of young college students who may not, at the moment, have an income that supports paying a premium for green products. This could explain why the largest percentage of respondents for both questions selected the midpoint option of undecided.

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages for Green Behaviors

Green Behavior	Scale	Frequency (%)		
		Control	Greenwashed	Green
Purchase Products Specifically for its Eco-Friendliness	Strongly Disagree	1 (2.5)	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)
	Disagree	4 (10)	4 (10)	8 (10)
	Undecided	25 (62.5)	20 (50)	18 (45)
	Agree	8 (15.5)	12 (26.5)	11 (31)
	Strongly Agree	2 (5)	3 (7.5)	-
Willing to Pay Extra for Green Products	Strongly Disagree	3 (7.5)	1 (2.5)	2 (5)
	Disagree	10 (25)	7 (17.5)	11 (27.5)
	Undecided	15 (37.5)	18 (45)	3 (32.5)
	Agree	7 (17.5)	11 (27.5)	13 (32.5)
	Strongly Agree	5 (12.5)	3 (7.5)	1 (2.5)
Recycle Product Packaging	Strongly Disagree	-	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)
	Disagree	4 (10)	5 (12.5)	-
	Undecided	8 (20)	7 (17.5)	8 (20)
	Agree	20 (50)	20 (50)	17 (42.5)
	Strongly Agree	8 (20)	7 (17.5)	12 (30)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the stability of the factor structure for the ESSQ. In effect, the CFA would confirm the measurements used for the seven latent variables that comprise the structure of the ESSQ. Absolute fit indices were used as a means of understanding how well the theoretical model fit the sample data being examined, while relative fit indices were used to compare the chi-square (X^2) of the hypothesized model to a null model where all measured variables are uncorrelated (i.e., there are no latent variables). The most commonly reported absolute fit indices are the chi-square statistic (X^2), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Studies have shown, however, that the chi-square statistic (X^2) is sensitive to sample sizes that are less than 200 and complex models that have a large number of indicators, which are both factors in this study (Hoelter, 1983). In such cases, a model can be assessed using a ratio of X^2/df . As for incremental fit, two of the most frequently reported indices include the comparative fit index (CFI) and the incremental fit index (IFI).

In conducting a CFA with the seven-factor structure of the ESSQ there was a reasonable model fit, $X^2 (329) = 447.77$, $p < 0.05$, $X^2/df = 1.36$, SRMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.5 with a 95% CI of [0.566 to 1.498], CFI = 0.81, IFI = 0.82. Traditional and contemporary studies have suggested that an SRMR and RMSEA value of 0.05 or lower indicates close model fit, while a value of 0.08 or lower, represents a reasonable model fit (Jackson, Gillapsy, & Purc-Stephenson, 2009; Hu & Bentler, 1999, Browne & Cudeck, 1993). A X^2/df value of 2 or less indicates a good fit (Wheaton, 1987). As for incremental

fit indices, it is commonly proposed that a value close to 0.90 or above indicates a good model fit, however there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that models tend to decline slightly as more variables are included (Kenny & McCoach, 2003). The CFA results revealed that most of the indices had acceptable values and confirmed that the structure of the ESSQ had a reasonable model fit.

Reliabilities of the ESSQ Scores

Chronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine item correlation for each dimension of the ESSQ. Results indicated that the overall reliability for all 28 items of the ESSQ was sufficiently high (28 items; $\alpha = .84$). Researchers have suggested .70 as the lowest acceptable alpha score for good reliability (Field, 2005). While the sub-dimensions of ESSQ all fell below the acceptable threshold for good reliability, the lower reliability for these particular sub-dimensions can be attributed to the dependency of alpha values on one-dimensional constructs for higher inter-item reliability, as well as the fact that highly abstract concepts often prove more difficult to operationalize into more immediately perceptible items (Tirri & Nokelainen, 2012; Helms, Henze, Sass & Mifsud, 2006). As such, a lower bound of 0.5 has been deemed acceptable for dimensions that measure complex phenomenon, like attitudes towards ethical issues (Schutte, Wolfensberger, & Tirri, 2014; Tuckman 1972) (see Table 4 for the descriptive statistics and reliabilities of the ESSQ).

Ethical Sensitivity in Generation Z

RQ1 sought to determine the ethical sensitivity of Gen Z undergraduates born between 1995 and 1998. The results indicated that the level of ethical sensitivity in the

sample based on the ESSQ was high ($m = 3.95$, $SD = 0.34$), particularly when compared to other studies that employed the same methodology (Schutte, Wolfensberger, & Tirri, 2014; Gholami & Tirri, 2012). A one samples t-test was conducted to determine whether sub-dimension scores were statistically different from the overall mean score of the ESSQ. The mean score for “Preventing Social Bias” was significantly lower by a mean of 0.17, 95% CI [-0.27 to -0.08], $t(119) = -3.71$, $p = .000$. The mean score for “Caring by Connecting With Others” was significantly higher by a mean of 0.38, 95% CI [0.30 to 0.47], $t(119) = 8.96$, $p = .000$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of the ESSQ

Dimension	Items	M (SD)	α
Reading and Expressing Emotions	4	3.84 (.55)	.50
Taking the Perspective of Others	4	3.86 (.59)	.66
Caring By Connecting to Others	4	4.32 (.47)	.67
Working with Interpersonal & Group Differences	4	4.01 (.52)	.61
Preventing Social Bias	4	3.76 (.52)	.52
Generating Interpretations & Options	4	3.95 (.47)	.52
Identifying the Consequences of Actions & Options	4	3.86 (.59)	.65
Total	28	3.95 (.34)	.84

RQ2 looked to assess gender-related differences in ethical sensitivity. To this end, a Mann-Whitney U test has been the preferred test throughout the literature to analyze the

relationship between gender and ethical sensitivity as it allows for two independent samples to be compared to a dependent variable that is ordinal or continuous. In this instance, the Mann Whitney U test revealed that the self-estimated ethical sensitivity was significantly greater for females (Mdn = 4.00) than for males (Mdn = 3.92) ($U = -2.124$, $p = 0.03$). Looking at the dimensions of the ESSQ scale, the results from the Mann Whitney U Test also showed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female respondents in two dimensions of ethical sensitivity: (1) Caring by Connecting to Others (Mdn: female = 4.50, male = 4.25, $U = -3.283$, $p = .001$); and (2) Identifying the Consequences of Actions & Options (Mdn: female = 4.00, male = 3.75, $U = -2.088$, $p = .037$). None of the other five dimensions resulted in statistically significant differences (see Table 5). Similar results were found in other studies that explored ethical sensitivity through the ESSQ (Schutte, Wolfensberger, & Tirri, 2014; Tirri, Nokelainen, & Holm, 2008).

Race-Related Differences in Ethical Sensitivity

Possible differences in ethical sensitivity were explored across racial categories (see Table 6). Although race-related differences do not appear to have ever been measured in previous ESSQ applications, this study is novel in that it appears to be the first instance in which this measure has been tested on a relatively diverse sample. Analysis of variance confirmed a statistically significant difference between racial categories and ethical sensitivity ($F(5, 114) = 3.81$, $p = .003$). Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated that mean scores for the ethical sensitivity of Asian/Pacific Islanders ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .37$) was statistically significant from Hispanic/Latino

respondents ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .39$), $p = .03$. No other significant differences were found across the other racial categories. In addition, an independent-samples t-test indicated that ethical sensitivity scores were statistically significant between these two racial categories in two sub-dimensions: (1) caring by connecting to others (M : Asian/Pacific Islander = 4.56, Hispanic/Latino = 4.24, $t(20) = 2.90$, $p = .009$); and (2) working with interpersonal & group differences (M : Asian/Pacific Islander = 4.19, Hispanic/Latino = 3.61, $t(37) = 3.58$, $p = .001$).

Table 5

Gender-Related Differences for Responses to the ESSQ

Dimension	Median		Z (p)
	Female (n=68)	Male (n=50)	
Reading and Expressing Emotions	4.00	3.75	-1.015 (.310)
Taking the Perspective of Others	4.00	3.75	-1.202 (.229)
Caring By Connecting to Others	4.50	4.25	-3.283 (.001)*
Working with Interpersonal & Group Differences	4.00	4.00	-1.740 (.082)
Preventing Social Bias	3.75	3.75	-0.473 (.636)
Generating Interpretations & Options	4.00	4.00	-0.303 (.762)
Identifying the Consequences of Actions & Options	4.00	3.75	-2.088 (.037)*
Total	4.00	3.92	-2.124 (.034)*

* $p < .05$.

Table 6
Race-Related Differences for Responses to the ESSQ

Dimension	Mean (SD)			
	Black (n = 11)	Asian (n= 24)	White (n = 59)	Hispanic (n= 15)
Reading and Expressing Emotions	3.93 (.37)	3.90 (.60)	3.83 (.53)	3.68 (.65)
Taking the Perspective of Others	3.75 (.57)	3.96 (.58)	3.83 (.63)	3.70 (.56)
Caring By Connecting to Others	4.31 (.22)	4.56 (.31)	4.24 (.51)	4.11 (.54)
Working with Interpersonal & Group Differences	4.09 (.40)	4.19 (.51)	3.95 (.50)	3.61 (.46)
Preventing Social Bias	3.56 (.43)	3.86 (.62)	3.72 (.53)	3.63 (.42)
Generating Interpretations & Options	4.00 (.37)	4.07 (.48)	3.86 (.47)	3.85 (.47)
Identifying the Consequences of Actions & Options	4.18 (.38)	3.91 (.62)	3.80 (.60)	3.56 (.44)
Total	3.97 (.12)	4.06 (.37)	3.89 (.31)	3.73 (.39)

Manipulation Check of Ad Designs

To pre-test whether the manipulation of the ad types was successful, 3 separate samples of 10 participants were asked to report whether the ad they were exposed to had an environmental claim. 100% of the control ad respondents reported no, whereas 100% of the greenwashed and green ad respondents reported yes. The difference was

statistically significant $\chi^2 (2) = 30, p < 0.001$. In addition, study participants who viewed the green and greenwashed ads were asked to respond to three additional questions in order to evaluate (1) the environmental friendliness of the product attributes; (2) the usefulness of the product information; and (3) the perceived environmental friendliness of the brand based on the ad content. The difference regarding the product attributes of the products marketed in the samples was not statistically significant, $t (18) = -1.88, p = .07$. As for the perceived environmental friendliness of the brand, responses indicated the samples were being evaluated quite similarly, $t (18) = -1.20, p = .24$. Combined, these measures confirm the effectiveness of greenwashed manipulation. Not only were respondents not readily able to identify the lack of environmental friendly product attributes in the greenwashed advertisement, but they also did not seem to recognize that the ad promotes a product made of plastic, which is arguably the least environmentally friendly material in this product category.

Pre-TARES Evaluations of Ad Ethicality

Prior to evaluating the ethicality of one of the three advertisements through TARES, the ethical sensitivity of sample in relation to the ad was explored by asking participants to indicate if they identified any ethical issues related to the ad. As a “yes” or “no” question, the item was coded dichotomously (see Table 7). The data was tested using a chi-square test of independence, which is used to determine if there is any relationship between two categorical variables. The test indicated that there was no significant association between ad type and a respondent’s initial perception of the ad’s ethicality, $\chi^2 (2, N = 120) = 3.32, p = .19$. In other words, the dichotomous pre-TARES

evaluations of ad ethicality revealed that the ad types did not have a significant association with participant evaluations of message ethicality.

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages for Pre-TARES Ad Evaluations

Ad Type	N	Frequency (%)	
		Ethical Issues	No Ethical Issues
Control	40	27 (67.5)	13 (32.5)
Greenwashed	40	22 (55)	18 (45)
Green	40	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)

Additionally, individuals that identified ethical issues with the ad were given the opportunity to describe these ethical issues through a short response. These responses were reviewed and coded into five major categories. Despite the difference in ad content, the majority of respondents from each sample identified the appropriation of the word Karma as the main source of unethicity. Overall, respondents were able to both identify and articulate an ethical issue 62% of the time in the control, 50% in greenwashed, and 45% in the green advertisement (See Table 8 for frequencies and percentages of short responses).

Reliabilities of the TARES Scores

A reliability analysis showed that the 19 items used for the TARES have a good internal consistency for the greenwashed advertisement ($\alpha = .79$), but not the green ($\alpha = .67$) or control ad ($\alpha = .45$). Further analysis was conducted on the reliability of the groups of items specific to the principle of truthfulness, which yielded a fairly similar

reliability distribution with the greenwashed ($\alpha = .72$), green ($\alpha = .65$) and control ad ($\alpha = .59$). The omission of one of the social responsibility items (pertaining to the prompting of an attitudinal or behavioral change) appears to improve the reliability of the overall TARES test for all three samples. The control sample improved to a .54, while the greenwashed and green samples improved to a .75 and .70, respectively. (see Table 9 for a summary of the reliability statistics of the TARES).

Table 8

Ethical Issues Identified by Respondents Prior to Applying the TARES Criteria

Short Response	Frequency (%)		
	Control (n = 25)	Greenwashed (n = 20)	Green (n = 18)
Product Packaging (i.e., Plastic Bottles)	3 (7.5)	8 (20)	5 (12.5)
Exploits Consumer Fears	-	3 (7.5)	3 (7.5)
Cultural Appropriation of the Word Karma	14 (35)	9 (22.5)	8 (20)
Not Everyone Has Access to Clean Water	6 (15)	-	-
Omission of Information	2 (5)	-	2 (5)

Table 9

Reliabilities for the TARES Scores and the Principle of Truthfulness

Ethical Dimension	N of Items	Chronbach's Alpha		
		Control	Greenwashed	Green
Truthfulness	5	.59	.72	.65
TARES	14	.45	.72	.67
Adjusted TARES	13	.54	.75	.70

Manifestation of TARES

RQ3 sought to ascertain the extent to which Gen Zers would be able to recognize ethical issues in green advertising through the use of TARES test. Although TARES had not previously been operationalized using a 5-point Likert scale, it was clear that the data was being analyzed at an interval measurement scale, which is why this data set was analyzed using means for central tendency and standard deviations for variability. To measure message ethicality, an index was constructed by analyzing mean scores for all 14 items of the TARES test. In general, the green ($m = 3.24$), greenwashed ($m = 2.97$), and the control ad ($m = 2.87$) did not score highly in message ethicality. However, in only using mean scores, none of the ad types scored particularly low either, as all means coalesced around the “undecided” category. Mean scores for TARES sub-dimensions and individual items had similar statistical distributions (see Table 10). There was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(2, 117) = 7.36, p = .001$).

A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that the mean score for the control advertisement was significantly lower than the green advertisement in truthfulness ($p = .04$), authenticity ($p = .00$) and social responsibility ($p = .00$), as well as the overall TARES index score ($p = .001$). The control advertisement was also significantly lower in relation to the greenwashed advertisement in authenticity ($p = .01$) and social responsibility ($p = .01$). Lastly, the means for the green advertisement was significantly higher than the greenwashed advertisement in the principle of respect ($p = .05$) and the overall TARES index score ($p = .02$). The results indicate that Gen Zers are not able to consistently

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for TARES Scores

TARES Principle	Items	Mean (SD)		
		Control (n = 40)	Greenwashed (n = 40)	Green (n = 40)
Truthfulness	Verbal Truthfulness	3.03 (.76)	3.17 (.98)	3.45 (.87)
	Visual Truthfulness	2.90 (.81)	3.25 (.92)	3.28 (.81)
	No Verbal Exaggeration	2.18 (.54)	2.48 (1.10)	2.93 (.94)
	No Visual Exaggeration	2.35 (.77)	2.43 (1.01)	2.48 (1.06)
	No Omission of Information	2.60 (.87)	2.13 (.88)	2.58 (.84)
Authenticity	Sincere Need for the Ad	2.78 (1.05)	3.45 (1.10)	3.80 (.96)
Respect	Demonstration of Full Responsibility	3.20 (.93)	2.83 (1.15)	3.38 (1.00)
Equity	Audience's Level of Comprehension	2.90 (1.05)	2.65 (1.12)	2.78 (1.02)
	Exploitation of Human Weaknesses	2.70 (1.01)	2.60 (1.00)	2.55 (.95)
Social Responsibility	Societal Improvement	3.13 (1.09)	3.48 (.98)	3.75 (.92)
	Benefit to Audience	2.98 (1.00)	3.93 (.65)	3.93 (.76)
	Harm to Audience	2.63 (.86)	2.65 (.97)	2.93 (1.11)
	Impact on Level of Trust on Ads in General	3.35 (.77)	3.03 (.97)	3.00 (.96)
	Serious Approach to Social Responsibility	2.88 (.82)	3.35 (.89)	3.65 (.80)
TARES	All Items	2.87 (.36)	2.97 (.50)	3.24 (.45)

differentiate green and greenwashed content across all the principles of the TARES.

However, when the principles are observed collectively, the green advertisement is being evaluated as having significantly higher ethical content than the greenwashed advertisement (see Table 11 for significant Tukey HSD results).

Table 11

Tukey's HSD Comparison for TARES Principles

<i>DV</i>	Comparison	Mean Difference	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% (CI)
Truthfulness	Control vs. Green	-.33	.13	.03*	-.64, -.02
Authenticity	Control vs. Greenwashed	-.67	.23	.01*	-1.23, -.12
	Control vs. Green	-1.02	.23	.00*	-1.58, -.47
Respect	Greenwashed vs. Green	-.55	.23	.05*	-1.00, -.00
Social Responsibility	Control vs. Greenwashed	-.29	.10	.01*	-.54, -.04
	Control vs. Green	-.46	.10	.00*	-.70, -.21
TARES	Control vs. Green	-.37	.09	.001*	-.60, -.13
	Greenwashed vs. Green	-.27	.09	.02*	-.50, -.03

* $p < .05$.

Descriptions of Gender Related Differences in TARES Scores

RQ4 was a complementary question to the gender related exploration of ethical sensitivity, which allowed for potential variances in ethical assessments of adverts between the genders to be explored. While descriptive statistics showed a relatively even evaluation by male and female students for the control group (M: Male = 2.80, Female = 2.90), there was greater separation in scores within the greenwashed (M: Male = 3.16, Female = 2.76) and green sample (M: Male = 3.06, Female = 3.34) (see Table 12). A

Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that the TARES scores in the greenwashed sample were greater for males (Mdn = 3.22) than for females (Mdn = 2.78), $U = -2.615$, $p = 0.009$. The green sample resulted in no statistically significant differences.

Table 12

Gender-Related Differences for TARES Score

Ad Type	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Control	Male	13	2.80	.25
	Female	25	2.90	.42
Greenwashed	Male	21	3.16	.44
	Female	19	2.76	.48
Green	Male	16	3.06	.49
	Female	24	3.34	.40

TARES Scores as Ordinal Data

Alternatively, researchers have suggested that numbers assigned to Likert-scale items can sometimes convey a positive or negative relationship that cannot readily be interpreted (Spatz, 2011). In this case, the TARES test items are to be evaluated on an ordinal measurement scale rather than an interval measurement scale (Boone & Boone, 2012). Researchers recommend descriptive statistics that include the mode or median for central tendency and frequencies for variability. In examining the percentages for each principle, respondents most often disagreed with the truthfulness of the control (52%) and greenwashed ad (50%). As for the green ad, there was a fairly even ethical assessment of the ad, although the largest percentage of respondents (35.5%) disagreed with the

truthfulness of the messaging. In authenticity, respondents were in agreement with the messaging of the green (70%) and greenwashed ad (52.5%), but disagreed with the control ad (51%). For the principle of respect, agreement among respondents was most strongly manifested in the green (57.5%) and control ad (45%), while most disagreed with the greenwashed ad (47.5%). Respondents uniformly disagreed with the equity principle of the green (53.7%), greenwashed (51.2%), and control ad. Lastly, respondents perceived the social responsibility of the messaging favorably, agreeing with the green (54%) and greenwashed ad (48.5%), while remaining largely undecided for the control advertisement (34%) (see Table 13 for frequencies and percentages of the TARES).

Unlike the mean, which simply presents the average of the values assigned to the Likert items selected by respondents, the mode reveals the option that most frequently appeared in the data set. In order to measure the overall message ethicality using the mode as the central tendency, an index was constructed by summing up the number of TARES items that had a frequency of occurrence of at least a 4, as this number represents the lowest acceptable score for message ethicality. Overall, message ethicality can therefore range from 1 to 14, with 1 suggesting that an ad fulfilled only one TARES item, while 14 indicating that an ad fulfilled every one of the fourteen items. The green advertisement had the highest frequency of ethical items with 7(50%), followed by the greenwashed ad fulfilling 5 items (36%) and the control advertisement, which fulfilled 3 items (21%) (see Table 14 for a summary of the mode statistics for the TARES results).

Table 13
Frequencies and Percentages for TARES Scores

TARES Principle	Scale	Frequency (%)		
		Control	Greenwashed	Green
Truthfulness	Strongly Disagree	9 (4.5)	25 (12.5)	13 (6.5)
	Disagree	93 (46.5)	75 (37.5)	58 (29)
	Undecided	66 (33)	42 (21)	62 (31)
	Agree	31 (15.5)	53 (26.5)	62 (31)
	Strongly Agree	1 (.5)	5 (2.5)	5 (2.5)
Authenticity	Strongly Disagree	3 (7.5)	2 (5)	1 (2.5)
	Disagree	16 (40)	6 (15)	3 (7.5)
	Undecided	10 (25)	11 (17.5)	8 (20)
	Agree	9 (22.5)	14 (35)	19 (47.5)
	Strongly Agree	2 (5)	7 (17.5)	9 (22.5)
Respect	Strongly Disagree	0 (0)	4 (10)	1 (2.5)
	Disagree	12 (30)	15 (37.5)	9 (22.5)
	Undecided	10 (25)	8 (20)	7 (17.5)
	Agree	16 (40)	10 (25)	20 (50)
	Strongly Agree	2 (5)	3 (7.5)	3 (7.5)
Equity	Strongly Disagree	4 (5)	12 (15)	6 (7.5)
	Disagree	35 (43.8)	29 (36.2)	37 (46.2)
	Undecided	19 (23.8)	16 (20)	17 (21.3)
	Agree	17 (21.2)	23 (28.8)	18 (22.5)
	Strongly Agree	5 (6.2)	0 (0)	2 (2.5)
Social Responsibility	Strongly Disagree	9 (4.5)	8 (4)	7 (3.5)
	Disagree	57 (28.5)	39 (19.5)	29 (14.5)
	Undecided	66 (33)	56 (28)	56 (28)
	Agree	63 (31.5)	82 (41)	83 (41.5)
	Strongly Agree	5 (2.5)	15 (7.5)	25 (12.5)

Table 14

Mode Statistics for TARES Test Results

TARES Principle	Items	Mode		
		Control	Green	Greenwashed
Truthfulness	Textual Truthfulness	3	4	4
	Visual Truthfulness	3	4	4
	No Textual Exaggeration	2	2	3
	No Visual Exaggeration	2	2	2
	No Omission of Information	2	2	3
Authenticity	Sincere Need for the Ad	2	4	4
Authenticity	Sincere Need for the Ad	2	4	4
Respect	Demonstration of Full Responsibility	4	2	4
Equity	Audience's Level of Comprehension	2	2	2
	Exploitation of Human Weaknesses	2	2	2
Social Responsibility	Societal Improvement	4	4	4
	Benefit to Audience	4	4	4
	Harm to Audience	2	2	2
	Impact on Level of Trust on Ads in General	3	3	3
	Serious Approach to Social Responsibility	2	3	4

Ethical Sensitivity and TARES

RQ5 sought to explore any correlation that might exist between Generation Z's ethical sensitivity and their ethical evaluations of the ads through TARES. To this end, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed to determine the relationship

between the mean scores of respondent's self-estimated ethical sensitivity and their ethical evaluation of one of three ads through the TARES. No connection between ethical sensitivity and TARES was found in this study.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Significance of Major Findings

Summary

The level of ethical sensitivity in the sample based on the ESSQ was high, particularly in the subscale of “Caring by Connecting with Others.” In assessing gender-related differences it was determined that the ethical sensitivity was significantly greater for females than for males. The descriptive statistics of the TARES scores suggest that Gen Zers are able to recognize ethical issues in green advertising, but the disparity between the green and greenwashed messaging was far less than what was expected. In exploring gender-related differences, the statistics revealed that female respondents had greater ability in differentiating the ethicality of green and greenwashed content. Lastly, statistical analyses found no connection between ethical sensitivity and ethical assessments of advertisements through TARES.

Ethical Sensitivity of Gen Z

The current research was grounded upon the notion that there was a need for measuring the ethical sensitivity of an emerging generational cohort that might become the most adept and critical in assessing the content of green advertising. Unlike prior studies that suffered from low reliabilities in one or more subscales of the ESSQ, this study was able to assess the ethical sensitivity of the sample using all seven subscales. The underlying finding in the descriptive statistics showed that Gen Zers possess a higher self-evaluation of ethical sensitivity than any other group previously surveyed through the ESSQ (e.g., adolescent secondary Finnish students, high ability high school students,

university undergraduates in Netherlands, and Iranian-Kurdish teachers at primary, middle, and high schools).

While these findings on Generation Z cannot be related to prior research given the lack of studies available on this generational cohort, there are a number of core issues and generational markers that may serve as indicators for this heightened sense of ethicality. Among these are the fact Gen Zers have been raised to value diversity and social justice, as well as teamwork and working toward the collective good. Their empathy manifests itself in fighting for equality and justice for friends, classmates, and any other who they believe is being mistreated due to gender, sexuality, and/or race (Meehan, 2016). While some may argue that this fight was started and possibly even won long before this generation came along, Gen Zers are identifying a myriad of social injustices and often choose to address them via YouTube, Instagram, Kickstarter, selfie challenges, and Twitter debates (Manrodt, 2014). It goes without question that this generation believes in their ability to be agents of change for everything from domestic issues like homelessness, to global issues like climate change (Bridges, 2015). Collectively, these issues and generational markers demonstrate genuine concern and consideration for the other, which are ideals that are at the crux of many of the ESSQ sub-dimensions. Alternatively, it could very well be the case that the high ethical sensitivity observed within the sample is representative of the same ethical afflictions that have affected other emerging adult generations, namely their life inexperience leads to an overinflated sense of ethicality (Smith, Davidson, Christoffersen, & Herzog, 2011).

More in-depth analysis showed that the highest and the lowest self-reported

dimensions of ethical sensitivity among the sample were “Caring by Connecting with Others” and “Preventing Social Bias,” respectively. While the first result has already been explained by viewing the core issues and characteristics of this generational cohort, the low scores on a dimension that measures comprehension, recognition, and active opposition of social bias would appear to bring into question the validity of such characterizations. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics of the individual questions that comprise the dimension, the lower score can be attributed entirely to the question which asks, “When I am choosing between alternatives that must be evaluated as right or wrong, I most often try to take a position that is not influenced by my personal feelings, opinions, or prejudice.” If this question were removed, the overall mean score for this dimension would improve from a 3.76 to a 3.92. The disparity in means for the items related to this dimension could be reflecting the high degree of importance that is ascribed to personal authenticity by this generational cohort. Within the context of ethics, this authenticity can manifest itself in highly individualistic and relativistic perspectives that emphasize personal agency when evaluating decisions with ethical dimensions (Smith, Davidson, Christoffersen, & Herzog, 2011). This of course does not mean that the opinions and perspectives of others are not considered in the decision making process, but rather that the act of choosing rests primarily on the beliefs, feelings, and, opinions of the individual that must ultimately decide between alternatives.

In analyzing the data for gender-related differences, it was revealed that female students had a higher estimation of their ethical sensitivity than male students, particularly in the subscales of “Caring by Connecting to Others” and “Identifying the

Consequences of Actions & Options.” No other significant differences were found between the genders on the other five dimensions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these findings are consistent with the literature which suggests that females display greater moral orientation toward caring ethics, as opposed to males that are more inclined toward justice ethics (Tuckman 1972; Gilligan, 1982; Tirri, 2003; Tirri & Nokelainen, 2007; Schutte, Wolfensberger & Tirri, 2014). This orientation toward an ethic of care reflects a more relational approach to ethics, which differs from the individualized approach found in “reading and expressing emotions” or the universal orientation presented in the subscales of “preventing social bias” and “generating interpretations and options.” Furthermore, research on cognitive moral development also supports the presence of gender-related differences in relational approaches to ethics. Specifically, one study found that female participants had higher cognitive moral development, which not only implied that they possessed greater ability to reason through multifaceted ethical situations, but also that there were more likely to contemplate the relational dynamics of their decision making as evidenced by their propensity to consider the interests of more stakeholders (Goolsby & Hunt, 1992).

Along with exploring the ethical sensitivity of Gen Z undergraduates, this study sought to investigate the ability of this generational cohort to assess the ethicality of advertising content through the ethical framework of the TARES test, while also evaluating its veracity as an evaluative framework for green advertising. This portion of the study came with a caveat, as respondents were first asked to evaluate the ethicality of the ad with a dichotomous question prior to using the TARES criteria. Interestingly,

despite the differences in textual content, respondents were almost uniformly distributed in their responses across the three ads, which in this instance meant that all three ads were being perceived as having ethical issues at nearly the same rate. This distribution can in many ways be attributed to respondents taking issue with what they felt was the cultural appropriation of the word Karma, which was the fictional brand name that appeared on all three ads. The percentages of the short response data seem to legitimize some concern regarding the effectiveness of greenwashed messaging given that 60% of the respondents who claimed to recognize an ethical issue in the greenwashed sample failed to even mention the use of plastic, which was considered to be the central issue when designing the ad.

Ethical Evaluations of Ads through TARES

The descriptive statistics for the overall means of the TARES revealed that both the green ($m = 3.24$) and greenwashed ($m = 2.97$) advertisement did not meet the criteria for message ethicality. More specifically, the frequency distribution of the data indicated that the green advertisement failed 50% of the TARES items, while the greenwashed ad failed 64%. This contrasts significantly with previous research that applied TARES principles to U.S. anti-smoking ads, in which more than one-third fully passed all the items of the test (Lee & Cheng, 2010). This disparity is not as strong, however, when compared to the other known TARES applications in advertising research, where 380 fast food ads were assessed and only 1.58% of them fulfilled all the items of the test. Although there is some merit in contextualizing the results of this study within the larger body of TARES research, it is necessary to point out that this study differs significantly

from the aforementioned research in the following aspects: (1) respondents were asked to evaluate message ethicality using a Likert scale rather than a dichotomous measure; and (2) each respondent was only allowed to assess the ethicality of one of three ads, which were all similar in color, size, layout, and image, but varied in the headline, subheadline, and benefit claim. This study was therefore not only far more restrictive and unique, but it also made comparisons less straightforward. The TARES means and frequency distribution reveal a far narrower separation between the green and greenwashed content, which is surprising given the green ad was created specifically to elicit a far greater number of positive evaluations than what the data suggests.

In looking at the data for the greenwashed sample across all five principles of the TARES, the greatest impediments to message ethicality were related to the items measuring Truthfulness, Respect, and Equity. Specifically, the items that were most frequently evaluated as unethical were related to (a) visual and textual exaggeration, (b) omission of information, (c) exploitation of human weaknesses, (d) the inability of the audience to understand the content, (e) a failure on behalf of the advertiser to demonstrate that they are willing to take full responsibility for the ad content, and (f) the potential harm that this ad could bring to some groups in society. Given the nature of this study and the greenwashed treatment of this ad, the most significant results are reflected in the dimensions and respective items that were evaluated with high ethicality. Among these were (a) textual and visual truthfulness, (b) the sincere need of the product marketed in the ad within our society, (c) the societal improvement that can result from consumers purchasing this product, and (d) the benefit of this ad to a pro-green audience.

The items of textual and visual truthfulness are arguably the two most salient measures of truthfulness and as such, they should not have been evaluated with high message ethicality. The principle headline for this ad read, “Better for You and the Planet,” which was followed by a sub-headline of, “Because a green lifestyle starts with greener choices.” When situated within the framework of the sins of greenwashing, the claims of the headline and sub-headline are exemplars of the sin of fibbing and the sin of irrelevance, respectively. The headline claim is unequivocally false given that the bottle being marketed is made from plastic and is therefore contributing to the degradation of the planet. While the message of the sub-headline may be true in a general sense, it is a green claim that is inconsequential to a consumer seeking to purchase a green product based on this particular ad. Additionally, this ad included what was intended to be a fake eco-seal with subtext that read, “Certifiably Natural” and, “Please Recycle.” Collectively these ad components have the markers of the sin of worshipping false labels and the sin of vagueness. The claim of certifiably natural may be true for the water itself, but it says little about the product packaging. Moreover, the juxtaposition of this claim with an image of a globe with two leaves around the outer portion is potentially misleading for a consumer who may interpret this image to be a symbol of environmental friendliness when in reality it has no formal meaning. Having explained the content of this ad through the criteria of the sins of greenwashing, it should become clear that there appears to be little if any justification for why this particular ad should have received ethical evaluations for any of the items related to truthfulness, authenticity, and social responsibility.

By comparison, the biggest obstacles to message ethicality for the green sample included an item measuring truthfulness, both items for equity, and one item for social responsibility. Unlike the greenwashed ad where the most significant scores were found in the ethical evaluations, significant results for the green ad are manifested in the low ethicality found in the form of (a) visual exaggeration, (b) the inability of the audience to understand the content, (c) the exploitation of human weaknesses, and (d) the potential harm that this ad could bring to some groups in society. Also noteworthy are the items of textual exaggeration and omission of information that while not having failed still left the majority of respondents unable to make a decision regarding its ethicality. Unlike the greenwashed ad, the green ad had a principle headline that read, “It’s Better to Green It,” which was followed by a sub-headline of “Our bottles are made entirely from plant based materials and are 100% biodegradable.” When evaluating these claims through the criteria of the sins of greenwashing, there is a sense that the sub-headline could be unfit for consumers by meeting the criteria for the sin of no proof. However, this lack of proof in the sub-headline claim is to some degree mitigated by the presence of an ECOLOGO certification seal, which affirms that the product has “undergone rigorous scientific testing, exhaustive auditing, or both, to prove its compliance with stringent, third-party, environmental performance standards” (ECOLOGO Product Certification, n.d.). Unfortunately, the novelty of a bottle made entirely from plant-based materials that while available, has not been widely introduced to the market, may have contributed to low ethicality in the ability of the audience to understand the content.

Visual exaggeration of the ad represented a point of low ethicality in both the

green and greenwashed sample. Given that both ads shared the same central image (i.e., a bottle splashing into water that is transforming into natural elements) it would be expected that evaluations pertaining solely to the visual imagery of the ad would also be similar. There is a sense that evaluations related to the visual elements of an ad should at least to some degree be informed by the product attributes represented in the textual claims of the ad. Thus, it would seem that the greenwashed ad that is marketing a plastic bottle, which has the potential to negatively affect the environment should have lower ethicality than the green ad that promotes a biodegradable bottle that is not harmful to the environment. Another item that scored low in message ethicality for both the greenwashed and green ad was the exploitation of human weaknesses. When only using the information provided by the TARES test, it is quite difficult to ascertain what the source of this low ethicality is, but in reviewing the information provided in the short responses questions, it is likely that respondents were attributing this assumed exploitation, to the use of the word, “Karma.” While this concept is too often oversimplified to mean, “what goes around comes around,” this term more accurately reflects a notion that one’s actions can affect an individual, either positively or negatively, as we move forward into the future. Considering the level of environmental degradation and the impact poor consumer behavior can have on various populations across the globe, the brand name Karma would seem to perfectly capture the reality of both the negative and positive effects that consumer decisions can have when it comes to green products.

Despite these attempts to justify the inclusion of the word, “Karma,” greater

discussion of Gen Z responses is warranted given the frequency to which Generation Z characterized its inclusion as an instance of cultural appropriation. It is plausible that the extent to which this generation sees Karma as an example of cultural appropriation can be attributed to the previously stated values of social justice and diversity, which in America are of even greater importance given the widespread racial tension experienced over the last few years. This can be evidenced by the extensive criticism that has been directed toward culturally offensive Halloween costumes and the use of Native American imagery as sports mascots (Reynolds, 2017). While it is certainly justified for this generation to push for others to be respectful of ethnic customs, language, food, artwork, and clothing, it does bring up a larger question. Why were these respondents not able to make the connection between Karma and the environmental disruption created by consumer behavior? The answer may be that Karma became deemed inappropriate when it was interpreted to be a deliberate attempt to incorporate a word of cultural and/or religious significance in order to better market a product. If this is the case, the locus of consumer dissonance may rest in the juxtaposition of consumerism and cultural elements.

In considering the breadth of information provided through descriptive statistics and data analyses, it is warranted to confirm that Generation Z is in fact able to distinguish the ethicality of green and greenwashed content to a degree that is statistically significant. However, the content analysis of the green and greenwashed ad provided earlier would appear to demand an even greater separation in the evaluations than what was observed, specifically in items such as textual truthfulness, exploitation of human weaknesses, societal improvement, benefit to the audience, and harm to the audience. It is

likely the case that while there is a strong presence of green attitudes in Generation Z, they currently do not possess the spending power to turn those attitudes into green behavior. While having the ability to spend on products may appear to be trivial, it actually represents an important stage in a consumer's ability to recognize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate persuasion attempts in this product category. As a result, the initial claim of this generation's ability to distinguish the ethicality of green and greenwashed content must be stated with a caveat, which is that greenwashing remains an effective marketing strategy that even consumers with green attitudes are not so readily able to distinguish.

In analyzing the data for gender-related differences, it was revealed that female students had a significantly lower overall ethical assessment of the greenwashed ad than male students. Interestingly, the mean scores for the green sample reflected an inverse pattern given that the overall ethical evaluations of female respondents were higher than male respondents. Unfortunately, the statistical significance of the results for the green ad was affected by the disparity in sample size (Male = 16, Female = 24). Analyzing the data using a one sample T-test revealed that if the same results were found in an equally distributed sample, the results would be approaching the p value needed for statistical significance. Still, the results indicate that female participants possess greater ability than males in assessing the degree of ethicality of green and greenwashed ads.

Although the last portion of this study sought to synthesize the results of these two tests, a Pearson's product-moment correlation showed that a relationship between a respondent's self-estimated ethical sensitivity and their ethical evaluation of one of three

ads through the TARES test could not be determined. Although it will be addressed in greater detail in the following sections, the ESSQ suffers from range restriction and the resulting lack of variability in the data set greatly reduced the likelihood that a relationship between these two variables could be determined. Nevertheless, the statistically significant findings in gender related differences for both the ESSQ and TARES seem to at least point to the possibility that high ethical sensitivity can result in more accurate assessments of green messaging. Justification for this conjecture will likely require that a different instrument be employed to measure the ethical sensitivity of respondents in an in order to avoid the range restriction commonly found in the ESSQ.

CHAPTER 6

Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

Theoretical Implications

While the portion of this study that focused solely on ethical sensitivity is an extension of previous research, it is novel in that it applied the ESSQ to an unexplored population and it also sought to explore the possibility of a correlation between self-assessed ethical sensitivity and the ability of respondents to properly differentiate the ethicality of different ad types. As discussed in detail in the preceding chapter, this study adds to the literature on ethical sensitivity in the following ways: (a) it points to a potentially overestimated assessment of ethical sensitivity among this emerging generational cohort; (b) despite this generation being attributed with a shift away from gender binaries and exhibiting gender neutrality toward evaluative criterion of aesthetics (e.g., fashion), this population's self-assessment of ethical sensitivity continues to follow gendered patterns that are consistent with traditional gender characterizations; (c) even in a region with a multicultural ethos like Southern California, racial categories are an important indicator in self-assessments of ethical sensitivity; and (d) as one of the few quantitative measures for ethical sensitivity, the ESSQ suffers from range restriction, which is a lack of variability that in this case greatly shrinks the possible relationship that may in fact exist between two variables such as ethical sensitivity and ethical evaluations through the TARES (Aron, Coups, & Aron, 2013; Abrami, Cholmsky, & Gordon, 2001).

This may be the lone study to have applied the ethical framework of the TARES to assess print advertisements that communicate a green message and as such, it

contributes to the limited knowledge available regarding the ethics of green advertising. To date, it seems that much of the research available in this type of advertising ignores ethical issues and instead, focuses on the relationship between ad exposure and consumer behavior. The emphasis in the latter may explain why much of the theoretical models of green advertising focus on the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior. Nevertheless, these theories do have great explanatory value in regards to explaining the growth in green advertising, particularly as it evolved alongside the emergence and spending power of both Millennials and Generation Z. Within these models, green advertising is particularly salient to these generations due to (a) the feelings and beliefs that these generations share for matters of sustainability on both an individual and collective level; (b) their increased knowledge as it relates to climate change and human impact in environmental degradation; (c) the strength of their intentions to perform actions that are aimed toward environmental protection; and (e) their positive evaluations regarding the strong correlation between changes in human behavior and restoration of ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources (“Green Generation,” 2015; Ottman, 2011; Priggen, 2007). While this explains why advertisers have gone to such lengths to try to green their company image and their respective products, there appears to be little research that addresses the ability of consumers to properly differentiate green and greenwashed content.

It is precisely in this regard that this study contributes to the second dimension of the persuasion knowledge model, which can be defined as the perceived appropriateness of the persuasion tactics employed by an advertiser. One should recall that this theory

posits that consumers consider persuasion behavior to be appropriate only insofar as it appears to be ethical or normatively acceptable. While Gen Z respondents may not have differentiated the ethicality of the green and greenwashed content to the degree that was expected in certain subscale items, the data still revealed a significant difference in the overall TARES scores between these samples. Thus, Gen Zers do possess the ability to properly organize the ads based on the ethicality of the message and therefore brands that are trying to mislead consumers through greenwashed content are likely contributing to negative consumer evaluations, which have the potential to damage brand equity and diminish their influence on consumer behavior.

Although ethical evaluations often occur on a continuum, the frequency statistics suggest that a five-point Likert scale may not offer the optimal method for evaluating the ethicality of advertisements through the TARES test. This can be evidenced by the overuse of the midpoint category, as well as an infrequent selection of the extreme response categories. Researchers have suggested that the decision to include a mid-point category should “depend on the level of [undecided] responses one is willing to tolerate” (Matell & Jacoby, 1972, p. 508). In this instance, the selection of the midpoint throughout the 14 items of the TARES was sufficiently high to where it became difficult to interpret the data solely through means and as a result, its inclusion proved to be somewhat disadvantageous in evaluating the data set.

Marketing research suggests that one of the primary means for businesses to connect with Gen Zers will be through authenticity in both marketing and brand story. With high ethical sensitivity, these digital natives who have a seemingly endless stream

of information at their fingertips, will not be so easily swayed by persuasion tactics built upon facades and omission of information. Businesses would be wise to acknowledge Gen Z's ethical sensitivity, and they should respond by meeting the ethical standards of a generation that is readily equipped to turn a blatant disregard and disrespect for an audience into a viral phenomenon that can drastically alter the direction of a business and their respective products.

Collectively, this all points towards a need for businesses and agencies to incorporate Gen Z perspectives and sensibilities in order to fundamentally shift the paradigm of advertising in such a way that ethics will be present from the outset, in both the process and production of communicative acts. Ethicality will therefore not only be a matter of ethical judgments and unethical behaviors residing in the target population, but it will also be part and parcel of the advertising process. In other words, businesses should look to change their focus from strategic to dialogical communication. Researchers have often expressed a disdain for the ethos of strategic communicators whose tactics are often marred by what seems to be an unavoidable practice to control and manipulate (Hallahan, 2015). Alternatively, "The process of dialogue involves interacting with, listening to, respecting, empowering, understanding, and accommodating less powerful participants" (Toledano, 2017, p. 134). In dialogue there are no negotiations or debates, but rather there is just a desire for authentic engagement where participants find satisfaction in the simple fact that their concerns were heard (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). Hence, dialogue does not only advocate for ethical communication as it relates to the consumer, but it also protects businesses from feeling

pressured into making concessions simply to appease the other. As this study shows, consumer assessments are not always entirely correct, so while they may be worthy of consideration, they should not be assumed to be objective truths that require substantive responses in the form of change.

Although the TARES test is fundamentally designed to bring attention to the need for ads to be evaluated based on their intrinsic moral worth, there was a secondary element to this study, which sought to explore whether this generational cohort could properly differentiate the content of a green and greenwashed ad. Given the results, even authentic green messages would benefit from more stringent review during their strategic and creative process, so that they better reflect TARES principles. Most important to this was a desire by respondents to have more information about the product and also the brand itself, which is something that may be particularly salient to brands that are new to the product category. In providing information that is both correct and without deception, green advertisers must also be increasingly wary of this generation's propensity to scrutinize the use of words and concepts that could be viewed as offensive either through it being apprehended as cultural appropriation or it being insensitive to the gender, race, and/or religion of others. In regards to the aesthetics of the ads, while Gen Zers evaluated the ads to be truthful in their visual representations, they also uniformly assessed the graphic components to be ethically dubious in regards to visual exaggeration. While it cannot be confirmed with this research alone, this finding may suggest that there is a reduced effectiveness of traditional green advertising tactics that focused on creating visual associations between the brand and natural imagery, specifically those that are

constituted by blue or green colors.

Additionally, male and female differences in the assessments of green and greenwashed content would suggest that it would be worthwhile for advertising practitioners to create messages that account for the existing disparities in ethical assessments. While in one sense, advertisers could presumably produce less ethical content for ads targeting men, the more ethically sound approach would be to create ethical content regardless of gender and have a more scrutinized creative and strategic process for ads targeting women. The reason for this latter point being that women not only have more heightened awareness to inconsistencies in marketing messaging, but they also are more inclined to purchase green products (Holland, 2012; Kraft & Weber, 2012). Moreover, given that omission of information was identified as a problem across all three samples and that women value product information, it would behoove advertisers to distance themselves from creating overly shortened messages that are characteristically preferred by men.

Practical Implications

As noted in other research, all students can benefit from integrating ethics and a careful reflection on values while pursuing higher education. While true, a more practical implication would evaluate these self-assessments in light of this generation's concern for social justice and equality, which would in turn suggest that businesses will be evaluated more critically than ever before. Unfortunately for businesses, this study revealed that consumer criticisms might not always reflect the genuine intention behind the communicative act. That is, Gen Z may rightly evaluate something as unethical, but the

grounds upon which this is based on may be radically different than what the designer intended (i.e., Karma versus plastic bottles). This scrutiny will extend to a company's culture, business practices, and the types of advertisements that they choose to associate with their brand image. This not only suggests that all business practices are subject to critical and ethical evaluations, but the results of that interpretation may fall outside of intent.

As for the moral responsibility of the advertisers, it is imperative to emphasize that advertisers are moral agents who exercise their own moral autonomy in creating the messages that are used to promote a brand and sell their products (Lee & Nguyen, 2013). This of course entails that advertisers should be held accountable for their messages and can no longer look for legitimization solely through outcomes (i.e., the performance of the ad). Green advertisers should therefore be expected to be morally responsible for their messages and the burden of resisting or readily identifying greenwashed content should not rest solely on the green consumer, who in the presence of greenwashed content is being exploited because of their values and their spending power.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study that could have implications in the interpretations of results. First, the study only sampled Gen Z undergraduates from a private Christian university and thus the study could benefit from a much wider sample, such as from public universities and other geographic regions. Also, while the ESSQ works well as a standalone measurement for self-assessments of ethical sensitivity, the data does suffer from restriction of range, which still allows for comparisons of

independent variables (e.g., race, gender, etc.), but greatly reduces the possibility for correlations between other variables such as the TARES test scores. While diversifying the sample could mitigate this limitation, the range restriction may simply be an unavoidable occurrence for any population that does not willfully and unapologetically engage in behaviors that violate social norms.

The TARES test was conceived and previously operationalized as a series of dichotomous responses, yet given that responses to ethical issues do not always conform so readily to a dichotomous evaluation, this study chose to convert the TARES test items from binary responses to scale items. The midpoint, however, proved to be a frequently selected option and given the fairly even distribution of balance side point options (e.g., disagree and agree) and an infrequent use of the extreme response categories (e.g., strongly disagree and strongly agree), it resulted in a great deal of midpoint averages. When using the mean as the central tendency, the descriptive statistics simply did not appear to adequately reflect the distribution of the data. Lastly, this version of the TARES did not include multiple items for all principles of the TARES and as a result, reliabilities could not be measured for every subscale. Therefore the results of the TARES, while interesting, are limited in the generalizability and implications.

Directions for Future Research

Although this study was not able to determine a strong predictive relationship between ethical sensitivity and the TARES test, there does seem to be sufficient reason to continue to explore the possibility of a correlation. In order to do so, future research will need to find a way to create greater variance in the ESSQ sample, possibly by having a

larger and more diverse sample. As for the TARES test, ethical evaluations often do occur on a continuum, but given the data collected in the sample, it may benefit future researchers to eliminate the midpoint and use a four-point scale that employs a similar forced choice method as the binary scale, but in this case will allow the researcher to assess the strength of the respondents evaluation of the ad. Furthermore, although the TARES test has proven to be a quantitative method that can successfully be applied to a wide range of advertising content (e.g., smoking, food, and environmental), it is always in need of revisions and exclusions of certain measurement items that do not fit well for certain contexts. In doing so, future researchers should look to maintain at least 3 items per TARES principle in order to have the ability to run a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the model fit, as well as reliability testing for each subscale. Lastly, given that Gen Zers are emerging adults that may still be shaping their own standards of ethics through newfound experiences, researches should look to conduct a longitudinal study that tracks changes in their ethical sensitivity over time.

Appendix A

Control advertisement

The advertisement features a central image of a clear plastic water bottle with a black cap. The bottle is surrounded by a dynamic splash of water. A butterfly is perched on the right side of the splash, and a leaf is on the left. The bottle's label reads "KARMA H₂O" in large, bold letters, with a circular arrow icon above the "O". Below this, in smaller text, it says "PURIFIED DRINKING WATER" and "1.03 LITER".

ph
perfect ph
balance

SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD
Filtered Water. Pure Taste. All the Time.

Appendix B

Greenwashed advertisement



Certifiably Natural.
Please Recycle

KARMA H₂O

NATURAL
SPRING WATER
100% BOTTLED IN THE U.S.

BETTER FOR YOU & THE PLANET

Because a green lifestyle starts with greener choices.

Appendix C

Green advertisement

UL
certified for reduced
environmental impact

KARMA H₂O
FILTERED SPRING WATER
100% BIODEGRADABLE

IT'S BETTER TO GREEN IT
Our bottles are made entirely from plant
based materials and 100% biodegradable.

Appendix D

Coding categories for the ESSQ

Dimension	Item
Reading and Expressing Emotions	When disagreeing with others, I am usually able to recognize how the other person is feeling.
	I am most often able to express differing feelings to other people.
	I usually notice if someone working with me is offended by me.
	I am able to express to other people if I am offended or hurt because of them.
Taking the Perspective of Others	I am generally able to cooperate with people who do not share my opinions on what is right and what is wrong.
	I generally tolerate people who have different views on what is right and what is wrong.
	I think it is good that my closest friends think in different ways.
	I can generally get along with people who do not agree with me.
Caring by Connecting to Others	I am generally concerned about the wellbeing of people around me.
	I attend to the wellbeing of others and try to improve it.
	When disagreeing with others, I most often do my best to take actions that try and keep good personal relationships.
	I strive for good relationships with all the people I am working with.
Working with Interpersonal and Group Differences	I take other peoples' opinions into consideration when making important decisions in my life.
	I try to consider another person's position when I am in disagreement with them.

Appendix D. Continued

	<p>When I have to choose between alternatives that must be evaluated as right (ethical) or wrong (unethical), I most often consider the impact that my decisions may have on other people.</p> <p>I generally try to consider other peoples' needs, even in situations that may benefit me directly.</p>
Preventing Social Bias	<p>I generally recognize my own bias when I take a stand on ethical issues.</p> <p>I realize that I am tied to certain prejudices when I assess ethical issues.</p> <p>I try to control my own prejudices when evaluating ethical issues.</p> <p>When I am choosing between alternatives that must be evaluated as right (ethical) or wrong (unethical), I most often try to take a position that is not influenced by my personal feelings, opinions, or prejudice.</p>
Generating Interpretations and Options	<p>I generally contemplate on the consequences of my actions when making ethical decisions.</p> <p>I consider different alternatives when wrestling with an ethically problematic situation.</p> <p>I am able to generate multiple alternatives when I face ethical problems in my life.</p> <p>I believe there are several right solutions to most ethical issues.</p>
Identifying the Consequences of Actions and Options	<p>I notice there are ethical issues involved in human interaction.</p> <p>I tend to see a lot of ethical problems around me.</p> <p>I am generally aware of the ethical issues I face at school or work.</p> <p>I am better than other people in recognizing new and current ethical problems.</p>

Appendix E

Coding categories for the TARES test

Principle	Item
Truthfulness	<p>The textual ad claims are truthful.</p> <p>The visual components are truthful.</p> <p>The textual ad claims are exaggerated.</p> <p>The visual ad claims are exaggerated.</p> <p>Important information has been left out.</p>
Authenticity	<p>The product marketed in this ad meets an important need in our society.</p>
Respect	<p>The creator of the ad is willing to take full, public, and personal responsibility for the content of this ad.</p>
Equity	<p>In order to understand the message of the ad, the audience needs to be unusually well informed.</p> <p>The ad unduly takes advantage of anxieties, fears, and/or concerns for the environment.</p>
Social Responsibility	<p>If everyone changes their attitude or behavior about buying bottled water, society as a whole would be improved.</p> <p>The ad promotes a pro-green message aimed at changing consumer attitudes and/or behaviors.</p> <p>There are some groups in society that could be harmed by the ad.</p> <p>This ad decreases the trust that the average person has for ads in general.</p> <p>The ad demonstrates a commitment towards the welfare and interests of the society in which it operates.</p>

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