

Part A

Globally, the fashion industry has faced increasing pressure to adopt sustainable methods and practices. According to Bain & Company's (2022) report "How Brands Can Embrace the Sustainable Fashion Opportunity", the significance of sustainable fashion practice is explicitly outlined. Furthermore, the report outlines the challenges that consumers and fashion organisations face in analysing consumer value and purchasing behaviour. In order to understand this behaviour, this essay will discuss attitudes and consumer involvement within consumer behaviour. These theories will then provide insights into how brands can leverage sustainability and shift consumer choices, with respect to a local context such as Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Attitudes are an individual's changing evaluations, be it positive or negative, of a person, object or issue (Krasniqi & Krasniqi, 2014). Certainly, within a marketing and consumer behaviour context, these attitudes can help predict purchasing decisions. According to Engel et al., 1995, attitudes consist of three components: cognitive (what a consumer believes), affective (how they feel), and conative (behavioural, how they act). Attitudes are formed through various different ways such as lived experience, cultural influences and social norms but can be changed through marketing exposure, credible messaging and persuasive communications, especially when aligned with the consumer's values.

Consumer involvement, on the other hand, refers to the degree of interest, information search, or complex decision-making a consumer engages in regarding a particular product or service (Zaichkowsky, 2010). Within the context of fashion, products with high involvement that require complex decision making, such as clothing with higher price points, may see more stable attitudes. Conversely, low-involvement decisions, where decision making has "inertia", the consumer purchases based on habit or convenience - often associated with fast fashion. Therefore, attitudes and consumer involvement work conjointly - consumers who are highly involved tend to form strong and favorable attitudes towards sustainable products.

One major challenge identified in Bain & Company's (2022) report is the low ranking of sustainability within a consumer's purchasing factors for global fashion. While 25% of global fashion consumers showcase a high concern for the environment (Bain & Company, 2022), factors such as product quality, price and durability rank highest and take precedence. In New Zealand, while 8 out of 10 New Zealanders wish to lead a more sustainable lifestyle, 71% of them outline cost being a barrier to this (Kantar, 2022). Equally, it is important to recognise that consumers are willing to pay more for higher quality clothing items, especially when tied to sustainability - rather than sustainability being a singular component (Bain & Company, 2022).

Understanding attitudes can help marketers address this challenge. To shift attitudes, brands must focus on the affective component of attitudes - the feelings consumers associate with sustainability. Consumers in New Zealand may have an attitude towards sustainable fashion as overpriced and believe the higher cost is solely due to sustainable initiatives and ethical reasons (Hall, 2023). However, if marketers were to link sustainability with quality, durability and long term value, these feelings can be replaced with pride. Considering that the affective component operates through the peripheral route (through visual communication), it is important that sustainability is communicated as a benefit, theoretically resulting in consumers becoming more willing to pay a premium and choosing sustainable options.

Additionally, increasing consumer involvement is critical. According to Kantar (2022), New Zealanders demand brands and companies to lead on sustainability, despite their skepticism of the true actions. Moreover, 87% wish to be more informed about the efforts companies are taking to tackle environmental issues. By integrating sustainability into the core of the brand, perhaps through statement pieces or collections (Bain & Company, 2022), brands can align with consumers' values and build trust. In doing so, consumers can generate enduring involvement with fashion brands as they are more in line with their values. When brands lead with authenticity within sustainability, they activate a positive feedback loop of sorts: enduring involvement drives demand, and demand motivates further action.

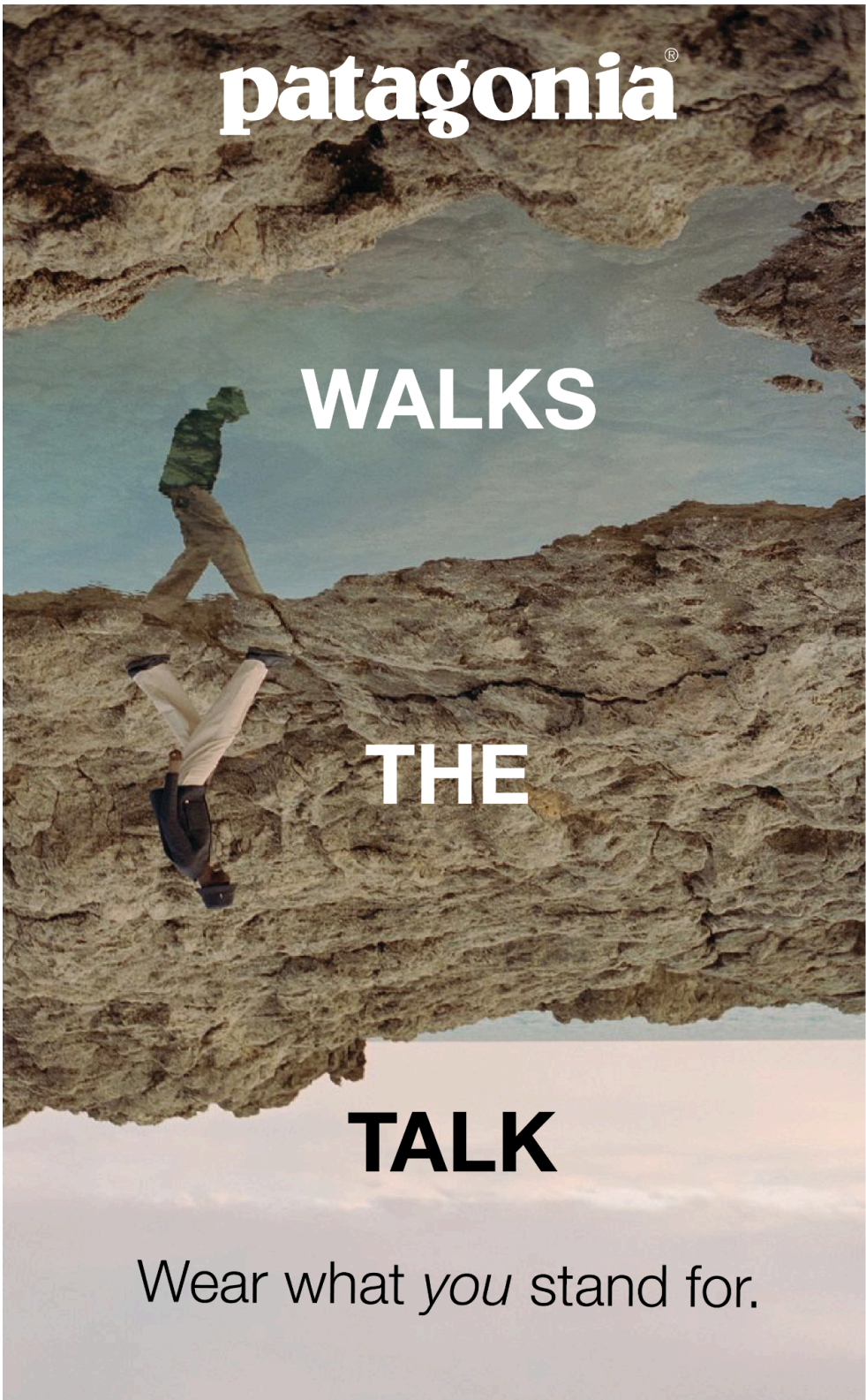
An example of a New Zealand-based company who has successfully addressed the challenge outlined are Allbirds. The brand has centred sustainability at the core of its purpose and identity,

whilst simultaneously highlighting quality, comfort and performance alongside a market-pricing strategy (Allbirds, 2024). Through their branding, Allbirds combine sustainability, quality and durability by highlighting the use of natural materials such as merino wool and sugarcane, whilst being transparent about their carbon footprint, associating quality with sustainability and not just a box to tick.

This essay has argued that the shift of consumer attitudes and increasing involvement are essential in overcoming the issue of low prioritisation of sustainability in fashion, for both brands and consumers. By focusing on the affective component, brands can align sustainability with quality such as product quality and durability and can change consumer attitudes and encourage purchases. Additionally, embedding sustainability into the brand's identity, as seen with Allbirds, brands can benefit from higher consumer involvement, ultimately driving long term sustainable change.

Part B

The primary goal of the advertisement is to tackle the challenge of low prioritization of sustainability within fashion consumers, identified in Part A. Firstly, the vertical slogan “Patagonia walks the talk” signals a commitment to sustainability, which is subconsciously outlined in the background image with the man in nature. This aligns with the findings that New Zealand consumers seek brands who are leaders in sustainability, and are “committed to making society better” (Kantar, 2022). Furthermore, the slogan “Wear what *you* stand for”, with an emphasis on *you*, seeks to tap into the enduring involvement of the consumer, which are based on long term interests and values. Theoretically, this approach echoes the Elaboration Likelihood Model by utilising the peripheral route where emotional appeal is utilised to influence attitudes, without deep complex thinking (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Therefore, this ad seeks to synchronise brand and consumer attitudes towards a sustainable future in fashion.

A full-page advertisement for Patagonia. The background is a photograph of a person walking on a narrow, rocky ledge that extends over a body of water. The person is wearing a green jacket and light-colored pants. The water is a calm, light blue-grey color. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The Patagonia logo is at the top, and the words 'WALKS THE TALK' are in large, bold, white letters across the middle. At the bottom, the slogan 'Wear what you stand for.' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

patagonia[®]

WALKS

THE

TALK

Wear what *you* stand for.

Image taken from Arte Spring Summer 2022 Campaign (Arte, 2022)

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