



**VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**DIGITAL MARKETING PROGRAMME**

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**MASTER THESIS**

<b><i>VIZUALINIŲ ELEMENTŲ EL. NAUJENLAIŠKIUOSE ĮTAKA KLIENTŲ KETINIMAMS PIRKTI INTERNETE</i></b>	<b><i>THE IMPACT OF VISUAL ELEMENTS IN e-NEWSLETTERS ON CUSTOMER ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION</i></b>
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Vilnius, 2024

## SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

DIGITAL MARKETING

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THE IMPACT OF VISUAL ELEMENTS IN e-NEWSLETTERS ON  
CUSTOMER ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION

Supervisor – Dr. Neringa Vilkaite-Vaitone

Master's thesis was prepared in Vilnius, in 2023

Scope of Master's thesis – 74 pages.

Number of tables used in the FMT - 9 pcs.

Number of figures used in the FMT – 2 pcs.

Number of bibliography and references – 92 pcs.

The thesis highlights the importance of using visual content in electronic newsletters in marketing campaigns, especially in the clothing sector. The work reveals the purpose of newsletters, starting with increasing brand awareness, ending with customer retention, and advertising revenue generation.

A literature review identified a research gap regarding the impact of visual elements in e-mail. letters in newsletters, which provided the basis for empirical research. The main objective of the work was to determine how visual elements in newsletters affect consumers' online purchase intentions, focusing on the clothing sector.

To achieve the research objective, a quantitative research method using an experimental design was used. The choice of visual elements (human model, typographic hierarchy and call to action) was based on their frequent use in clothing brand newsletters. The surveys were distributed online after simulating six different experimental design scenarios. Included in the study only in the last 12 months. people who shopped online. The results of the empirical study revealed complex interrelationships, highlighting the impact of typographic hierarchy, human model, and call to action on user perceptions and intentions.

**SANTRAUKA**  
VILNIUS UNIVERSITY VERSLO MOKYKLA  
SKAITMENINĖS RINKODAROS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMA  
HÜSEYİN ŞERİF ŞERAS  
VIZUALINIŲ ELEMENTŲ EL. NAUJENLAIŠKIUOSE ĮTAKA KLIENTŲ  
KETINIMAMS PIRKTI INTERNETE

Supervisor – Dr. Neringa Vilkaite-Vaitone

Darbas parengtas 2023 m., Vilniuje

Darbo apimtis – 74 puslapių.

Lentelių skaičius darbe - 9 vnt.

Paveikslų skaičius darbe - 2 vnt.

Literatūros ir šaltinių skaičius – 92 vnt

Baigiamajame magistro darbe išryškinta vizualinio turinio elektroniniuose naujienlaiškiuose panaudojimo rinkodaros kampanijose svarba, ypač aprangos sektoriuje. Darbe atskleista naujienlaiškių paskirtis, pradedant prekės ženklo žinomumo didinimu ir baigiant klientų išlaikymu bei reklamos pajamų generavimu. Literatūros apžvalga nustatė tyrimų spragą, susijusią su vizualinių elementų poveikiu el. laiškų naujienlaiškiuose, kas suteikė pagrindą empiriniams tyrimams. Pagrindinis darbo tikslas buvo nustatyti, kaip vizualiniai elementai naujienlaiškiuose veikia vartotojų ketinimus pirkti internete, koncentruojantis į aprangos sektorių. Siekiant tyrimo tikslo, buvo pasitelktas kiekybinis tyrimo metodas, panaudojant eksperimentinį dizainą. Vizualinių elementų (žmogaus modelio, tipografinės hierarchijos ir kvietimo veiksmui) pasirinkimas buvo pagrįstas dažnu jų naudojimu drabužių prekių ženklų naujienlaiškiuose. Apklausos internetu platintos sumodeliavus šešis skirtingus eksperimentinio dizaino scenarijus. Į tyrimą įtraukti tik per pastaruosius 12 mėn. internetu apsipirkinėję asmenys.

Empirinio tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė sudėtingas sąsajas, pabrėžiant tipografinės hierarchijos, žmogaus modelio ir kvietimo veiksmui poveikį vartotojų suvokimui ir ketinimams.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BT: Brand Trust

CTA: Call-to-Action (Button)

CTI: Click-through Intention

OPI: Online Purchase Intention

SC: Source Credibility



## INTRODUCTION

Email newsletters, categorized as a type of email marketing (Priyanga, 2023), serve multiple purposes such as building brand awareness, customer retention, and generating advertising revenue (Sathish et al., 2011). Their widespread adoption among marketing campaigns can be associated with their cost-effectiveness (Zhang et al., 2017).

There have been a number of research studies by scholars that investigated the impact of visual elements in advertisement and marketing campaigns (Shaouf et al., 2016; Sundar and Noseworthy, 2014; Wang and Cheng, 2013; Lindgaard et al., 2011), and more specifically visual elements within email marketing and their impact on online purchase intention (Kumar, 2021; Nobile & Cantoni, 2023; Rodriguez & Sangle-Ferriere, 2023), however a significant gap in literature regarding the impact of visual elements within the email newsletters remain, therefore this study aims to examine how visual elements within email newsletters impact customer online purchase intentions, focusing on the e-commerce sector within the clothing industry.

In this study, the selection of visual elements was based on the commonly used ones in email newsletters of clothing brands. The selected elements include human model images, typographic hierarchy, and a call-to-action button with a message. These elements were identified as representative features commonly found in the email marketing strategies of clothing brands, forming a relevant basis for investigating their impact on customer online purchase intentions.

**The main research question of this study aims to answer:**

how do different visual elements presented in the email newsletters impact the source credibility which leads to brand trust and click-through intention, and ultimately shaping online purchase intention?

**The problem of this study** is formulated as a following question: “what impact do visual elements have in email newsletters on customer online purchase intention?”

**The goal of this study** is to determine the impact of visual elements in email newsletters on customer online purchase intention.

**The theoretical objectives of the study** are as follows:

- discover the effective usage of visual elements in email marketing, specifically email newsletters;
- examine the relationships between the selected visual elements;
- explore the effects of certain visual elements on source credibility and ultimately online purchase intention.

**The empirical objectives of the study** are as follows:

- evaluate if the presence or absence of typographic hierarchy influences source credibility;
- assess the potential impact of human models on enhancing source credibility and shaping user perceptions;
- analyze if the presence of a Call-to-Action (CTA) button, in conjunction with different visual elements, influences source credibility and user engagement;
- investigate the complex relationship between source credibility, leading to the development of brand trust and click-through intention, ultimately shaping the impact on online purchase intention.

The findings of this research have the potential to add to the expanding body of information on the use of visual elements in newsletters in terms of marketing, as well as to give practical insights for companies wishing to optimize their newsletter design and boost purchasing behavior. This research could provide valuable insights for businesses looking to customize their newsletter designs and potentially leading to more efficient marketing tactics.

To address the research question, this study implemented a quantitative research approach while using experimental design for data collection. The experimental design method is a suitable research tool for collecting data from a large sample size by creating surveys for six different experiment scenarios to properly examine each visual elements' impact. The surveys were distributed online to a sample of participants who have experienced making online purchases in the last 12 months. This method enabled data collection on participants' perceptions of visual elements in email newsletters and their impact on online purchase intention.

# **1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF VISUAL ELEMENTS IN ONLINE MARKETING AND THEIR IMPACT ON PURCHASE INTENTION**

## **1.1 Exploring The Visual Elements**

Nowadays, when digital technologies surround us, the role of visual elements in consumer behavior has become extremely critical. Leung (2019) discovered that when information is presented visually, people tend to remember 65% of it. In contrast, when the information is in text form, the confinement falls down significantly to only 10% to 20%. This suggests a visible difference in how our brains process and hold onto information based on the presentation mode.

Research done by Shaouf et al. (2016), provides strong support for the hypothesis that visual aesthetics in advertising play a key role in the formation of consumers' attitude and online purchase intention. Multiple authors such as Sundar and Noseworthy (2014) and Wang, Cheng, and Chu (2013) support this idea, and furthermore they suggest that visual appeal has the potential to influence consumer's behavioral intentions, even without the influence of their cognitive judgment such as attitude. The implementation of visual elements in marketing communication has been empirically established as an undeniable aspect, which plays an important role in consumer interest and trust, as research by Lindgaard et al. (2011) suggests.

Email marketing is a type of marketing communication strategy that uses email to provide marketing materials or advertisements to a broad audience. Part of email marketing campaigns can focus on the distribution of periodic newsletters, product updates or sale offers to specific group of subscribers who have willingly decided to receive communications from the companies via email (G, 2023). According to Sathish et al. (2011), the use of email newsletters proves to be crucial for companies in achieving key objectives such as building brand awareness, generating advertising revenue, and retaining customers. Zhang et al. (2017) acknowledges that email marketing is beneficial in regards of profit and is a very commonly used tool by marketers, however lack of literature remains in the marketing area regarding this field. Several studies have examined various visual designs within email marketing and their impact on purchase

intention (Kumar, 2021; Nobile & Cantoni, 2023; Rodriguez & Sangle-Ferriere, 2023). Hartemo & Suomi emphasize in their research (2016) that while past academic research has introduced models for evaluating email newsletter design by authors like Cases & Fournier (2006) and Czernik & Höpken (2008), these studies mainly focused on explaining the characteristics of the email rather than providing a detailed explanation of the models themselves. They also indicate that a more in-depth understanding of these characteristics, research by Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2012) provides more detail.

Existing research has extensively provided results on how visual design influences customer behaviors and intentions across various marketing channels, such as web advertisement, social media marketing, and email marketing. Despite this comprehensive exploration of visual elements in marketing, a clear gap remains in the literature concerning the impact of visuals within the realm of email newsletters specifically. In addressing this void, the present study seeks to contribute by examining the influence of visual elements within email newsletters specifically and how they influence customers' online purchase intentions for advertised products. Although there are studies regarding the effects of visual elements in online marketing such as link placement (Kumar & Salo, 2018), presence of images (Leung, 2019), and usage of emojis (Cavalheiro et al., 2022), a noticeable gap exists in the literature concerning in-depth investigations into the visual elements chosen for this research, which are typographical hierarchy, Call-to-Action (CTA) button accompanied by a message, and the inclusion of a human model.

Previous studies indicate the central role of visual elements in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in advertising. While existing research has explored this phenomenon across various marketing channels, a significant gap exists in understanding the impact of visual elements within email newsletters. This study aims to bring new knowledge about this topic by examining the influence of specific visual elements on customers' online purchase intentions, focusing on typographical hierarchy, Call-to-Action buttons, and the presence of human models.

### **1.1.1 The Impact of Human Model Presence**

Conventional physical retail establishments have been relying on the use of mannequins as an expressive and substantial tool needed for presenting their products, especially in the clothing sector. These figures play a big role in assisting potential

customers in visualizing how the displayed clothing might look on the human form through the simple act of observation (Oh and Petrie, 2012). However, unlike physical stores, online shopping has a distinguishing challenge, depriving customers of the experience of physically interacting with or trying on clothing before committing to a purchase. This challenge is strongly present in the fashion industry, which is constantly and rapidly evolving.

In response to this shifting landscape, Krishna et al. (2016) propose a solution aimed to intensify the efficacy of online advertisements. Their suggestion was to encourage customers to engage in a mental simulation, prompting them to visualize how the clothing would complement their own selves through the strategic integration of visual elements in advertisements. A growing body of research supports the notion that such mental simulation positively influences customers' inclination toward purchasing the showcased product (Elder and Krishna, 2012; Muñoz-Vilches et al., 2020).

Delving deeper into this exploration, Bagatini et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive study examining the impact of distinct product images on consumers' mental simulation and eventually purchase intentions. The study incorporated various image variations, placing particular emphasis on human models presented in two conditions: one with the absence of the face and another with the face visible. Their findings suggest that portraying a human model, irrespective of facial visibility, in the showcased clothing triggers a greater mental simulation, thereby positively affecting customer purchase intentions. This finding stands in bigger contrast to the less effective visualizations achieved through mannequins or standalone product presentations, undermining the natural attractiveness of human imagery (Di et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014).

A recurring theme across multiple studies emphasizes the significance of engaging in mental simulation, especially when individuals visualize themselves within a given context. This cognitive process not only stimulates a favorable attitude toward the presented information but also serves to strengthen the credibility of the content when a human model is incorporated into advertising. People are inherently more likely to trust and be influenced by content that aligns with their self-concept and aspirations. This complex interplay among mental simulation, source credibility, and positive attitude formation highlights the hidden potential in the strategic utilization of human models within advertising contexts (Ha et al., 2019; Park and Yoo, 2020).

Among previous studies, the consistent theme of mental simulation stresses the importance of its role in promoting positive attitudes and strengthening content credibility, revealing undeveloped potential in strategically incorporating human models in advertising contexts. While the impact of mental simulation and the presence of human faces and bodies has been explored by scholars in both traditional and digital marketing fields, there is a noticeable gap in the existing literature when it comes to studying the influence of human model presence specifically in email marketing within the clothing sector. This gap highlights the need for further research to understand how the inclusion of human models in email marketing campaigns and email newsletters for clothing brands may affect consumer perceptions and engagement.

Even though images have great power to grab the attention of the observer, it is not sufficient to convey a specific message in marketing communication. The addition of textual content, alongside the image as a complimentary strategy, increases the context and facilitates the audience to understand the message more in-depth as it provides essential details and information that might not be obvious in images (Hermanto, 2022). This leads us to the next visual element: Typographical Hierarchy.

### **1.1.2 The Role of Typographical Hierarchy**

Typography is commonly defined as the visual manifestation of a written language. This comprises various aspects such as font styles, sizes, spacing, and overall layout, all of which contribute to the visual appeal and readability of written text. When applied effectively in advertising, typography serves as a crucial visual element with the capacity to target and engage specific audiences. Its strategic use can facilitate a clearer understanding of the promoted product or service. The selection of appropriate sizes, font styles, and layouts contribute to the overall visual attractiveness and increase the message's communicative power. At core, typography embodies a valuable tool for distributing information and influencing consumer perception, making it a necessary element in visual communication and advertising. (Rawat & Singh, 2021). Moys (2014) supports the idea that typography holds influence and argues that adjusting typographic layout enables the shaping of a favorable judgment toward the presented material.

In their 2023 study, Kulczynski and Hook discovered that using vintage typography in marketing enhances consumers' perceptions of a product's safety as well as reliability, durability, simplicity, and ease of use to a degree. This suggests that

typography can influence how consumers view these essential product attributes, providing valuable insights for marketers aiming to create an affirmative impression. Another research conducted by Huang et al. (2018) revealed interesting findings about the impact of font choice in online product comments. Their study showed that the used font can influence the perceived credibility and overall influence of the comments, subsequently affecting consumers' purchase intentions. This phenomenon is attributed to the processing fluency induced by fonts, which acts as a cue for consumers, signaling the credibility of the reviewers.

In the study by Antypas and Wangberg (2014), the authors argue that the effective use of design cues, such as text font, text size, and template, plays a crucial role in establishing credibility (as cited in Harris & Silence 2009; Lehto & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2011). The findings of Hui's (2017) study specify that there is a positive association between consumers' perception of information source credibility and their expression of purchase intention. To put it simply, when individuals consider the information source to be more trustworthy or credible, there is a tendency for them to show a higher purchase intention.

Today, online users can easily navigate information hierarchies, particularly when the textual content is both visually appealing and functionally integrated into digital platforms. This level of intellectual, emotional, and higher-order thinking skills has empowered individuals to interact with digital content seamlessly (Poon, 2021). Furthermore, Poon (2021) stresses that it is important to focus on making the typography easy to read, so the consumers can have a better understanding of the message. The placement of the text on the page is also a very important aspect. If it is not comfortable for readers to consume the message, it can become more challenging for them to comprehend and engage with the content.

Several scholars have identified diverse impacts associated with typographical hierarchy in their respective studies. These include its impact on the reader's emotional state (Tsonos & Kouroupetroglou, 2011), stimulating a positive reader attitude (Turkkan, 2021), and direct positive relationship with both user satisfaction and user trust. The study conducted by Faisal et al. (2017) on web design attributes has significantly contributed valuable insights to the existing literature. Their research uncovers the role of typography in enhancing the website's attractiveness, supportiveness, and most importantly trustworthiness. Some scholars, like Ayeh (2015) and Tseng & Fogg (1999), argue that trustworthiness and expertise are the main components of source credibility.

While numerous studies have explored the impact of Typographical Hierarchy in marketing across various channels, there is a noticeable lack of literature on how Typographical Hierarchy influences credibility and purchase intention within email marketing and e-newsletters.

### **1.1.3 Crafting a Message Through Call-To-Action Button**

Call-to-action refers to buttons or links strategically placed on a company's marketing platform with the purpose of generating leads. They encourage visitors to take specific actions such as downloading an eBook, participating in an online seminar, or making a purchase (Halligan & Shah, 2014 as cited in Meslem & Abbaci, 2023). Incorporating call-to-action buttons is a fundamental practice for converting website visitors into leads or customers. Depending on the marketing goals, these buttons play a crucial role in guiding visitors from mere browsing to becoming potential leads or even actual customers. Therefore, careful design of these buttons is essential to ensure successful conversion, aligning with the ultimate goal of the inbound marketing strategy. Without this conversion, the efforts invested in the marketing strategy may not yield the desired outcomes. Call-to-action buttons typically take the form of an encircled icon and are primarily located at the bottom right of the screen, floating above the user interface. Functionally, floating action buttons offer swift access to significant or frequently used actions within an application. This usually includes positive interactions, such as creating, sharing, exploring, and similar activities (Meslem & Abbaci, 2023).

In a technical sense, a call to action is broken down into several components: gaining attention, facilitating user action, and guiding the user to take the appropriate action, all from the user's perspective. Call-to-action elements can manifest in various forms and designs. They may appear as buttons directing the user to another page, or as compact input forms to directly collect user data within the CTA component. Common marketing examples of CTAs include elements prompting sign-ups, subscriptions, and the option to learn more about a specific product or service (Chen & Yeh, 2020).

Given that call-to-action buttons are deemed the optimal approach, the design of such buttons can vary based on the organization and the specific product or service. Notably, clarity emerges as an important factor in this design process. Within a brief 4-5 second span, subscribers are anticipated to comprehend the desired action, whether it



pertains to making a purchase, acquiring further information, or engaging in a sign-in procedure (Budac, C., 2016).

The design of a call-to-action button plays a crucial role in engaging and influencing consumer behavior. Several studies provide valuable insights into the impact of call-to-action buttons on user engagement and response. Zhao et al. (2023) emphasize the positive effects of incorporating risk disclosure and call to action in message design to enhance trust in marketing (Zhao et al., 2023; Ashton et al., 2021) found that users engaged with the call-to-action button, indicating its significance in promoting interaction with marketing content.

Extensive research conducted by Mejttoft et al., (2021) concluded that users exhibit positive attitudes towards design features that prioritize intuitiveness and high explainability/honesty, as these factors significantly influence users' willingness to engage with a call-to-action buttons. Notably, the study underscores the importance of transparent design in achieving a high click-through rate. When users are clearly informed about what to expect, there is an increased level of trust in the design, prompting the recommendation to position user engagement upfront. This approach enhances transparency by immediately highlighting to users what information is required to complete the desired action, ultimately contributing to a more effective and trustworthy call-to-action design.

In summary, call-to-action (CTA) buttons are integral in guiding users toward specific actions on marketing platforms, driving lead generation and conversion. The careful design of these buttons, emphasizing clarity, is crucial for successful engagement within a brief period. Studies highlight the positive impact of CTA buttons on user engagement and response, with insights into the importance of design features such as risk disclosure and intuitiveness. However, the literature gap concerning the context of email marketing call-to-action buttons remains.

## **1.2 Source Credibility**

In the context of discussions on visual elements and their effects, the significance of source credibility in influencing consumers' purchase intentions is undeniable. Source credibility embodies to what extent consumers accept and use information about a product. It plays an important role in shaping consumer's intentions to make a purchase. Once consumers consider a source as reliable and trustworthy, there is a higher

possibility that they will view the information positively, which can lead to a stronger intention to make a purchase. This perspective is supported by previously created studies by researchers such as Broeck et al. (2019), Yoo & Gretzel (2008, 2011), Yoo et al. (2015), Hui (2017), and Almosawi (2014). These studies collectively highlight the consistent association between source credibility and its impact on consumers' willingness to engage in purchasing behavior. Gained knowledge based on these studies suggests the idea that building and maintaining a credible image for information sources is crucial in influencing consumer decision-making processes related to product purchases (as cited in Liew & Tan, 2021).

Research conducted by Ghane et al. (2014) supports the idea that the credibility of a message or source is influenced by the credibility of the organization. Furthermore, Nowak & McGloin (2014) discovered that the perceived credibility of product images online, particularly those with human or humanlike characteristics, not only influences the overall credibility of the information source but also directly impacts the purchase intention. This emphasizes the significance of visual elements, indicating that humanlike visual characteristics can enhance the perceived trustworthiness of a source, thereby impacting consumer intentions to make a purchase.

Previous studies have explored the relationship between source credibility and purchase intention across various channels. However, it is important to note that there are studies in academic literature that do not identify a significant relationship between source credibility and purchase intention. Rahmi et al. (2017) investigated YouTube Vloggers and concluded that consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness and expertise did not influence purchasing intentions. Similarly, in Sun & Meng's (2022) research, the U.S. participants found no significant main effect of source credibility on purchase intention for food products, with risk attitude playing a more influential role.

In contrast, Rathnayake & Lakshika (2023) identified a positive impact of social media influencers' credibility on purchase intention, specifically in the context of Instagram. Martín-Consuegra et al. (2018) suggest that credible brands positively influence consumer purchase intention by providing clear and accessible product information through their social media activity. Research conducted by Jin & Phua (2014) supports the previous study; they revealed that celebrity endorsers with a high number of followers on Twitter were perceived as credible and trustworthy. Additionally, the use of positive tweets by these celebrities was associated with an increase in consumers' purchase intention. The findings of Choshaly & Mirabolghasemi (2020) in

their study on the impact of source credibility (as a factor representing viral marketing strategy) on the purchase intention of eco-labeled products align with prior research conducted by (Atika et al., 2018; Kim and Yu, 2015; Tsang et al., 2004; Haghirian et al., 2005). These diverse findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between source credibility and consumer behavior, indicating that the influence may vary across different platforms and contexts.

In this paper, an important aspect is the relationship between click-through intention, a variable within the research model, and source credibility. Based on Alsheikh et al. (2021), the perceived credibility of the electronic passing information from person to person plays a significant role; if the source is deemed trustworthy and reliable, it intensifies its influence on the intention to visit. These findings line up with preexisting research in the literature written by (Doosti et al., 2016; Nechoud, Ghidouche & Seraphin, 2021; Revilla, Santana & Parra, 2016; Shome, 2020; Shu et al., 2017; Teng et al., 2017).

This paper also explores the connection between source credibility and brand trust. According to Wu & Wang (2011), there is a direct and positive relationship between the credibility of the message source and various aspects of consumer perception, including brand trust, affection, purchase intention, brand attitude, and support. Similarly, research by Dwivedi et al. (2015) suggests that endorsing the credibility of social media influencers and the message they promote can create positive associations with a brand. This is achieved by promoting the belief in consumers that the brand will perform well and by helping them reduce psychological risks associated with brand trust (as cited in Leite & Baptista, 2022).

In summary, source credibility is mostly considered to be crucial in influencing consumer behavior, especially purchase intention. The perceived trustworthiness and reliability of information sources play a central role in shaping positive consumer perceptions. However, the complexity of this relationship is apparent across diverse platforms and contexts, with some studies showing a direct positive association while others reveal nuanced findings. The paper also highlights the relevance of source credibility in click-through intentions and brand trust, underscoring its multifaceted impact on consumer decision-making. Overall, maintaining a credible image for information sources is essential, but the varied outcomes emphasize the need for consideration of contextual factors in understanding the dynamics between source credibility and consumer behavior. Numerous studies have investigated the influence of

source credibility across various channels, yet a notable gap exists in the literature concerning its impact on email marketing, specifically in the context of email newsletters.

### **1.3 Bridging Visuals and Customer Purchase Intention**

#### **1.3.1 Click-Through Intention**

The click-through intention in email marketing is a crucial aspect of digital marketing strategies. Several studies have explored the determinants of consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards various forms of digital advertising, including email marketing, and their impact on purchase intentions (Keyzer et al., 2015). found that perceived personalization of advertisements on social network sites positively influences click intention, especially for individuals with a more positive attitude towards the platform (Keyzer et al., 2015). Similarly, Shi (2018) highlighted the significant impact of consumer innovativeness on click intention, mediated by attitudes towards social network advertising (Shi, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of consumer attitudes and perceptions in shaping click-through intentions in digital advertising.

Understanding click-through intention is pivotal in the context of this study, where visual communication design is recognized as a key factor in enhancing consumer interest and trust (Lindgaard et al., 2011). People leverage contextual cues to direct their attention to crucial regions when processing visual scenes, indicating the significance of visual elements in information processing (Oliva et al., 2003). Furthermore, research on consumers' online shopping behaviors reveals that leveraging visual attention mechanisms in online visual communication design can motivate consumers to generate click behaviors and make purchases (Mo et al., 2021).

The click-through intention in the context of email newsletters is influenced by various factors. Email characteristics and activities significantly shape consumer responses, impacting subscription rates and engagement with emails (Cases et al., 2010; Zviran, Te'eni, and Gross 2006). However, a holistic understanding requires consideration of visual heuristics, design considerations, and psychological aspects of human attention. These elements play a crucial role in various consumer activities related to email newsletters, such as channel choice decisions, customer lifetime value, and customer relationship management (Martin et al. 2003; Kumar et al. 2008; Lewis,

Whitler, and Hoegg 2009, all cited in Kumar & Salo, 2016). Similarly, Tian et al. (2021) conducted empirical studies to examine the influence of online picture contents on consumers' clicking intention when shopping for agricultural products online, providing insights into the impact of visual content on click intention.

To enhance the effectiveness of digital content, advertisers must consider the psychological and visual heuristic aspects of human attention. Email marketing campaigns often suffer from low click-through rates, emphasizing the impermanence of recipients' decisions to click on a link (Tourangeau et al. 2004, as cited in Kuisma et al., 2010). Research by Kumar and Salo (2016) reveals that the location and region of visual signs in a digital medium significantly influences viewers' interaction. Links placed in the left region, particularly the top-left region, are more likely to drive click-through rates, influenced by information processing concepts from cognitive psychology and visual heuristics.

Moreover, customer engagement is crucial in digital content design, with positive attitudes significantly influencing click behavior (Gauzente, 2010). Higher engagement rates positively correlate with click-through rates, as engagement serves as a response to ads, fostering a more positive attitude that, in turn, drives the intention to click on the respective ad (Calder et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2016). Notably, Aiolfi et al. (2021) emphasize the direct relationship between click intention and the likelihood of purchasing a product, underlining the importance of understanding and fostering click-through intention in driving desired consumer actions.

In summary, click-through intention in email marketing is a vital aspect of digital strategies, influenced by factors like personalization, consumer attitudes, and visual design. The study highlights the significance of visual elements, such as images, and the use of visual attention mechanisms to motivate clicks and drive purchases. Understanding the impermanence of recipients' decisions and optimizing email characteristics, visual heuristics, and psychological aspects collectively impact click-through intention. Customer engagement, shaped by positive attitudes, emerges as a key factor, positively correlating with higher click-through rates. The direct link between click intention and the likelihood of purchasing emphasizes the importance of fostering click-through intention for achieving desired consumer actions, offering valuable insights for marketers in optimizing their digital content and email campaigns.

### 1.3.2 Brand Trust

In the context of this study, trust has been defined with precision, drawing upon various perspectives. Particularly relevant is the definition by Gabarino and Johnson (1999, as cited in Kunz and Kantsperger, 2010), characterizing trust as consumers' confidence in the quality and trustworthiness of the product or service provided by a business. More specifically, brand trust, which is a crucial element in consumer-brand interactions, can be conceptualized as a cognitive state during brand engagement. Delgado et al. (2003) describe it as the belief that the brand will consistently exhibit reliability and responsibility in satisfying the consumer. Another insightful definition, provided by Chadhuri (2001, as cited in Munuera-Alemán et al., 2003), portrays brand trust as the consumer's willingness to rely on the brand. These definitions place the preliminary work for a comprehensive examination of trust and brand trust in the study, considering both the product/service level and the broader brand-consumer relationship.

The concept of brand trust is tied to brand credibility. Perceiving a brand as credible not only improves the position of the perceived quality of the product but also reduces the perceived risk associated with it (Baek and King, 2011). In substance, as the perceived credibility of the brand increases, the level of perceived risk decreases, which creates an amplified level of trust. This, in turn, results in a decline in the sense of uncertainty in the commercial relationship between the consumer and the brand. (Frasquet et al, 2017, as cited in Alguacil et al., 2021).

Various trust theories, such as cue utilization, propose that trust plays a mediating role in interactions. Despite considerable research attention on trust in online shopping, there is a significant lack of research focusing on examination of the process perspective and its causal relationships, as highlighted by Chuang and Fan (2011, as cited in Sikandar, 2021). Consequently, the mediating function of trust has been insufficiently explored. Additionally, concerning purchase intention and its precursors, online suppliers and e-retailers must recognize that customers' primary concern during purchases is not the products or services per se, but the perceived risk. This perceived risk, in turn, may function as a moderator, potentially reducing purchase intention (Salisbury et al., 2001, as cited in Sikandar, 2021).

Exploring the role of product type and brand trustworthiness online expresses the impact of the relevance of different experiential dimensions in purchase decisions. Search products, for instance, secure more benefits from informative experiences and

less from social experiences. On the other hand, highly trustworthy brands benefit more from informative experiences, while less trustworthy brands gain more from entertaining experiences. In particular, brand trustworthiness may magnify consumers' willingness to process more information warrants further investigation, especially in research focused on a decline in brand value when alternative sources of information become readily available to consumers (Simonson and Rosen, 2014, as cited in Bleier et al., 2018).

The mediating role of trust is significant in the relationship between perceived service quality, website quality reputation, and online purchase intention. This research contributes to the understanding of web-store decision-makers by highlighting the substantial influence of trust and its mediating impact on online shopping. It demonstrates that an increase in trust can mitigate the intensity of the impact of perceived risk on online purchase intention (Sikandar et al., 2021).

Santo and Marques (2022) studied research that focused on the impact of the customer's motivation, access to information, and trust on the online purchase intention. Findings indicate that the tendency to persist in online shopping is, in part, clarified by online information accessibility, hedonic motivations, and trust in e-commerce platforms. Particularly, online information plays an important role in stimulating trust, while the perception of online prices does not directly impact loyalty but positively influences hedonic motivations. These findings declare the connection between online trust and purchase intention, aligning with the study by He et al. (2012, as cited in Santo and Marques, 2022). Furthermore, the work of Liu et al. (2018, as cited in Santo and Marques, 2022) endorses that trust exerts a positive influence on the relationship with the website, consequently influencing purchase intention.

In conclusion, brand trust is intricately connected to perceived brand credibility, influencing product perceptions, and reducing associated risks. It plays a vital role in mediating commercial relations, particularly in online contexts. Trust significantly shapes the relationship between perceived service website quality reputation and online purchase intention, acting as a buffer against perceived risks. Despite declarations of trust's positive impact on website relationships and purchase intention, the specific influence of brand trust on online purchase intention remains insufficiently explored in the realm of email marketing, especially within email newsletters.

## 1.4 Online Purchase Intention in Digital Landscape

Online purchase intention is not a new concept in the marketing field. It refers to an individual's inclination and willingness to actively participate in digital transactions, involving the acquisition of goods or services through online platforms. This framework not only captures a potential buyer's preparedness for online commerce but also includes their cognitive and emotional tendencies related to online purchasing activities. Pavlou (2003) arranged the basis for a fundamental exploration of this indispensable aspect of consumer behavior in the digital age.

The online customer purchase behavior binds the decision-making process through which customers go through while they choose the products or services for online purchase. This complex journey is influenced by the extensive impact of the Internet and unfolds in three key phases: pre-purchase, actual purchase, and post-purchase. Each phase is based on unique factors and considerations, as mentioned by Sheth and Mittal (2004). In this context, a customer's intention to make an online purchase becomes an important factor, which becomes a key aspect of their commitment to engage in online shopping. As highlighted by Salisbury et al. (2001), this intention plays a main role in influencing and directing consumer behavior in the online environment, stressing its importance in the broader environment of digital commerce (Salisbury et al., 2001).

According to more recent studies, online purchase intention reflects an individual's readiness to participate in e-commerce, encompassing the entire customer journey from initial consideration to post-purchase evaluation. Online purchase intention underscores the pivotal role of the Internet in shaping consumer behavior, emphasizing the importance of a customer's determination to engage in online shopping activities (Feng & Wei, 2023).

The extensive studies created by Ganguly and Dash provide strong empirical evidence supporting the central role of trust as a mediator in the connection between design elements and purchase intention. These studies, marked by a careful examination of the differences in information design and communication strategies, discovered how substantial impact these factors have on shaping purchase intention within the complex landscape of marketing dynamics (Ganguly & Dash, 2009). This exploration emphasizes the importance of cultivating trust as an anchor, demonstrating that the thoughtful



coordination of design elements and communication strategies can influence consumer's inclination to make online purchases.

The perception of products or services within a brand is influenced by the brand's image, including symbols and names associated with it. Brand image is frequently interchangeable with the notion of brand quality. Huang, Schrank, and Dubinsky (2004, as cited in Wani et al., 2016) discovered that brand names or identity (image) play a crucial role in online purchase decisions, and their absence can result in perceived risks in the customer's mindset.

There is typically a positive association between online purchase intention and actual online purchase behavior (Lim et al., 2016, as cited in Aziz & Wahid, 2018). This suggests that if the individual's intention is stronger to make an online purchase, the more likely they are to engage in the actual online purchase behavior. Consequently, the focus has been on examining the factors influencing consumer intention to buy online, recognizing it as a determining factor for actual behavior.

The study created by Kumar (2021) focused on the investigation of the link between consumers' email responses and their subsequent product purchases, focusing on open, click, and reopen dimensions. Research reveals that email clicks have the strongest impact on purchases, followed by reopening and opening. The study identifies significant effects of email design characteristics on both email responses and purchases, offering insights for optimizing email marketing return on investment. Furthermore, Reimers et al. (2016) explored permission email marketing's (PEM) impact on consumers' attitudes toward online shopping. Their research highlights the importance of providing relevant information in permission email marketing to distinguish it from spam. They found that the distinction weakens without relevance, regardless of consent. The study supports their hypothesis that an overall positive attitude toward online shopping corresponds with increased intentions to engage in online purchase activities. Moreover, it is essential to understand the preferences and behaviors of recipients in email newsletters. Email newsletters became strongly popular as a delivery system for news and marketing content (Seely & Spillman, 2021). However, the effectiveness of email newsletters, particularly in terms of personalization and engagement, remains an area with limited research (Garbani-Nerini et al., 2022). Qualitative feedback on newsletter emails has been mixed, with some recipients perceiving them as spam that litter their inboxes, while others appreciate them for timely updates (Chua et al., 2022).

This highlights the importance of understanding consumer perceptions and reactions to email newsletters to effectively influence their purchase intentions.

In short, online purchase intention represents a critical aspect of consumer behavior in the digital landscape, encompassing a customer's readiness and commitment to engage in online shopping activities. Pioneering works by Pavlou (2003) and subsequent studies by Salisbury et al. (2001) underscore the central role of this intention in shaping consumer behavior throughout the online purchasing journey. Trust emerges as a key mediator in the relationship between design elements, communication strategies, and purchase intention, as demonstrated by the comprehensive investigations conducted by Ganguly and Dash (2009).

Additionally, the perception of brand image and the role of brand identity play a crucial role in influencing online purchase decisions. The positive correlation between online purchase intention and actual behavior emphasizes the predictive nature of intention in determining subsequent actions. However, in the literature concerning email newsletters, there is still a notable gap in research, particularly regarding the impact of online purchase intention.

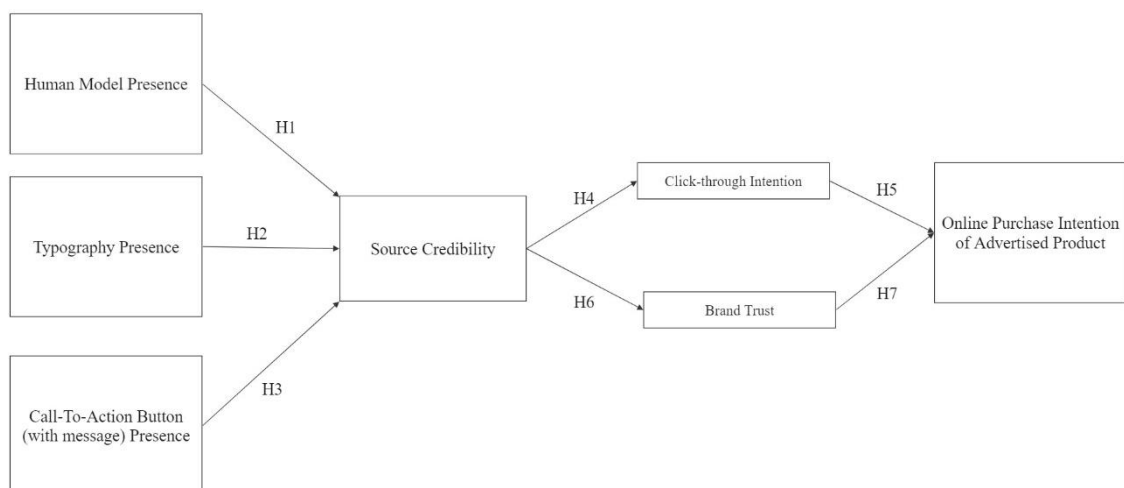
## 2. DESIGNING THE EXPERIMENT: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 The Purpose of the Research and Proposed Research Model

The existing body of literature has found that some visual elements play a role in influencing consumers' purchase intention. Numerous studies have explored the connection between visual elements and the credibility of information sources. This, in turn, has been investigated in relation to both brand trust and the click-through intention to online content. Additionally, researchers have studied the connection between brand trust, click-through intention, and the outcome of online purchase intention. Upon reviewing these studies, it becomes evident that a positive relationship exists among the variables under consideration. In other words, the literature suggests that visual elements tend to positively impact source credibility, which, in turn, contributes positively to brand trust and click-through intention. Consequently, this positive trajectory extends to online purchase intention.

**Figure 1**

#### *Research Model*



*Source:* compiled by the author

The research aims to investigate how visual elements in email newsletters influence source credibility and, subsequently, impact customer online purchase intention. This process is expected to operate through the mediating factors of brand trust and click-through intention.

## **2.2 The Research Methodology**

### **2.2.1 Data Collection Method**

The study employed an experimental design, manipulating three variables: Human Model, Typographical Hierarchy, and CTA button with a message. Six different e-newsletter designs were created, and their distribution was randomized. This approach allows for a systematic investigation into the impact of these design elements on user responses, with the randomized distribution minimizing potential biases. Specifically, the manipulation focused on the presence or absence of a human model wearing the promoted clothing, hierarchy and design in typography, and the presence or absence of Call-To-Action (CTA) buttons.

For human model manipulation, two conditions were created: Presence, where an image of a human wearing the clothing was featured, and Absence, where only the image of the clothing without a human model was presented. This aimed to explore the influence of human presence on the perception of the product. Typographical Hierarchy was another variable, with two conditions: Presence, involving different font sizes, boldness, and headings throughout the e-newsletter, and Absence, characterized by uniform font size and boldness without any specific headings. This manipulation attempted to understand the impact of Typographical Hierarchy variation on user attention and comprehension. The third element manipulated was the CTA button with its accompanying message. In the Presence condition, there were distinct CTA buttons for adding the product to the cart and claiming discounts with specific messages like "Add to Cart" and "Claim Now!" respectively. In contrast, the Absence condition featured buttons displaying only product prices, without any specific call to action or discount-related message. This manipulation aimed to investigate how different CTA button presentations influenced users' responsiveness. By systematically altering these elements, the study tried to uncover insights into how the presence or absence of a human

model, typographical hierarchy variations, and distinct CTA buttons might impact users' perceptions and behaviors in response to the e-newsletter content.

Participants were recruited from the target audience of the individuals who had purchased clothing online in the past 12 months who reside in Lithuania, ensuring relevance to the study context. This sampling approach was applied to select individuals who were likely to engage with e-newsletters and potentially make online purchases related to clothing.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions, where they were exposed to a specific e-newsletter image with a manipulated visual element. Each participant completed the survey with an assigned e-newsletter, providing responses based on their perceptions and intentions. To increase the internal validity of the study, there were added control variables such as demographic information (e.g., age, gender, and online shopping habits).

**Table 1**

*Experimental Research Design*

<b>Experimental Design</b>	<b>Human Model</b>	<b>Typographical Hierarchy</b>	<b>CTA button with message</b>
<b>Design 1</b>	Absence	Presence	Presence
<b>Design 2</b>	Presence	Absence	Presence
<b>Design 3</b>	Presence	Presence	Absence
<b>Design 4</b>	Absence	Presence	Absence
<b>Design 5</b>	Presence	Absence	Absence
<b>Design 6</b>	Absence	Absence	Presence

*Source:* compiled by the author

The study used a convenience sampling approach, exploiting the accessibility of participants for recruitment. Social media users located in Lithuania were engaged through platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and email. This method was chosen due to its practicality and efficiency in reaching a diverse pool of potential

respondents within the specified demographic. Additionally, the study employed online sampling techniques by administering surveys through the Qualtrics platform. This approach made the collection of responses from individuals residing in Lithuania easier, which aligned with the study's geographical scope. It is important to acknowledge the essential limitations associated with convenience sampling, especially the potential for sample bias. Nevertheless, given the exploratory nature of the research and resource constraints, convenience sampling was chosen as a suitable method in regard to obtaining valid responses.

### **2.2.2 Choice of Apparel Case: H&M**

For the purposes of this survey and as the exemplary brand in the email newsletter examples, H&M was specifically chosen to represent the fast-fashion industry. The H&M Group, a prominent global fashion entity, holds a significant position within the international fashion landscape, with Europe emerging as its primary market (Statista). Particularly, H&M's marketing initiatives have successfully resonated with a broad and diverse demographic (H&M). Within its brand portfolio, H&M stands out as the flagship, emphasizing fast-fashion apparel (Vedeikytė & Lechmanová, 2019). H&M has been present in Lithuania since 2013 and currently, it belongs among the leaders of the retail clothing industry (H&M).

Based on the following authors (Anguelov, 2016; Becker-Leifhold and Heuer, 2018; Niinimäki et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021, as cited in Herold & Prokop, 2023) fast fashion, which can be enlightened by its ability to offer affordability, unconventionality, and trend-driven products to consumers, relies on cost-effective production methods. These methods result in insufficient quality of products and due to this reason, they are worn shortly. Overall, consumers are attracted by the popularity of fast fashion retailing, which results in increased purchasing behaviors (Lang, 2018; Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2011). Given H&M's widespread recognition in Lithuania and its appeal to a diverse target audience, it was selected as the subject for the email newsletter example in the survey.

### 2.3 Hypotheses and Research Questions

Previous research has consistently indicated a positive correlation between individuals engaged in mental simulation and their favorable attitudes toward exposed information. In a more specific context, recent findings by Bagatini et al. (2022) emphasize that the inclusion of a human model image in content increases mental simulation compared to scenarios where a human model is absent. This increased mental simulation, as per studies by Ha et al. (2019) and Park and Yoo (2020), contributes significantly to the credibility of the information source. This is explained by individuals' inclination to trust and be influenced by content that aligns with their self-concept and aspirations. Therefore, based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** The presence of a human model in product representation positively influences source credibility.

In line with previous studies into the impact of a human model, several research studies have also delved into the role of typography in influencing source credibility. A study by Kulczynski and Hook in 2023 found that incorporating vintage typography in marketing enhances consumers' perceptions of a product's safety, reliability, durability, simplicity, and ease of use, ultimately affecting purchase intention. Similarly, Huang et al. (2018) discovered that font choice in online product comments significantly influences perceived credibility, the overall impact of comments, and subsequently, consumers' purchase intentions. This effect is attributed to the processing fluency induced by fonts, serving as a cue for consumers and signaling the credibility of reviewers. Antypas and Wangberg (2014) emphasized the strategic use of design cues, including text font, text size, and template, in establishing credibility. Furthermore, Faisal et al.'s (2017) research on web design attributes has provided valuable insights, particularly highlighting the role of typography in enhancing website attractiveness, supportiveness, and, crucially, trustworthiness. Based on these collective findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** The presence of Typographical Hierarchy in email newsletters positively influences source credibility.

Building on the exploration of visual elements, the influence of the Call-to-Action (CTA) button accompanied by a specific message has been a subject of prior

investigation. Zhao et al. (2023) focused their study on examining the effects of call-to-action and risk disclosure in advertisements for dietary supplements among young adults. Their research revealed that the inclusion of a call to action in probiotic supplement ads enhanced the perceived believability of the message. Furthermore, it contributed to increased trust in the brand, fostered a positive attitude, and raised the likelihood of individuals seeking advice from a healthcare professional and expressing an intention to make a purchase. Even though there is a gap in the literature regarding the impact of CTA buttons on source credibility, these compelling findings lay the foundation for the formulation of the subsequent hypothesis based on the observed impact of call-to-action buttons accompanied by a message:

**H3:** The presence of a CTA button with a message positively influences source credibility.

Building upon existing research, this study proposes the hypothesis that source credibility significantly and positively influences brand trust. The theoretical foundation for this hypothesis is drawn from Wu & Wang (2011), who establish a direct and positive relationship between the credibility of the message source and crucial aspects of consumer perception, including brand trust. According to their findings, a credible source not only fosters brand trust but also influences consumer attitudes, affections, purchase intentions, and overall brand support. Additionally, insights from Dwivedi et al. (2015) contribute to this hypothesis, suggesting that the endorsement of social media influencers, coupled with the credibility of their messages, fosters positive associations with a brand. This endorsement mechanism is seen as instrumental in cultivating the belief among consumers that the brand will perform satisfactorily, thereby assisting in mitigating psychological risks associated with brand trust (Leite & Baptista, 2022). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

**H4:** Source credibility positively influences brand trust.

This next hypothesis is built on insights provided by Zboja and Voorhees (2006), who emphasized the vital roles of brand satisfaction and trust in shaping retailer repurchase intentions. Moreover, their findings indicated that this influence is mediated through the dimensions of retailer satisfaction and trust. Additionally, in association with the work of Ariff et al. (2014), we acknowledge the significance of perceived risk in the online shopping realm. Their research highlighted the direct impact of perceived risk on



both attitude and the intention to purchase. In light of these studies, it is hypothesized that brand trust will positively contribute to the online purchase intention of the advertised product. Building on the existing literature, the current study aims to investigate the relationship between brand trust and online purchase intention in the context of advertised products. Specifically, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5:** Brand trust positively influences the online purchase intention of an advertised product.

The work of Bleier and Eisenbeiß (2015) is the inspiration behind the next hypothesis. Their research revealed a connection between consumer responses to personalized online advertising and click-through intentions, which underlined the central role of trust in relation to the effectiveness of personalized online advertising. By examining source credibility as a contributing factor, this study aims to further clarify the mechanisms influencing users' intentions to click through online advertisements, thereby contributing valuable insights to digital marketing and consumer behavior, thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H6:** Source credibility positively influences click-through intention.

The final hypothesis assumes that click-through intention plays a critical role in positively influencing the online purchase intention of an advertised product. Indrawan et al. (2022), established a positive correlation between attitude towards online advertisements and purchase intention, as well as a significant relationship between the frequency of clicking on online ads and purchase intention. From the study's results, it becomes evident that consumer attitudes and clicking behavior exert a make a considerable impact on their purchase intentions. Therefore, building upon this base, the present study looks to further explore the hypothesis that the intention to click through an online ad serves as a key determinant in shaping consumers' intentions to make online purchases of the advertised products, therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H7:** Click-through intention positively influences the online purchase intention of an advertised product.

## 2.4 The Structure of the Questionnaire and Scales

**Construct 1:** The purpose of this section is specifically designed to assess online purchase intention. To effectively measure this crucial aspect, the study adopts the scale developed by Nikbin et al. (2022). This scale, crafted by the mentioned researchers, is carefully chosen for its relevance and appropriateness in capturing the nuances of individuals' intentions to make online purchases.

**Construct 2:** In this section of the study, the primary objective is to evaluate brand trust. To achieve this, the study employs a scale sourced from Delgado-Ballester's (2004) work, comprising eight questions. This established scale is chosen for its ability to effectively capture the multifaceted nature of brand trust, providing a structured and reliable means of measurement.

**Construct 3:** In this study, to measure click-through intention a scale developed by Zhang and Mao (2016) was used. This scale consists of three questions designed to understand users' thoughts and behaviors related to clicking through online content.

**Construct 4:** In this study, the measurement item for source credibility from a previous study by Ohanian (1990) was used. It was adapted to fit the specific context of the current research. The questions used in the survey include assessing if the brand appears competent, can fulfill promises, delivers as promised, presents believable product claims, builds trust over time, and maintains a trustworthy reputation without pretending to be something it is not.

To gain deeper insights into participants' online purchase intentions, the survey incorporated questions about their age, gender, consideration of online clothing purchases in the last 12 months, actual online clothing purchases during the same period, and the frequency of such transactions. This approach allows for the exploration of potential variations in online purchase intent across different demographic groups. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing online clothing purchase intentions, which will be possible due to the examination of participant's demographics and past behaviors.

**Table 2***Scales used in the research*

<b>Measurements</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nr of Items</b>	<b>Type of Scale</b>
Source Credibility	1990	Ohanian	5	5-point likert
Brand Trust	2004	Delgado-Ballester	8	5-point likert
Click-Through Intention	2016	Zhang and Mao	3	5-point likert
Online Purchase Intention	2022	Nikbin et al.	3	5-point likert

*Source:* compiled by the author

The final questionnaire variants are presented in Annexes 1 and 2. The questionnaire was presented in English language. In summary, participants in the survey were exposed to various mockups of "H&M" email newsletters, each featuring distinct combinations of visual elements. The manipulation of email newsletters aimed to evaluate the formulated hypotheses, resulting in the creation of six survey variants. Despite visual differences in the email newsletters, all surveys shared identical scales and questions, maintaining consistency in user responses.

The surveys were distributed online, utilizing the Qualtrics platform for survey creation and data collection. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the six survey variants through the link to the questionnaire. The data was collected between 2023-12-04 and 2023-12-18, from social media users in Lithuania across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and email. Afterward, the gathered data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics software.

### **3. RESEARCH RESULTS: THE IMPACT OF VISUAL ELEMENTS IN EMAIL NEWSLETTERS ON CUSTOMER ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION**

#### **3.1 Respondent demographics**

Research results show that a total of 272 participants provided responses to all questionnaires. To ensure the integrity and reliability of the data, certain exclusion criteria were applied. Invalid results stemming from incomplete questionnaires, surveys with durations shorter than 100 seconds, and questionnaires where participants provided identical responses throughout the survey were removed before proceeding to data analysis. The decision to set the duration threshold at 100 seconds, as opposed to a conventional 120 seconds, was influenced by the concise nature of the survey. Following the application of these criteria, 52 questionnaires were excluded from the dataset. Consequently, the final dataset for analysis comprises responses from 220 participants, whose contributions align with the established criteria for data quality and completeness. The 220 respondents, who met the criteria for data quality and completeness, were distributed across the six questionnaire variants, resulting in an allocation of at least 33 respondents per questionnaire. The distribution of respondents among email newsletter versions is as follows: Version 1 (36 respondents), Version 2 (41 respondents), Version 3 (33 respondents), Version 4 (34 respondents), Version 5 (38 respondents), and Version 6 (38 respondents).

During the data collection process, the questions related to demographics and online clothing purchase behaviors were not separated into questionnaire variants but were included in all six questionnaires. The age group of 18 to 24 cover a great section of the questionnaire respondents, making up approximately 49.1% of the total respondents while the age category of 25 to 34 covers 41.4% of participants. In contrast, respondents aged between 35 and 44 cover a smaller proportion, accounting for 2.7% of the total. The final age group, covering respondents aged 45 and older, also covers 2.7% of the research participants. These demographic distributions provide a clear overview of the age composition within the respondent pool.

The gender distribution among research respondents reveals a diverse representation. Approximately 37.3% of respondents identify as male, while a majority

of 56.4% identify as female. While 4.5% of participants identify as non-binary, reflecting a recognition of diverse gender identities within the sample, 1.8% of respondents preferred not to disclose their gender.

Participants' behaviors and intentions regarding online clothing purchases were examined to understand their shopping preferences. A great majority (91.3%) of respondents revealed that they have actively considered buying clothing online in the last 12 months, indicating a strong inclination towards exploring online retail options for clothing.

Moreover, the survey uncovered that a significant portion of participants (81.8%) has turned this consideration into action, having made online clothing purchases within the last 12 months. This finding concludes that participants not only contemplate but also actively engage in online purchase for clothing items.

**Table 3**

*Respondent demographic characteristics*

	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Percentage</b>		<b>Construct</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	37,3%	<b>Considered buying clothing online in the last 12 months</b>	Yes	91,36%
	Female	56,4%		No	8,64%
	Non-binary	4,5%	<b>Purchased clothing online in the last 12 months</b>	Yes	81,82%
	Prefer not to say	1,8%		No	18,18%
<b>Age</b>	18-24	49,1%	<b>Frequency of purchasing clothing online</b>	Every 2 weeks	8,18%
	25-34	41,4%		Every month	30,91%
	35-44	6,8%		Every 3 months	30,91%
	45+	2,7%		Once a year	19,55%
				I do not buy clothes online	10,45%

*Source:* compiled by the author.

When exploring the frequency of online clothing purchases, participants exhibited diverse shopping behaviors. For some, the frequency was relatively high, with

8.2% making purchases every two weeks, while a significant portion (30.9%) opted for a monthly shopping routine. Another 30.9% indicated making online clothing purchases every three months, reflecting a quarterly shopping pattern. In contrast, 19.5% reported making such purchases once a year, highlighting a less frequent but still notable engagement. Additionally, a segment of participants (10.5%) expressed a choice not to buy clothes online. These nuanced insights into participants' online clothing purchase behaviors contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their preferences, habits, and considerations within the evolving landscape of online retail.

### 3.2 Reliability of scales

**Table 4**

*Reliability analysis of the research scales*

	N	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Version 4	Version 5	Version 6
<b>Source Credibility</b>	5	0,945	0,927	0,948	0,923	0,932	0,908
<b>Brand Trust</b>	8	0,925	0,890	0,908	0,917	0,945	0,917
<b>Click-Through Intention</b>	3	0,865	0,839	0,747	0,925	0,909	0,881
<b>Online Purchase Intention</b>	3	0,907	0,940	0,886	0,896	0,941	0,917

*Source:* compiled by the author

Reliability measures the consistency and stability of a scale or measurement tool, emphasizing the significance of having reliable instruments to ensure accurate and valid results. In order to evaluate the reliability of each scale used in research, a series of Cronbach alpha analyzes were conducted in the IBM SPSS statistics software for each used construct. Based on the reliability of each construct (Source Credibility, Brand Trust, Click-Through Intention, Online Purchase Intention) in the study conducted on

all the versions of the surveys, as measured by Cronbach alphas, falls within an acceptable range, which is above 0.6 and below 0.95, indicating that the measurement scales used in the research are reliable enough for drawing conclusions from the results. The research scale's reliability analysis can be seen in the table below.

### 3.3 Results of the Experiments and Hypothesis Testing

Based on regression analysis on finding the relationship of all three visual elements and the source credibility, it is observed that the regression model is not significant due to the p-value exceeding the accepted value 0.05. As a result, the regression model is rejected because it cannot be confidently said that there is a significant relationship between the visual elements and source credibility based on the analysis.

**Figure 2**

*Regression Analysis of Visual Elements and Source Credibility*

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	,362	1	,362	,530	,467 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	148,648	218	,682		
	Total	149,010	219			

a. Dependent Variable: SC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Typography

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	,000	1	,000	,000	1,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	149,010	218	,684		
	Total	149,010	219			

a. Dependent Variable: SC

b. Predictors: (Constant), CTA button

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	,100	1	,100	,147	,702 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	148,910	218	,683		
	Total	149,010	219			

a. Dependent Variable: SC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Human model

*Source:* compiled by the author

The correlation analysis results for three variables, Typographical hierarchy, Human model, and CTA button, are presented in the table below. The Pearson correlation coefficient for Typographical Hierarchy and SC is 0.049, indicating a very weak positive correlation. However, this correlation is not statistically significant, as demonstrated by the p-value of 0.467 (two-tailed). Similarly, the correlation between the Human model and SC is -0.026, which suggests a very weak negative correlation, but again, this correlation is not statistically significant with a p-value of 0.702. Interestingly, the correlation between the CTA button and SC is reported as 0.000, indicating no linear correlation. Additionally, the p-value is 1.000 ( $p > 0.01$ ), confirming its insignificance. The sample size for all correlations is  $N=220$ .

In summary, based on these results, there is no strong evidence of linear relationships between Typographical hierarchy, Human model, and CTA button with the variable Source Credibility in this analysis. As a result, the first three hypotheses (**H1, H2, H3**) are rejected as relationship between the visual elements and source credibility are deemed insignificant based on both analyses.

**Table 5**

*Correlation Analysis of Visual Elements and Source Credibility*

<b>Correlations</b>				
		<b>Typography</b>	<b>Human model</b>	<b>CTA button</b>
<b>SC</b>	Pearson Correlation	0,049	-0,026	0,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,467	0,702	1,000
	N	220	220	220

*Source:* compiled by the author

Based on the correlation analysis of Source Credibility and Brand Trust, a strong positive relationship between the variables Source Credibility and Brand Trust was found. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.641, displaying a strong positive correlation. Moreover, this correlation is highly statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) with the sample size  $N=220$ . Based on the findings in this analysis, the hypothesis **H4** is accepted.



**Table 6***Correlation Analysis of Source Credibility and Brand Trust*

<b>Correlations</b>		
		<b>BT</b>
<b>Source Credibility</b>	Pearson Correlation	,641**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000
	N	220
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

*Source:* compiled by the author

The correlation analysis examined the relationship between Source credibility and Click-Through Intention also shows that there is a strong positive relationship between the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.474, reflecting a strong positive correlation, however it is moderately weaker than the relation between Source Credibility and Brand Trust. Furthermore, this correlation is highly statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ), with the sample size  $N=220$ . Based on the findings in this analysis, the hypothesis **H5** is accepted.

**Table 7***Correlation Analysis of Source Credibility and Click-Through Intention*

<b>Correlations</b>		
		<b>CTI</b>
<b>SC</b>	Pearson Correlation	,474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000
	N	220
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

*Source:* compiled by the author

The relation of Brand Trust and Click-Through Intention with the Online Purchase Intention is also examined via Correlation Analysis, displayed in the table below. The findings demonstrate the Pearson correlation coefficient between OPI and CTI is 0.503, indicating a moderate positive correlation. This correlation is highly statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) with the sample size of  $N=220$ , suggesting that changes in OPI are significantly associated with changes in CTI.

Secondly, the correlation between OPI and BT is even stronger, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.761. This signifies a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation is highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) with the sample size of  $N=220$ . In short, the findings suggest significant and positive linear associations between OPI and both CTI and BT. Therefore, the Hypotheses **H6** and **H7** are accepted.

**Table 8**

*Correlation Analysis of Brand Trust and Click-Through Intention on OPI*

<b>Correlations</b>			
		<b>CTI</b>	<b>BT</b>
<b>OPI</b>	Pearson Correlation	,503**	,761**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000
	N	220	220
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

*Source:* compiled by the author

The regression analysis is conducted to measure the SC, BT, CTI and OPI. Based on the ANOVA results (Annex 3), the model is deemed significant as the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p = ,001$ ). The model summary demonstrates R Square value of .588 which indicates that approximately 58.8% of the variance in the OPI can be explained by the regression model that includes the independent variables SC, BT, and CTI suggesting a reasonably strong explanatory power of the model for predicting OPI based on SC, BT, and CTI. Moreover, the Durbin-Watson statistic is reported as 1.408. This value is less than 2, indicating a potential presence of positive autocorrelation in the residuals which suggests that there is a positive correlation between the residuals. (Annex 4).

In the conducted regression analysis, the examination of unstandardized coefficients (B values) provide more details for the anticipated change in OPI for a one-unit increase in each independent variable while holding the other variables constant. Significantly, the variable BT stands out as a contributor with the B value of 0.881. This indicates that for every one-unit increase in BT, OPI is expected to increase by approximately 0.881 units. In comparison, CTI and SC contribute with B values of 0.105 and 0.027, respectively, suggesting that a one-unit increase in CTI and SC corresponds to an expected increase in OPI by about 0.105 and 0.027 units, respectively. While BT demonstrates the strongest impact, the contributions of CTI and SC are comparatively smaller (Annex 5).

The examination of tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values in the regression model investigates the potential multicollinearity among the independent variables BT, CTI, and SC. For the variable BT, a tolerance of 0.507 and a VIF of 1.972 indicate that around 50.7% of its variance is not explained by the other variables, with a moderate inflation factor. This suggests that multicollinearity concerns for BT are relatively low. Conversely, CTI exhibits a tolerance of 0.667 and a VIF of 1.499, indicating a moderate level of multicollinearity. Similarly, SC demonstrates a tolerance of 0.570 and a VIF of 1.756, suggesting a moderate inflation in variance. In short, the detected multicollinearity in the regression model is deemed not severe (Annex 5).

And lastly alignment of the points in the probability-probability (P-P) plot with the reference line provides compelling evidence that the residuals from the regression model exhibit a distribution consistent with normality. Moreover, the scatterplot exhibiting a distinctive rectangular shape conveys a strong and consistent linear relationship between the variables. This graphical representation visually demonstrates the pattern of points forming a rectangle, indicating that alterations in one variable correspond systematically with changes in the other. The rectangular configuration implies a constant spread or variance in the association across the entire range of values, reflecting the stability and predictability of the linear correlation (Annex 6).

### **3.4 Conclusion of the Experiments**

In this chapter, a thorough investigation was made to explore the impact of visual elements in email newsletters on customer online purchase intention. The research

engaged 220 participants, and afterwards focused on examining respondent demographics, the reliability of scales, and hypothesis testing.

The results based on demographic composition revealed a youthful respondent base, with 49.1% falling within the 18-24 age group. The gender diversity is evident, as 56.4% of respondents were female and 37.3% as male. Moreover, the majority of participants (91.3%) actively considered buying clothing online in the last 12 months and a notable portion (81.8%) engaged in online clothing purchases within the last 12 months.

The reliability analysis of scales, including Source Credibility, Brand Trust, Click-Through Intention, and Online Purchase Intention, confirmed the validity of the measurement instruments. Cronbach alpha values fell within an acceptable range (0.747 to 0.948), which ensured the reliability of the research scales.

Hypothesis testing at first aimed to unravel the relationships between visual elements (Typographical Hierarchy, Human Model, CTA button) and Source Credibility. However, the analysis revealed no substantial evidence supporting these connections, leading to the rejection of H1, H2, and H3. This suggests that the visual elements examined did not significantly influence the perceived Source Credibility in the context of email newsletters.

In contrast, the correlation and regression analyses related significant findings regarding the relationships between Source Credibility, Brand Trust, Click-Through Intention, and Online Purchase Intention. While the visual elements did not strongly impact Source Credibility, Brand Trust and Click-Through Intention emerged as pivotal factors influencing Online Purchase Intention.

**H1:** The Presence of Typographical Hierarchy Positively Influences Source Credibility (Rejected)

The hypothesis posited that the inclusion of specific typographic elements in email newsletters would enhance the perceived Source Credibility. However, the empirical analysis did not provide sufficient evidence to support this claim. The correlation coefficient between Typographical Hierarchy and Source Credibility was a mere 0.049, indicating a weak positive correlation that was statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.467$ ). The absence of a substantial relationship suggests that typography, as manipulated in the experiment, did not significantly impact the perceived credibility of the information source in the context of email newsletters.

**H2: The Presence of a Human Model in Product Representation Positively Influences Source Credibility (Rejected)**

Similar to the Typographical Hierarchy hypothesis, the hypothesis proposing a positive influence of a human model on Source Credibility was not shown to be true by the data. The correlation coefficient between the presence of a Human Model and Source Credibility was -0.026, indicating a very weak negative correlation that was statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.702$ ). Contrary to expectations, the inclusion of a human model in product representation did not result in a significant impact on the perceived credibility of the source delivering the information through the email newsletters.

**H3: The Presence Of A CTA Button With A Message Positively Influences Source Credibility (Rejected)**

The hypothesis referred to the positive impact of a Call-to-Action (CTA) button within the email newsletter message on Source Credibility was also rejected, as in previous hypotheses. The correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.000, indicating no linear correlation between the presence of a CTA button and Source Credibility. Moreover, the p-value of 1.000 confirmed the insignificance of this relationship. These findings suggest that the inclusion of a CTA button in the message did not contribute on magnifying the perceived credibility of the information source in the context of email newsletters.

**H4: Source Credibility Positively Influences Brand Trust (Accepted)**

The investigation into the relationship between Source Credibility and Brand Trust revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.641 demonstrated a strong positive association, and the p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) confirmed the significance of this relationship. These findings affirm that as the perceived credibility of the information source in email newsletters increases, so does the trust placed in the associated brand. The acceptance of H4 emphasize the essential role of Source Credibility in shaping and strengthening brand trust in the digital marketing landscape.

**H5: Source Credibility Positively Influences Click-Through Intention (Accepted)**

The hypothesis examining the relationship between Source Credibility and Click-Through Intention also yielded significant and positive findings. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.474 indicated a strong positive correlation, and the p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) emphasized the statistical significance of this connection. These results suggest that as the perceived credibility of the information source in email newsletters increases, users are more inclined to express an intention to click through. The acceptance of H5 underscores the pivotal role of Source Credibility in influencing user engagement and interaction within the digital communication channel.

**H6: Brand Trust Positively Influences Online Purchase Intention of an Advertised Product (Accepted)**

The correlation analysis exploring the relationship between Brand Trust and Online Purchase Intention demonstrated a significant and positive correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.761 illustrated a strong positive association, and the p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) confirmed the statistical significance of this relationship. These findings signify that as trust in a brand increases, the intention to make online purchases of the advertised product also intensifies. The acceptance of H6 emphasizes the critical role of brand trust as a precursor to positive purchase intentions in the realm of online marketing.

**H7: The Click-Through Intention Positively Influences Online Purchase Intention of an Advertised Product (Accepted)**

The examination of the relationship between Click-Through Intention and Online Purchase Intention revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.503 indicated a moderate positive association, and the p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) confirmed the statistical significance of this relationship. These findings suggest that the expressed intention to click through positively influences the intention to make online purchases of the advertised product. The acceptance of H7 underscores the significance of user engagement, specifically click-through intention, in shaping subsequent purchase intentions within the context of the examined email newsletters.

**Table 9***Results of the hypothesis testing*

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>H1</b>	The presence of typographical hierarchy positively influences source credibility	Rejected
<b>H2</b>	The presence of human model in product representation positively influences source credibility	Rejected
<b>H3</b>	The presence of a CTA button with message positively influences source credibility	Rejected
<b>H4</b>	Source Credibility positively influences brand trust.	Accepted
<b>H5</b>	Source Credibility positively influences click-through intention	Accepted
<b>H6</b>	The brand trust positively influences online purchase intention of an advertised product	Accepted
<b>H7</b>	The click-through intention positively influences online purchase intention of an advertised product	Accepted

*Source:* compiled by the author

In summary, the analyses for H1, H2, and H3 collectively signify that the manipulated visual elements (Typographical Hierarchy, Human Model, CTA button) did not display substantial influence on the perceived Source Credibility. While visual elements are crucial in capturing attention and engaging users, their direct impact on the perceived credibility of information in email newsletters appears to be limited in this study. These results underline the complexity of user perceptions and responses to visual cues in the context of digital communication and emphasize the need for further exploration into the nuanced dynamics of visual elements in email marketing.

Furthermore, hypotheses testing the relationships between Source Credibility and Brand Trust (H4), Source Credibility and Click-Through Intention (H5), and Brand Trust and Online Purchase Intention (H6) were supported by vigorous empirical evidence. These findings underline the critical role of Source Credibility and Brand Trust in shaping user perceptions and behaviors in the digital marketing landscape. However, the hypothesis suggesting a direct positive influence of Click-Through Intention on Online Purchase Intention (H7) was not substantiated, indicating a refinement

relationship between these variables that warrants further exploration and consideration in crafting effective digital marketing strategies.

### **3.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **Limitations**

Even though the study gave valuable insights into the impact of visual elements in email newsletters, it is necessary to acknowledge several limitations that may affect the general applicability of the findings:

1. The experiments were purposely conducted in controlled settings to ensure precision and reliability. However, this controlled environment may limit the real-world applicability of the findings. Different findings could be reached by implicating observational studies or field experiments to capture the dynamic nature of consumer responses in authentic, uncontrolled settings, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visual elements operate in varied contexts.
2. The exclusive focus on Lithuanian residents presents a limitation in terms of participant diversity. To magnify the external validity of the results, research could include broader participant inclusion, including individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds and from various geographical locations. This would contribute to a more inclusive and representative understanding of how visual elements impact a diverse audience.
3. The interpretation of visual elements' impact is subjective and varies among individuals. While the study's findings offer valuable insights within the chosen context, caution is necessary when generalizing these results to diverse industries and contexts.
4. The research principally focused on the fast-fashion industry, using H&M as an exemplary brand. Generalizing findings to other industries requires careful consideration, as visual communication dynamics may differ across sectors. However, including industry-specific variations could develop a narrower understanding of how visual elements impact diverse market segments.
5. The experiments did not explicitly explore the potential interactions between different visual elements, representing a gap in understanding their combined effects. Investigating how various visual elements interact and considering potential conflicts or



symbiosis in shaping consumer perceptions and intentions could provide more operative insights for marketers in designing effective visual communication strategies.

6. The study did not explicitly focus on the influence of technologies on visual communication. Given the continuous technological advancements, the research could focus more on how innovations, such as interactive visual elements, may adjust consumer responses and engagement levels.

Acknowledging these limitations provides a foundation for future research to build upon, refining methodologies and expanding the width to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding visual elements in digital communication. These considerations are essential for advancing the knowledge base and refining visual communication strategies within digital marketing.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the information gained from the thesis, the following recommendations could be proposed for future researchers to advance further the understanding of the impact of visual elements in email newsletters on customer behavior:

1. Given the lack of exploration of interactions between visual elements in the current study, future research could explicitly examine how various visual elements interact with each other. Understanding potential conflicts or synergies between visual elements would contribute to a more apprehension of their combined effects on consumer perceptions.

2. To capture dynamics and changes in consumer preferences, future researchers may consider conducting longitudinal studies or trend analyses. This approach would provide a more large-scale view of how the impact of visual elements evolved over different phases of industry evolution.

3. Future research could explore the emotional aspect of visual engagement further. Investigating how visual elements evoke and influence emotions in consumers can provide deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms and prove how fundamental is their impact on decision-making.

4. Extend the research scope beyond email newsletters to explore how visual elements impact customer behavior across various digital communication channels. Comparing and contrasting the effects in different contexts would contribute to a broad understanding of visual communication dynamics.

5. Consideration should be given to the accessibility and inclusivity aspects of visual elements. Future research could explore how the design of visual elements affects individuals with diverse abilities, ensuring that digital communication is inclusive and accessible to all.

6. And finally, there are still multiple visual elements to uncover in the marketing channels that can directly or indirectly influence online purchase intention, therefore future studies can focus on the undiscovered or understudied visual elements.

By addressing these recommendations, future researchers can contribute to a more nuanced and applicable body of knowledge regarding the intricate dynamics of visual elements in marketing channels, specifically email newsletters and their influence on consumer online purchase intention.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis aimed to investigate the impact of visual elements within email newsletters on customer online purchase intentions, focusing specifically on the e-commerce sector within the clothing industry. The study addressed several objectives, each shedding light on different facets of the relationship between visual elements and consumer behaviors.

The primary theoretical objective was to discover the effective usage of visual elements in email marketing, specifically email newsletters, although the effective usage of visual elements in various channels were discovered, the lack of sufficient literature regarding the email newsletter as a channel remains.

Secondly, the literature analysis explored the interrelationships between the chosen visual elements and the necessity of their combined configuration to generate an impact on customers.

And finally, the theoretical part of the study explored the influences of the selected visual elements on source credibility and ultimately online purchase intention.

The primary empirical objective of evaluating the influence of typographic hierarchy on source credibility and subsequent consumer intention revealed unexpected findings as previous studies on Typographical Hierarchy mainly found positive impact on source credibility. The manipulation of typographic hierarchy presence or absence attempted to contribute to understanding how font variations impact the source credibility, however, the study concluded that the presence or absence of typographic hierarchy does not significantly impact source credibility.

The exploration of the impact of human models on source credibility and user perceptions also found interesting data that it plays an insignificant role in email newsletters. The study revealed that the presence or absence of human models did not significantly influence the perception of the promoted product, in other words, the source credibility and ultimately online purchase intention.

The analysis of the presence or absence of Call-To-Action (CTA) buttons and their accompanying messages presented an understanding of how different CTA button presentations influenced user responsiveness. The study concluded that the strategic CTA button message design in shaping consumer perceptions and source credibility was not significant enough.

Although, the hypotheses regarding the visual elements have been rejected, the goal of investigating the complex relationship between source credibility, brand trust, click-through intention, and online purchase intention was successfully addressed through a systematic experimental design analysis. The research provided valuable insights into the interconnected nature of source credibility, brand trust, and online purchase intention, concluding that there is a strong positive relationship between these variables.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without its limitations. The controlled experimental setting and the exclusive focus on Lithuanian residents limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should diversify settings and broaden participant inclusion to enhance external validity. Additionally, the study primarily focused on the fast-fashion industry, using H&M as an exemplary brand, which created bias in the decisions of the participants responses, based on the received verbal feedback and the results of the variable Brand Trust performing the highest in correlation analysis. Generalizing findings to other industries requires careful consideration, urging for industry-specific explorations.

By addressing the identified limitations and digging into more specific industry contexts this study could help further researchers. Future research can conduct studies on other visual elements, while considering personal preferences and perceived values can contribute to this field of study. Exploring the impact of technological advancements on visual communication and conducting cross-cultural studies could further enrich the understanding of how visual elements resonate with diverse audiences in digital marketing and online purchase intention.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1

The image shows a promotional email layout for H&M. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the H&M logo on the left and icons for user profile, search, heart, and shopping bag on the right. Below the navigation bar, a text block reads: "Limited-Time Offers: Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue." Below this text is a red "Shop Now" button. The main content area is divided into three columns. The first column features a photo of a man in a turquoise t-shirt, with the text "H&M Turquoise Men's T-shirt" and a price of "\$19.99", followed by a red "Add to Cart" button. The second column features a photo of a woman in a turquoise jacket, with the text "H&M Turquoise Women's Jacket" and a price of "\$20.99", followed by a red "Add to Cart" button. The third column contains a text block: "Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color." Below this text is a red button that says "SALE IS ON! Up to 50% off Claim your discount here". At the bottom of the email, there is a navigation menu with links for "Women", "Men", "Baby", "Kids", "H&M Home", "Beauty", "Sport", "Holiday", "Sale", and "Sustainability". Below the menu are social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, X, YouTube, and a red circular icon. The footer of the email contains the text "You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications." and a link to "Unsubscribe".



Variant 1 (Typographic Hierarchy absence, Human Model presence, CTA button with message presence)



## Limited-Time Offers


Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue.

**SHOP NOW**

 <p>H&amp;M Turquoise Men's T-shirt</p> <p>\$19.99</p> <p><b>Add to Cart</b></p>	 <p>H&amp;M Turquoise Women's Jacket</p> <p>\$20.99</p> <p><b>Add to Cart</b></p>	<p><b>Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color.</b></p> <p><b>SALE IS ON!</b> Up to 50% off Claim your discount <a href="#">here</a></p>
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[Women](#) [Men](#) [Baby](#) [Kids](#) [H&M Home](#) [Beauty](#) [Sport](#) [Holiday](#) [Sale](#) [Sustainability](#)



You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications.


[Unsubscribe](#)

Variant 2 (Typographic Hierarchy presence, Human Model absence, CTA button with message presence)




## Limited-Time Offers

Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue.



H&M Turquoise Men's T-shirt

**\$9.99**



H&M Turquoise Women's Jacket


**\$20.99**

**Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color.**

**SALE IS ON!**  
Up to 50% off

---

[Women](#)
[Men](#)
[Baby](#)
[Kids](#)
[H&M Home](#)
[Beauty](#)
[Sport](#)
[Holiday](#)
[Sale](#)
[Sustainability](#)




You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications.

[Unsubscribe](#)


Variant 3 (Typographic Hierarchy presence, Human Model presence, CTA button with message absence)






## Limited-Time Offers

Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue.



H&M Turquoise Men's T-shirt

**\$9.99**



H&M Turquoise Women's Jacket


**\$20.99**

**Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color.**

**SALE IS ON!  
Up to 50% off**

---


[Women](#) [Men](#) [Baby](#) [Kids](#) [H&M Home](#) [Beauty](#) [Sport](#) [Holiday](#) [Sale](#) [Sustainability](#)




You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications.

[Unsubscribe](#)

Variant 4 (Typographic Hierarchy presence, Human Model absence, CTA button with message absence)




Limited-Time Offers: Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue.



H&M Turquoise Men's T-shirt

**\$9.99**



H&M Turquoise Women's Jacket


**\$20.99**

Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color.

**SALE IS ON!  
Up to 50% off**

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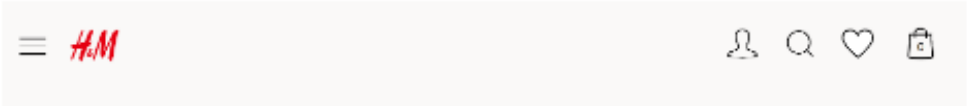
[Women](#)
[Men](#)
[Baby](#)
[Kids](#)
[H&M Home](#)
[Beauty](#)
[Sport](#)
[Holiday](#)
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You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications.


[Unsubscribe](#)

Variant 5 (Typographic Hierarchy absence, Human Model presence, CTA button with message absence)



Limited-Time Offers: Enjoy exclusive discounts and offers for our newsletter subscribers. Hurry, these deals won't last forever! Exciting news for fashion enthusiasts! H&M is making waves with the introduction of the hottest color trend of the season: Turquoise. Get ready to embrace the vibrant energy and refreshing vibes of this stunning hue.


[Shop Now](#)



H&M Turquoise Men's T-shirt

\$9.99

[Add to Cart](#)



H&M Turquoise Women's Jacket

\$20.99


[Add to Cart](#)

Dive into our stores or browse online to explore the Turquoise collection. Don't miss out on snagging the season's most coveted color.

**SALE IS ON!**  
 Up to 50% off  
[Claim your discount here](#)

---

[Women](#)
[Men](#)
[Baby](#)
[Kids](#)
[H&M Home](#)
[Beauty](#)
[Sport](#)
[Holiday](#)
[Sale](#)
[Sustainability](#)



You are receiving this email because you signed up to receive H&M promotional communications.

[Unsubscribe](#)

Variant 6 (Typographic Hierarchy absence, Human Model absence, CTA button with message presence)

**Annex 2***Questionnaire survey in English language***Block 1: Introduction**

Dear respondent,

My name is Hüseyin Ş. I am a Digital Marketing Master's program student at Vilnius University. I aim to investigate how Visual Elements on e-Newsletters impact the online purchase intention in the context of clothing industry. The questionnaire contains 5 question blocks and will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. It is anonymous, and the answers will be analyzed only for research purposes.

Before rating your level of agreement with each upcoming statement, please kindly take a moment to evaluate the visual aesthetics of the e-Newsletter example that is provided after the general questions. Thank you for your input in my research and for participating in the questionnaire.

**Block 2: Demography and Customer Behavior**

What is your age?

- 18-24 (1)
- 25-34 (2)
- 35-44 (3)
- 45+ (4)

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

Have you ever considered buying clothing online in the last 12 months?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Have you purchased clothing online in the last 12 months?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

How frequently do you purchase clothing online?

- Every 2 weeks (1)

- o Every month (2)
- o Every 3 months (3)
- o Once a year (4)
- o I do not buy clothes online (5)

**Block 3: *Email Newsletter Example and Online Purchase Intention***

[*Email newsletter image*] In this survey, I would like you to evaluate this specific e-newsletter example. Please take a moment to refer to the visual reference provided in this survey and rate your level of agreement with each upcoming statement.

I am very likely to buy the product from this brand.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I would consider buying the product from this brand in the future.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I intend to buy the product from this brand.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

**Block 4: *Brand Trust***

This is a brand that meets my expectations.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)

- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I feel confident in this brand.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

This is a brand that will not disappoint me.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

This brand guarantees satisfaction.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I could rely on this brand to solve the problem.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.

- o Strongly disagree (1)

- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

This brand would compensate me in some way for the problem with the product.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

**Block 5: Click-Through Intention**

I would click on the action buttons on the e-newsletter to understand more about the products.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I would click on the action buttons on the e-newsletter to make a purchase.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

I would click on the action buttons on the e-newsletter to get more information about the products.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Somewhat disagree (2)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- o Somewhat agree (4)
- o Strongly agree (5)

**Block 6: Source Credibility**

The information provided about the product on the e-Newsletter is dependable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

The information provided about the product on the e-Newsletter is honest.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

The information provided about the product on the e-Newsletter is reliable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

The information provided about the product on the e-Newsletter is sincere.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

The information provided about the product on the e-Newsletter is trustworthy.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)



### Annex 3

#### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	148,495	3	49,498	102,944	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	103,858	216	,481		
	Total	252,353	219			

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

b. Predictors: (Constant), SC, CTI, BT

### Annex 4

#### Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,767 <sup>a</sup>	,588	,583	,69342	1,408

a. Predictors: (Constant), SC, CTI, BT

b. Dependent Variable: OPI

### Annex 5

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-,091	,202		-,452	,651		
	BT	,881	,079	,686	11,187	<,001	,507	1,972
	CTI	,105	,050	,112	2,089	,038	,667	1,499
	SC	,027	,075	,020	,354	,724	,570	1,756

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

## Annex 6

